

Validated Terminal Review of the UNEP Project

‘Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in Southeast Asia’ (SEA circular) (PIMS ID 2010/SMA ID 130677)

2018 – 2024



UNEP Industry and Economy Division

Validation date: July 2025



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

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(Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in
Southeast Asia (SEA circular))
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This Terminal Review was prepared for UNEP Industry and Economy Division by Frank Noij.

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

The reviewer would like to thank the project team and in particular Ms. Kamala Ernest, former Project manager and Mr. Feng Wang, Coordinator UNEP Plastics Initiative, Consumption and Production Unit of UNEP's Industry and Economy Division, for their contribution and support throughout the review process. Sincere appreciation is also expressed to members of the Project Steering Committee who took time to provide comments to the draft report. The reviewer would also like to thank Government and other partners who shared their inputs to the review process, to the Government of Sweden as the donor to the project, and to participants of the SEA of Solutions 2024 who responded to the online mini-survey as part of the primary data gathering process.

The review consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will contribute to UNEP's ongoing support to address plastic pollution and marine litter in cooperation with relevant stakeholders at country, regional and global levels.

BRIEF EXTERNAL CONSULTANT(S) BIOGRAPHY

Frank is an evaluator with 30 years of experience in the evaluation and review of international development programming, primarily in the Asia and Pacific region. His expertise includes the conduct of complex evaluations and reviews, development and implementation of evaluation quality assurance systems and country level support to capacity development on evaluation and its use in results-based management. His approach to evaluation is informed by his experience in project and programme design and management. He has worked with UNEP as well as multiple other UN Agencies on the evaluation of projects and programmes with a focus on sustainable development. Earlier, he served as Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor for CARE in its Asia Regional Management Unit and worked on international development projects and programmes for Wageningen Agricultural and Leiden Universities, the Netherlands.

In the interests of transparency, it is noted that Frank carried out the midterm review of the Sea Circular project in 2021. Given that the project has a complex history within the UNEP Programme of Work and has, more recently, been incorporated as part of the UNEP Plastics Initiative and within the scope of the Circularity in Sectors Programme Coordinating Project, it was determined by the Evaluation Office that Frank's prior knowledge of the work outweighed any potential conflict of interest.

ABOUT THE REVIEW

Joint Review: No

Report Language(s): English.

Review Type: Terminal Review

Brief Description: This report is a management-led Terminal Review of the UNEP/COBSEA project implemented between 2018 and 2024. The project's overall development goal was to reduce the adverse impact of marine litter from plastic leakage by ensuring that less plastic was entering general solid waste streams where the coverage and effectiveness of the management systems was weak. 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, COBSEA, the Government of Sweden and the relevant government, private sector, civil society and academic agencies in the participating countries.

Source(s) of Funding by Country: -

Source(s) of Funding by Institution Type: *(indicate all that apply)*

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

Key words¹: Circular economy; plastic pollution; waste management; informal waste sector; extended producer responsibility.

Primary data collection period: April 2025

Field mission dates: Virtual interviews conducted in April 2025

¹ Please provide maximum five key words, which are not already in the project title.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
COBSEA	Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia
COVID	Corona Virus Infectious Disease
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization
EA	Expected Accomplishment
EOU	Evaluation Office of UNEP
EPR	Extended Producer Responsibility
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GESAMP	Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection
GPAP	Global Plastic Action Partnership
GPML	Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
IE	Industry and Economy (UNEP)
INC	Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee
MEG	Monitoring Expert Group (COBSEA)
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid Term Review
MTS	Medium Term Strategy (UNEP)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PoW	Programme of Work
PCP	Programme Coordination Project
PRC	Project Review Committee (internal UNEP committee that approves new projects)
ProDoc	Project Document (must be reviewed by PRC before any project can be undertaken, with the approval of the managing division director)
PRO	Producer Responsibility Organization
RAP MALI	Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (COBSEA)
ROAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (UNEP)
SC	Sustainable Consumption
SD	Sustainable Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SoS	SEA of Solutions
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
WGML	Working Group on Marine Litter (COBSEA)
WEF	World Economic Forum
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

Table 1. Project Identification Table

UNEP PIMS ID/SMA ² ID:	02010/130677	Grant ID ³ (if applicable):	M1-32CPL-000404
UNEP Management (Division/Branch/Unit):	Industry and Economy Division / RMB		
Implementing Partners:	UNEP and COBSEA Secretariat		
Sources of Funding:	Country ⁴ (ies):	Institution ⁵ Name/Type: Government of Sweden	
Relevant SDG(s):	12 (target 12.4 and 12.5), 14 (target 14.1) and 17 (target 17.16)		
MTS (all that apply):		UNEP approval date:	
POW Direct Outcome(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved from 2022): OR POW Output(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved pre-2022)	POW Direct Outcome: 3.3. Global plastic pollution is reduced, 3.6. Resource efficiency and circularity in key sectors are improved	MTS 2025 Outcome(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved from 2022): OR POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved pre-2022):	MTS 2025 Outcome: 1A, 3A, 3B, 2C, 3C
	POW Output: 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 521.1: Promotion and Delivery of Environmentally Sound Waste Management Technologies and Methods and in Country Technical and Advisory Support,		POW Expected Accomplishment: Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality EA (b) on Waste, EA (a) on SCP: Healthy and Productive Ecosystems EA (a)
	POW 2022 -2024 : ProDoc: ONE UNEP Plastic Project on Accelerating a Global Circular Plastic Economy to Reduce Plastic Pollution and Its Impacts		
Sub-programme:	Chemicals and Pollution	Programme Coordination Project:	Circularity in Sectors (Plastics)
Expected start date:	August 2018	Actual start date:	August 2018
Planned completion date:	31.12.2024	Actual operational completion date:	31.12.2024

² SMA refers to the ID provided by the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution (IPMR) system, which was introduced by UNEP in July 2023.

³ For example, ID references from EC, IKI, UNDA, Adaptation Fund, GCF.

⁴ Where applicable, list countries who have provided project funds and/or co-finance.

⁵ Indicate where funding institutions are any/all of the following: Foundation/NGO; Private Sector; UN Body; Multilateral Fund; Environment Fund; Other.

Planned total project budget ⁶ at approval:	Original Budget: USD 6,371,784 (SEK 55,000,000) Extension Phase: USD 2,346,142 (SEK 13,000,000)	Actual total expenditures reported as of [date]:	USD 6,873,805 (Cumulative Expenditure as of May 11, 2025)
Planned Extra-budgetary Funds ⁷ :	Cash: In-kind:	Secured Extra-budgetary Funds:	Cash: In-kind:
		Actual Extra-budgetary Funds expenditures reported as of [date]:	Cash:
First disbursement:	USD 799,269 (SEK 7,000,000)	Planned date of financial closure:	Estimated 1 year after operational completion.
No. and dates of formal project revisions:	One	Date of last approved project revision:	30.12.2022
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	6	Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	16.12.2024
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation budgeted:	• At design: (Y/N) • At revision: (Y/N) • N/A⁸	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	November 2021
Terminal Evaluation (planned date):	Dec 2024 – June 2025	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	Dec 2024 – May 2025
Coverage – Implementing Country(ies):	Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam	Coverage – Implementing Region(s):	Asia
Dates of previous project phases:	Inception Phase: Aug-2018- Jan 2019 Implementation Phase: Jan 2019 – Dec 2022 Extension phase: Jan 2023 – Dec 2024	Status of future project phases:	

⁶ Total budget may include; Regular Budget, Environment Fund, Extra-Budgetary, including 'softly-earmarked' etc.

⁷ Extra-budgetary funds may include co-finance (cash/in-kind)

⁸ Under four years of implementation, MTRs/MTes are not governed by alternative Donor agreements

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project background

1. The project 'Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South East Asia', with an initial duration of four years and five months, started implementation in August 2018, including an inception phase of 6 months. The project, also known as SEA circular, (which term will be further used to refer to the project), was extended with an additional two years, and ended in December 2024. The project was jointly implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA), with financial support from the Government of Sweden for a total of 68 million Swedish kronor. The project was administered under the UNEP. While initially the project was managed by the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), due to changes in the delivery model of the organization, the management of the project was shifted to the Industry and Economy Division of UNEP in January 2023, when it became part of the UNEP Plastics Initiative.⁹
2. The project aimed to reduce plastic pollution in the South East Asia region through four streams of work, including: Output 1: Market based solutions to "less plastic wasted" accessible to national and regional actors in the plastic value chain; Output 2: Scientific base for decision making on marine litter enhanced; Output 3: Outreach on plastic pollution and its impact enhanced; and Output 4: National actors in the region are more knowledgeable on how to coordinate action on plastic pollution.¹⁰

This review

3. The Review had 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, COBSEA, donor Sida and participating countries and organizations. The intended audience of the review included UNEP and COBSEA as implementing partners. The review would also be of use to participating countries, the donor agency and other partners and networks that supported or were otherwise involved in project implementation. The review used both qualitative and quantitative methods of data gathering and analysis with primary data gathering in the month of April 2025, covering different types of stakeholders to the project. The review was constrained by its implementation after project finalization and the departing of the project manager, making it more difficult to engage stakeholders in the review process and obtain the required secondary documentation.

Key findings

4. Based on the findings from this review, the project demonstrated performance at the 'Satisfactory' level (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, project design, financial management, achieving output level results, in terms of marine litter monitoring, communication and regarding factors

⁹ This is shorthand for the full project title: ONE UNEP Plastic Project on Accelerating a Global Circular Plastic Economy to Reduce Plastic Pollution and its Impacts.

¹⁰ In the original project document of 2018 these four streams of work were formulated as: Output 1: Market-based solutions to reduce single use plastic and to increase plastic re-use and recycling; Output 2: Strengthening the scientific base for decision making; Output 3: Outreach on marine litter and plastic pollution; and Output 4: Regional networking.

affecting performance. Areas that would benefit from further attention were achievement of outcome level results, project monitoring, connections with UNCT frameworks at country level and opportunities to address people related results in addition to environmental results.

Strategic questions

5. In terms of strategic questions (see details in Annex I) the project was in its first phase less aligned with its 'mother' project which focused on waste management. This changed in the extension phase, when the project became a part of the UNEP Plastics Initiative, that focused on accelerating a global circular plastic economy to reduce plastic pollution and its impacts. This concerned a programmatic approach towards plastic pollution, with coordination across SEA circular and other projects reducing overlap and enabling synergy. Moreover, there was coordination between the SEA circular project and projects of other stakeholders in the region, to avoid duplication, making use of the unique comparative advantages of each of the organizations and projects.
6. The project's ability to play a convening role across stakeholders was shown through the success of the SEA of Solutions events, organized throughout the project period. Assessment of the contribution of the project to the UNEP Programme of Work indicators improved in the extension phase, though data on several of the indicators concerned proved not available at country level in particular in terms of release of pollutants.
7. The project adapted usefully in various ways to the pandemic that struck hard in 2020-2022, adapting initiatives so that they could proceed, changing the ways of working through adopting online means of communication and focusing on the most vulnerable that were affected by the crisis. In the early stages of the pandemic, there was an opportunity identified to make use of resources provided to address the crisis to "build back better" and seize opportunities for leapfrogging to sustainable production, consumption, and waste management, enhancing a 'green' recovery.

Conclusions

8. The project was highly relevant from a variety of perspectives and responsive to the varied needs of the participating countries. It adapted its approach over time, informed by the needs of the countries as well as UNEPs positioning in the field of marine litter and plastic pollution in the region. UNEP's comparative advantage as UN agency to apply a human rights-based approach and a gender equality perspective set it apart from other organizations and provided added value in a field that got more crowded over time. Also, its co-implementation with, and support to, COBSEA as an intergovernmental mechanism, developing its capacity in the process, proved an important advantage, with the project achievements reached having shared ownership of the participating countries. The project contributed to the momentum that was created to address plastic pollution and marine litter in the region and supported countries in terms of their participation in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC) process that started towards the end of the initial phase of the project.
9. UNEP and its partners developed a substantial amount of knowledge products in relation to market-based solutions, marine litter monitoring and outreach materials. Through the Regional Node of the Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter (GPML), a framework was developed aimed at policy related, science related and capacity development related knowledge management and networking. With this framework in place, the challenge will be to support and enhance the use of the network and the knowledge products to inform the ongoing policy making and planning processes regarding marine litter and plastic pollution in the region.

10. An important achievement concerned the development of a harmonized marine litter monitoring approach, providing comparable data on coastal, marine and riverine aspects of marine litter. The data concerned can be applied as a baseline, to be used for comparison, after policies and plans have been implemented in order to assess results by repeating the assessment using the same methodology.
11. The initial project results framework was improved upon in the inception phase, with further additions and improvements made ahead of the extension phase of the project. Nevertheless, monitoring and reporting remained primarily activity oriented with intermittent assessment of output level results and less focus on outcome level change, limiting results-based management. However, reporting on qualitative achievements could fill some of the gaps concerned. Though a human rights framework was developed in the inception phase of the project, it was not used to assess aspects at the level of the rights related principles of participation, accountability and equality.
12. UNEP, as a non-resident agency, played an important role through the SEA circular project at the regional level, supporting coordination across an increasing number of projects in the region and enhancing sharing of learnings and providing a platform for discussion through the annual SEA of Solutions events. For further support at the country level, the project has depended on sister UN agencies and other stakeholders, resident in the country, with a possible focus on support to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) through contribution to the country level assessment and in framework design.
13. Sustainability of results appeared strongest in terms of their ownership and in terms of capacities for implementation with less attention so far to the financial aspects of sustainability. Though understandable in the context of the on-going INC process, in which UNEP performs the secretariat role for the negotiations, in which there needs to be a firewall, preventing UNEP from directly influencing the discussion, this will be an important field of attention once an agreement would be in place.

Lessons Learned (abridged, see full lessons learned in the main report)

14. Lesson 1: In a development intervention the use of a human rights-based approach can point to ways in which to prevent groups that are already vulnerable and marginalized, get even further behind in the development process through changes concerned.
15. Lesson 2: Rather than working with individual enterprises, results in terms of market-based solutions could be more readily obtained through working with membership-based business organizations, which could create multiplier effects throughout their membership and related stakeholders in the plastic value chain.
16. Lesson 3: Regional Guidance on Harmonized National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes can have multiple results, informing national level policy making and action plans as well as catalyze actions across the region and facilitate an integrated approach to the cross-boundary concerns of marine litter and plastic pollution.
17. Lesson 4: For a regional project it is useful to establish partner relationships through the relevant mother organization at a global or regional level before working with each of the partner organizations at the country level which can save time as well as enable the grounding of such country relationships in a regional approach and perspective
18. Lesson 5: Temporary Job Openings can enable a more rapid recruitment process once a project has started and prevent long recruitment processes to result in long term gaps in project staffing, when staff is leaving their position after the start of the project.

Recommendations (abridged, see full recommendations in the main report)

19. Recommendation 1: For UNEP, Sida and partners to follow up on the momentum created in the region in terms of support to plastic pollution and marine litter, integrating learning obtained through the SEA circular project, making use of a value chain approach, in ongoing marine litter and plastic pollution projects, in all parts of the UNEP Plastics Initiative and beyond, and assessing the need for additional support in the region.
20. Recommendation 2: For UNEP to support and enhance the use of the knowledge products developed through the SEA circular project through improving accessibility by tailoring knowledge products to specific stakeholder needs, translating documents, repackaging the knowledge base for ease of access, and providing a meta-analysis.
21. Recommendation 3: For UNEP to enhance monitoring of its marine litter and plastic pollution-oriented projects and programming, focusing on the assessment of relevant output and outcome level changes as well as intermediate level changes required to reach outcome level results, enhancing in this way results-based management and increasing the likelihood of contributing to outcome, intermediate state and impact level results.
22. Recommendation 4: For UNEP to strengthen its support to sister UN agencies at the country level, through cooperation between the IE Division and ROAP, ensuring the inclusion of marine litter and plastic pollution aspects in the Common Country Analysis and in the resulting Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework at country level.
23. Recommendation 5: For UNEP and partners to consider to enhance sustainability of results of this and other marine litter and plastic pollution related projects, through attention to technical support to country level involvement in the INC process, the financial aspects of addressing plastic pollution and marine litter once the INC process is finalized and by working with universities in the region to establish marine litter and other forms of plastic pollution monitoring in their curricula.
24. Recommendation 6: For UNEP to consider enhancing the linkages between environmental gains of reduced plastic pollution and marine litter and the results for people and communities, including the socio-economic, health and cultural implications, with a focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups, including both their present situation as well as their aspirations.
25. Recommendation 7: For UNEP to enhance aspects of project evaluation in terms of Terminal Project Reviews managed by the project internally: starting the review process within the implementation period of the project, retaining the project manager for the time of the evaluation and ensuring the availability of a database of project related documents.

Validation (by the UNEP Evaluation Office)

The report has been subject to an independent validation exercise performed by UNEP's Evaluation Office. The performance ratings for the UNEP Project 'Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in Southeast Asia' (SEA circular) (PIMS ID 2010/SMA ID 130677), set out in the Conclusions and Recommendations section, have been adjusted as a result. The overall project performance is validated at the **Satisfactory** level. Moreover, the Evaluation Office has found the overall quality of the report to be Satisfactory (see Annex XII).

I. INTRODUCTION

26. The project SEA circular project had an initial duration of 4 years and five months, and started implementation in August 2018, including an inception phase of 6 months. At the end of 2022, the project was extended with an additional two years and it ended in December 2024.¹¹ The project was jointly implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA), with financial support from the Government of Sweden for a total of 68 million Swedish Krona.¹² The project was administered under the UNEP. While initially the project was managed by the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), due to changes in the delivery model of the organization, the management of the project was shifted to the Industry and Economy Division of UNEP in January 2023.¹³
27. The project was initially under the UNEP Medium Term Strategy of 2018-2021, part of the Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality Sub-programme, while in addition contributing to outcome areas of UNEP's Climate Change and Healthy and productive ecosystems subprogrammes. In this first phase of the project, it contributed to the UNEP Programme of Work (POW) Project "521.1: Promotion and Delivery of Environmentally Sound Waste Management Technologies and Methods and in-Country Technical and Advisory Support". The initial project document contributed to POW Expected Accomplishments of Chemicals, waste and air quality, Resource efficiency and Healthy and productive ecosystems. In the extension period, the project was aligned with the Chemicals and Pollution Action subprogramme and the expected accomplishment of Waste management improved, including through circular processes, of the UNEP POW 2022-23 which was extended to cover the additional two-year period 2024-25. In this phase, the project became part of the ONE UNEP Plastic Project on Accelerating a Global Circular Plastic Economy to Reduce Plastic Pollution and its Impacts', hereafter referred to as the UNEP Plastics Initiative.
28. The project, in both phases, was aligned with the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP-MALI) of the COBSEA. The project supported countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 14 Target 14.1; SDG 12, Target 12.4; and SDG 17, Target 17.17. The project was implemented in six countries, including Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, with China, Republic of Korea and Singapore participating and knowledge partners.
29. A mid-term review (MTR) was scheduled for 2020 in line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy¹⁴, but was delayed till 2021. With the project ending in December 2024, a Project Terminal Review was conducted covering the entire project period from August 2018 till December 2024, including the initial project phase as well as the two-year extension period.

¹¹ The original Agreement between Government of Sweden and UNEP was signed on 16 July 2018 while the agreement regarding the extension phase was signed on 13 March 2023, with the latter referring to the original Project Document of July 2018 as well as the Project Extension 2023-2024 Document of November 2022.

¹² This included 55 million Krona for the initial phase from August 2018 till December 2022 and an additional 13 million Krona for the extension phase, from January 2023 till December 2024. The total budget amounted to 8.7 million USD.

¹³ This shift was based on the new UNEP Delivery Model policy from September 2022. UN Environment Programme, UNEP Delivery Model, Policy for One UNEP Delivery for Better Collaboration and Country Support, 26 September 2022.

¹⁴ United Nations Environment Programme, Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines. Available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/policies-and-strategies>.

30. The present 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, COBSEA, the donor Sida and participating countries and organizations.
31. The intended audience of the review includes UNEP and COBSEA as implementing partners. The review will also be of use to participating countries, the donor agency and other partners and networks that supported or were otherwise involved in project implementation. The review is, moreover, expected to be of use to a wider group of stakeholders of initiatives to reduce plastic pollution and marine litter, including Government agencies, sister UN agencies, multilateral, bilateral, academic and civil society organizations and private sector actors.



II. REVIEW METHODS

32. The review included questions related to review criteria that are standard applied to UNEP Project Terminal Reviews. In addition, a set of strategic questions was included, which responded to strategic issues and questions included in the TOR. For each of these criteria the main questions were identified, in line with the details from the TOR. These two sets of questions guided the entire review process (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Review criteria, strategic issues and related questions¹⁵

Review Criteria	Review Questions
1. Strategic Relevance	To what extent was the project suited to the priorities and policies of donors, UNEP, COBSEA, implementing countries, targeted beneficiaries, including participating organizations and other country level stakeholders
2. Quality of Project Design	What was the quality of the design of the project, including the design of the extension phase of the project (making use of UNEP format concerned)
3. Nature of External Context	What was the nature of the external context in terms of its favourability to the implementation of the project (part of the quality of project design format)
4. Effectiveness	To what extent have results been realized?
5. Financial Management	What has been the quality of the financial management system in place and its implementation?
6. Efficiency	To what extent have project activities been efficient in reaching of output level results?
7. Monitoring and reporting	What has been the quality of project monitoring and reporting?
8. Sustainability	To what extent are the results achieved by the project likely to be maintained without additional support?
9. Factors and Processes Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues	i. Preparation and Readiness (part of assessment of Project Design Quality) ii. Quality of Project Management and Supervision iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity v. Environmental and Social Safeguards vi. Country Ownership and Driven-ness vii. Communication and Public Awareness
Strategic Issues	Strategic Questions
1. Coherence. collaboration and complementarity	To what extent, and in what ways, was the work of the project complementary or coherent with other UNEP work, either with the PRC-approved project, PCP or Sub-programme or elsewhere in UNEP's Programme of Work
2. Added value	What added value did the work of the evaluand bring to UNEP's work in this thematic area and how is it visible, including in relation to poverty?
3. Effects of the COVID pandemic	What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how have any changes affected the project's performance?
4. Contribution to the host project, PCP/Subprogramme	To what extent has the project contributed to the host project, PCP and sub-programme of which it is a part
5. Leverage gained	To what extent, and in what ways, did the work under the project enable UNEP to drive efficiency and effectiveness at any level above that of the evaluand itself, at the level of the outcomes, intermediate states and/or long-lasting impact of a PRC-approved project, at the level of the POW Direct Outcomes
6. Governance	What has been the usefulness of the governance setup of the project?

¹⁵ In addition, the issues of Quality of project design and Nature of external context have been included in the assessment of the Project Design Quality, which was performed as part of the Inception phase of the review making use of the format of the UNEP Evaluation office.

Strategic Issues	Strategic Questions
7. Monitoring	How well was the Monitoring Plan of the evaluand contributing to that of the host PRC-approved project, PCP or sub-programme?
8. Reporting	How are the activities and achievements of the evaluand reflected in the reporting of the host PRC-approved project, PCP or Subprogramme?

33. To assess the achievements reached during the entire project period 2018-2024, the review made use of a theory-based approach, in which assessment was guided by the project's theory of change and its results framework. Given the lack of sufficient baseline data and counterfactual, the review made use of a non-experimental design, which also aligned with the review time frame and available resources.
34. For data gathering, use was made of a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods of data gathering and analysis in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of the project, its implementation and results achieved. The use of a variety of methods allowed for the use of triangulation of data across these methods and enhanced validity of findings.
35. The review made use of a participatory approach, including as much as possible a wide range and variety of stakeholders in the various stages of the review process. The use of a participatory approach enabled the inclusion of a range of perspectives on the implementation of the project and its results. The inclusion of multiple stakeholders allowed for triangulation of data across the various respondents and in this way supported validation of the findings. The use of a participatory approach enhanced the level of ownership of the review process and its findings and conclusions, which in turn enhanced the likeliness of use of the recommendations.
36. The review made use of appreciative inquiry, in addition to a problem-oriented approach. This allowed for a focus on what has worked and how this can be reinforced, while the use of appreciative questioning provided a powerful way to engage participants in evaluative discussions. Performance ratings made use of the UNEP Review Criteria Ratings Matrix and the Weightings Table for Review Criteria Ratings for management-led terminal reviews.
37. The variety of methods applied, included desk review of relevant secondary and project monitoring and reporting data, semi-structured interviews with stakeholders of the project, ensuring representation of all types of stakeholders to the project. All interviews were conducted virtually, given the geographical spread of respondents over parts of Asia and Europe. A mini survey was conducted for the participants of the 2024 iteration of the SEA of Solutions, a key event organized five times during the project period. The survey was web-based and limited to eight questions to facilitate participation.
38. In terms of respondents, it was aimed to include all UNEP staff involved, including COBSEA Secretariat staff, and to include a fair number of representatives of participating countries. Moreover, a selection of project partners was made, including all types of partners to the project, with representation of civil society organizations including those representing vulnerable groups, donor agency, academia, businesses and sister UN agencies. Multiple email reminders, including a review information sheet, were sent to identified respondents to enhance participation. For numerical aspects of sampling, see Table 2 below.
39. A variety of methods were used in terms of data analysis. These included qualitative content analysis of qualitative data and quantitative analysis, mainly descriptive statistics, for the data gathered through the mini-survey. Moreover, stakeholder and results framework analysis were used.

Table 2: Respondents' Sample

		# people involved (M/F)	# people contacted (M/F)	# respondent (M/F)	Percentage of respondents
Project team (those with management responsibilities e.g. PMU)	Implementing agency UNEP/COBSEA	17	17	16 (7 men, 9 women)	94 %
	Executing agency/ies	12	12	4 (3 men, 1 woman)	33 %
	# entities involved	# entities contacted	# people contacted (M/F)	# respondent (M/F)	% respondent
Project partners (implementing/ executing partners, receiving funds from the project)	33	22	22	8 (8 women)	36 %

40. Throughout the review process and in the compilation of the Final Review Report, the UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UN Evaluation Group Norms and Standards for Evaluation and Review in the UN System were adhered to.¹⁶ Efforts have been made to represent the views of both mainstream and more marginalized groups of stakeholders. Data were collected with respect for ethics and human rights issues. All discussions were based on informed consent, details remained anonymous and all information was collected according to the UN Standards of Conduct.
41. The number of questions of the review as presented in Table 2 above was relatively large, which ran the risk of jeopardizing the focus of the review. This was mitigated through ensuring a relevant balance between assessment of evaluation criteria versus strategic issues and to tailor questions to each of the stakeholders, taking into consideration their expected ability to address evaluation criteria versus strategic related issues given their role in the project and the wider organizational context.
42. For the involvement of a wider range of stakeholders than can be reached through interviews, use was made of a survey questionnaires for participants of the last SEA of Solutions project event. As surveys tend to have a limited response rate, jeopardizing quantitative analysis of the data gathered, a 'mini-survey' was used, limited to eight questions and providing web-based access. Nevertheless, response rates remained low, limiting quantitative analysis of the results.
43. The review was constrained by the timing after project activities had terminated and the project manager had left, which made it difficult to engage project partners and stakeholders in the review and to obtain access to the relevant documentation over the entire project period.



Photo: CSIRO and COBSEA, Towards a Regional Assessment on Marine Litter in the East Asian Seas (Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam) 2024, Bangkok: United Nations Environment Programme

¹⁶ UN Environment Programme, Evaluation Policy, revised, October 2022; UNEG, United Nations Evaluation Group, Norms and Standards for Evaluation, 2016, 2017; UNEG, Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation, March 2008; UNEG, UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System, March 2008.

III. THE PROJECT

A. Context

44. Plastic production and consumption have grown exponentially since the 1950s, when plastics were first introduced. Between 2000 and 2019, annual global production of plastics doubled from 234 to 460 million tons. Under a business-as-usual scenario, plastic use is projected to double in OECD countries between 2019 and 2060 while it is expected to triple in the same period in non-OECD countries. Plastics are associated with the use of chemical additives, many of which pose concerns for human health and a clean environment.
45. Plastic waste is on the rise with the packaging, textiles, building, construction and transport sectors being among the largest generators. While some of the plastic is recycled, the amount remains low, and is largely outnumbered by plastic mismanaged. Globally, 46 per cent of plastic waste is landfilled, 22 per cent is mismanaged and becomes litter, 17 per cent is incinerated, and 15 per cent is collected for recycling resulting in less than 9 per cent recycled, after losses.
46. The effects of plastic pollution are increasingly evident with the possibility of plastic posing risks to human health in every stage of its life cycle. Mismanagement of plastic waste has resulted in contamination of the entire marine environment, from shores to the deepest ocean sediments. Moreover, plastic, through the release of greenhouse gas across its life cycle, contributes to climate change. The negative effects of plastic pollution are disproportionately carried by the most vulnerable populations, including people whose livelihood depends on coastal and marine ecosystems as well as garbage collectors in the informal sector.
47. Root causes of plastic pollution and marine litter include the unsustainable consumption and production of plastic products under a linear economy, resulting in increased generation of plastic waste while insufficient waste management causes plastic pollution. The situation is aggravated by the limitations in terms of waste management capacities, including infrastructure, policies in place and enforcement capabilities. Plastic waste mismanagement is estimated at over 75 percent in most COBSEA countries, which has resulted in high levels of leakage in waterways and the ocean.
48. Ocean currents and waves have transported plastic waste across all five main gyres and to all the corners of the world, resulting in plastic waste even ending up on uninhabited islands. About 60 percent of global land-based plastic litter was estimated to come from six rapidly developing countries: China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.¹⁷ The amount of plastic waste entering the ocean appears mostly a function of population density, miles of coastline, amount of mismanaged waste and the amount of (single use) plastic in the waste stream. Leakage of plastic waste in the ocean is a result of the huge gap that exists between waste generation and waste management, including waste water management.
49. Marine litter has detrimental effects in terms of environment, human health, economic as well as climate related consequences. Marine litter is one of the fastest growing threats to the health of the world's oceans. Many species, from the smallest plankton to the largest whales, have been negatively affected by plastic debris. It has resulted in degradation of the natural systems, leading to marine mammal deaths and resulting in over half the number of fish having ingested plastics. Plastic wastes also have become

¹⁷ Encourage Capital on behalf of Vulcan, Inc. New York, Sea of Opportunity – Supply Chain Investment Opportunities to Address Marine Plastic Pollution, February 2017.

carriers of hazardous substances such as dioxins, spreading these in the environment. This in turn affects human health through injury or ingestion of contaminants through the food chain while the effects of consumption of fish or foraging animals that ingested plastic needs further research in the context of South-East Asia. Marine litter has substantial economic costs. It leads to a reduction of the services that marine ecosystems can provide, which affects coastal and poor communities who largely depend on marine resources for food, jobs and livelihoods. Plastic leakage adversely impacts certain social groups more severely than others.

50. The effects of plastic pollution and marine litter are recognized to have a gender dimension. With women more dependent on informal employment in the small-scale fishing and waste management sectors, they are more heavily affected by local economic downturn and the negative social and health effects of waste management. On the other hand, strategies to address waste, marine and coastal resource management are not necessarily gender responsive, with national governments and other duty-bearers often lacking the resources, technical capacity or the will to ensure that the inclusion of women and girls and other vulnerable groups is ensured and safeguarded. A gender analysis was conducted as part of the inception phase of the project to inform inclusive policymaking for marine litter.
51. The project contributed to multiple UNEP Sub-programmes, which in terms of the UNEP Medium Term Strategy 2022-2025 included:
 - **Directly** to the Chemicals and Pollution Action sub-programme as well as to the Nature Action Subprogramme
 - **Indirectly** to the
 - Environmental Governance sub-programme
 - Finance and Economic Transformations sub-programme
 - Digital Transformations sub-programme

B. Objectives and components

52. The SEA circular project aimed to reduce the adverse impact of marine litter from plastic leakage by ensuring that less plastic is entering general solid waste streams where the coverage and effectiveness of the management systems were weak. The original project results framework was organized around three outcome level changes which were compiled into one outcome in the extension phase of the project. Four output areas were identified in the original project design and only slightly adapted in the extension phase: 1) Market-based solutions towards “less plastic wasted”, 2) Strengthening the scientific basis for decision-making, 3) Outreach on marine litter and plastic pollution and 4) National actors in the region are more knowledgeable on how to coordinate action on plastic pollution. The results framework included indicators at outcome and output levels as well as output related milestones.
53. The results framework of the project was finalized in the Inception phase, which covered the six month period from August 2018 to January 2019. This resulted in some adaptations of the framework compared to the original framework contained in the Project Document. At outcome level, results remained the same but some of the indicators were adapted, including their targets and some indicators were added as was indicated as a possibility in the original results framework presented in the Project Document. This concerned for example the indicator on increased consumer awareness, to be verified through consumer awareness surveys planned for 2020 and 2022, and number of governments that were implementing waste prevention and sound management policies and good practices, in line with international agreements. Other adaptations at the output level appeared minor and focused on reformulation of some of

the output level results and indicators. For details on the four output areas of the project, see Table 3 below.

Table 3: Key Details of the Four Project Outputs

Project Output	Lead Agency	Description	Participating Countries
1. Market based solutions	UNEP	Aimed to generate some exemplary “solutions” for making transformational changes in the way plastic is managed in South-East Asia. With application of a Circular Economy approach, it aimed to help stakeholders showcase their collective ability to manage the plastic value chain better and also contribute to generating more business incentives for plastic reduction and recycling Two Solutions were envisaged: a) Increase in plastic re-use and recycling; b) Reduction in single use plastic packaging.	Malaysia and Thailand
2. Scientific basis	COBSEA	Development of and access to a robust evidence base for addressing marine plastic litter. This was done by harmonizing and strengthening marine litter monitoring programmes and building respective capacity, in line with global guidelines, providing access to research and data relevant to the region, and strengthening the science-policy interface through COBSEA mechanisms.	Targeted activities in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam and regional activities across all COBSEA countries
3. Outreach	UNEP	Raised awareness on marine litter as well as needs for better plastic value chain management to promote behavioural change among consumers and the industry and create an enabling space for policy development. It applied existing tools e.g., from the Clean Seas campaign, while drawing on findings and knowledge products of Outputs 1 and 2.	Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam (other COBSEA countries participating where relevant)
4. Networking	COBSEA	Supported successful project delivery by establishing the necessary regional mechanisms for technical advice and exchange, facilitating enhanced dialogue and networking, and providing targeted capacity building and technical support, especially in relation to the regional policy dimension of marine litter reduction. Where relevant, this entailed seeking close engagement and collaboration with ASEAN as a regional inter-governmental mechanism for economic, political and socio-cultural integration.	Targeted activities in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam and regional activities across all COBSEA countries

Source: UNEP, COBSEA, Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South-East Asia, Project Document, July 2018.

54. In the original results framework, outcome level indicators lacked baseline data but had nevertheless targets indicated. The inception phase added baseline data to the outcome level indicators and updated some of the targets concerned. For output level indicators, no baselines and targets were included in the original framework, nor were these added in the inception phase, limiting their use in terms of performance assessment. In some cases, milestones added some details, though focused primarily on activities rather than results.

55. The project adopted a human rights-based approach (HRBA), which was considered to enable recognizing and addressing the underlying causes of discriminate impacts of pollution and environmental degradation on vulnerable groups; aimed to empower and engage these groups in participatory processes; and build the capacity of governments, plastic producers and polluting industries and other duty bearers to act and protect human rights and the environment.¹⁸ In the Inception phase of the project, HRBA and gender related results were identified for each of the output areas in line with three core HRBA principles:

- Participation and empowerment
- Accountability and transparency
- Non-discrimination and equality

56. The results framework was slightly adapted in the 2023-2024 project extension phase as it adapted and added aspects at outcome and output levels, while also overlapping with the results and indicators of the first phase results framework. For this period, indicators at both outcome and output levels included baseline data and targets. Additions were informed by the Theory of Change of the UNEP Plastics Initiative of the Industry and Economy Division of UNEP of which the project became a part in the extension phase. For details, see table 4 below.

Table 4: Results framework as adapted in the extension document of the project

OUTCOME							
National actors adopt and implement policy measures, and consumer and private sector increase efforts to enhance the reduction in the most harmful and difficult to recycle plastics, as well as plastic reused and recycled.							
Output 1		Output 2	Output 3		Output 4		
A regional Plastics Circularity guidance framework developed by bringing the learnings from the 6 countries in Southeast Asia that integrate a human rights-based approach for market-based solutions, which will support stakeholders in the plastic value chain to improve the rate of collecting, sorting, and recycling as part of the EPR scheme.	Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in 4 countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines and Viet Nam) are more knowledgeable on how to increase plastic waste collection and recycling through engagement with Producer Responsibility Organizations (PROs).	Implementation of the national marine litter plans and national marine litter policies of 5 countries (Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam) accelerated by training and capacity building for relevant stakeholders, informed by the regional guidance and knowledge products from SEA circular.	Best practices of plastics circularity inform national accelerated solutions and the International Negotiations Committee (INC) for an International Agreement to End Plastic Pollution through Southeast Asia regional dialogues and knowledge exchange platforms.	Consumer awareness of solutions to marine litter and plastic pollution is increased to inform decision.	Guidelines developed for managing the plastic value chain, building on SEA circular's solutions and recommendations for evidence-based national marine litter plans, policies, regulations, and harmonization of standards in Southeast Asia.	The implementation of UN Country Framework of at least 3 SEA countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Viet Nam) incorporates joint UN initiatives to support respective countries to accelerate solutions to end plastic waste.	The 5th SEA circular's SEA of Solutions on Circularity for Ending Plastic Pollution Forum showcases innovative solutions and strengthened strategic partnerships that have accelerated progress to end plastic pollution in Southeast Asian region.

57. Though the project continued to make use of a rights-based approach, no details concerned were added to the results framework in the extension phase proposal beyond the inclusion of a human rights-based approach for market-based solutions as part of results under output 1 and the need for harmonized guidelines to manage the plastic value chain to consider relevant human rights and gender aspects under output 4.¹⁹

¹⁸ <https://www.sea-circular.org/about-sea-circular/human-rights-based-approach/>.

¹⁹ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), SEA circular Project Extension Proposal 2023-2024, Final, Submission to Sida, dated 28 November 2022, Table 3: Mapping of HRBA integration in the project results.

58. To assess the performance of the project over the entire timeframe from 2018 – 2024, the combined indicators of the results frameworks of the periods 2018 -2022 and 2023-2024 were used to inform the assessment, in line with the project reporting practice. For the period 2018-2022 use was made of the indicators as revised in the inception phase of the project and expressed in the annex to the inception report, while for the period 2023-2024 use was made of the details included in the extension proposal.

C. Stakeholders

59. A variety of stakeholders were involved in the implementation of the project in the slightly more than six years of its lifetime. This included UNEP at regional and headquarter levels, the COBSEA participating countries and Secretariat, national and sub-national level government agencies, private sector stakeholders, academic and research institutions, civil society organizations, donor agencies and sister UN agencies. Moreover, stakeholders included coastal communities and their representatives as well as informal waste workers and their associations, representing groups that are most vulnerable to the effects of marine litter and plastic pollution. The interest of each of these stakeholders in the project varied as well as their involvement in the four output areas. An overview of stakeholders to the project is provided in Table 5 below based on their interest in the project and their influence over plastic waste and marine litter related issues.

Table 5: Stakeholder characteristics along interest and influence criteria

Increased influence / of stakeholders over plastic waste and marine litter issues	B: High influence, low interest in project <i>Meeting their needs</i> • Governments of other developed countries	A: High influence, high interest in project <i>Key players</i> • Governments of participating countries • Intergovernmental agency COBSEA • Donor agency • Business leaders • Financial institutions • UN agencies at regional / country level
	D: Low influence, low interest in project <i>Marginal players</i> • Individual citizens • Consumer associations	C: Low influence, high interest in project <i>Show consideration</i> • Vulnerable groups, incl. coastal communities • Informal sector incl. waste pickers • Academia • Research institutes

Increased interest of stakeholders in the project

D. Project implementation structure and partners

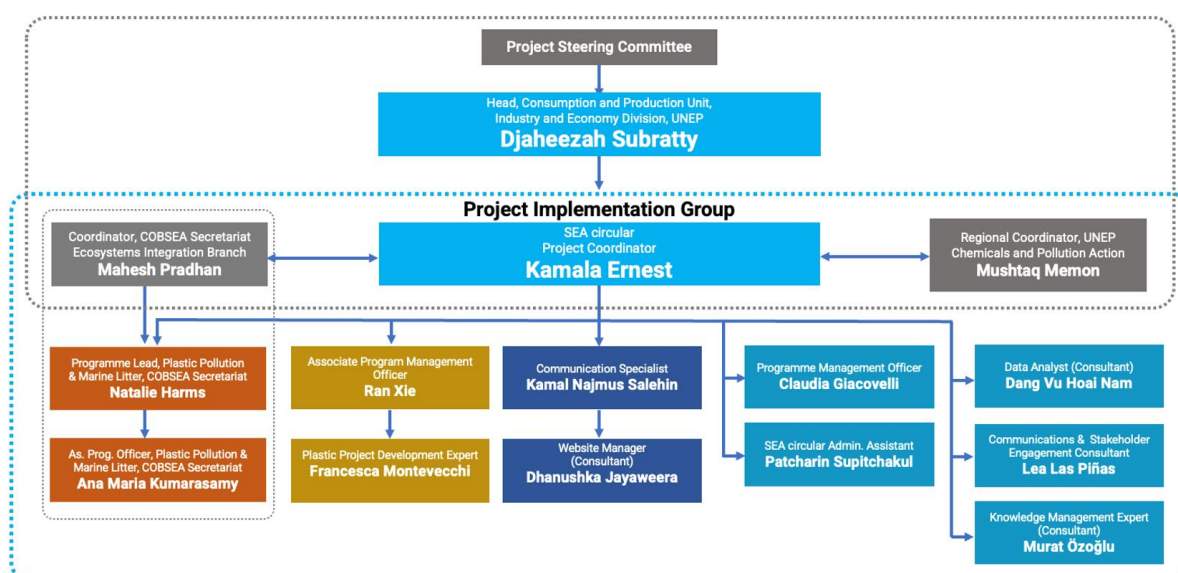
60. The project was jointly implemented by UNEP and COBSEA. The project was implemented through the project Implementation group, headed by the project manager and the COBSEA secretariat coordinator, supported by the UNEP regional coordinator of the Chemicals and pollution action subprogramme. The Implementation group further

consisted of output related staff as well as cross cutting related specialists in terms of a data analysis, knowledge management and communications. The project received strategic and management support through annual donor meetings, the project steering committee and through the UNEP Industry and Economy Division, with the head of the Consumption and Production Unit supervising the project manager. This differed from the situation in the first phase of the project, in which the supervision of the project manager was the responsibility of the Deputy Director of UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP). For details of the organigram in the extension phase, see Figure 1 below.

E. Changes in design during implementation

61. In addition to the changes made to the project results framework during the Inception period of the project, changes occurred in the extension phase informed by the recommendations of the Mid-term review and in response to organizational changes in UNEP around the delivery model of the organization.
62. Originally, the project was managed by the UNEP ROAP, on whose behalf the agreement between UNEP and the Government of Sweden was signed. Due to changes in the delivery model of UNEP, in January 2023, the management of the project was shifted to the Industry and Economy Division of the organization, based in Paris.²⁰ Within this division, the project became part of the UNEP Plastics Initiative, managed by the Consumption and Production Unit of the Industry and Economy Division. While project staff remained based in Bangkok, their reporting lines shifted to the Division in Paris. This went for the programme staff as well as the financial management staff. Though human resources remained largely the same, this required substantial adaptation in terms of shifts in responsibilities and reporting lines and caused delay as new ways of working between project staff and the Division needed to be established. For the latest organigram of the project, see Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Organigram of the Project in the Extension phase



²⁰ This shift was based on the new UNEP Delivery Model Policy from September 2022. UN Environment Programme, UNEP Delivery Model, Policy for One UNEP Delivery for Better Collaboration and Country Support, 26 September 2022.

63. Informed by the MTR conducted in 2021, and based on delays in project implementation that were partly due to the COVID pandemic, parties decided to extend the project period. Rather than a no-cost extension of one year, they opted for a two-year extension with Government of Sweden providing additional funding and adding results to the performance framework. This enabled the project to finish the work started and to address new issues that had emerged in the field of plastic pollution and marine litter, including support to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) on a binding agreement on Plastic Pollution that had started in the second half of 2022.

F. Project financing

64. A total budget of 6.37 million USD was planned originally for project implementation. Slight adaptations to the budget were made in the inception phase of the project with resources for staffing, travel, consultancies and contractual services slightly increased, while resources for grants and contributions and direct project management costs were slightly decreased. In 2022, due to the two-year extension of the project period, the budget was augmented with an additional USD 2,346,142, bringing the total project budget to USD 8,717,926 for the entire project period. For details on the project budget, see Annex VI.

65. In terms of allocation of budget across the four output areas of the project, output 1 on market-based solutions had the highest budget allocation followed by outputs 2 (scientific basis) and 4 (regional networking), with the budget for output 3 (outreach) slightly under the budget of output 4. For details, see Annex VI. For detailed financial information see Table 15 on page 61 and Tables 16 and 17 on page 62.



Photo: Experts from 14 ASEAN countries come together for the EPR capacity-building session on sustainable packaging, 2024

IV. THEORY OF CHANGE AT REVIEW

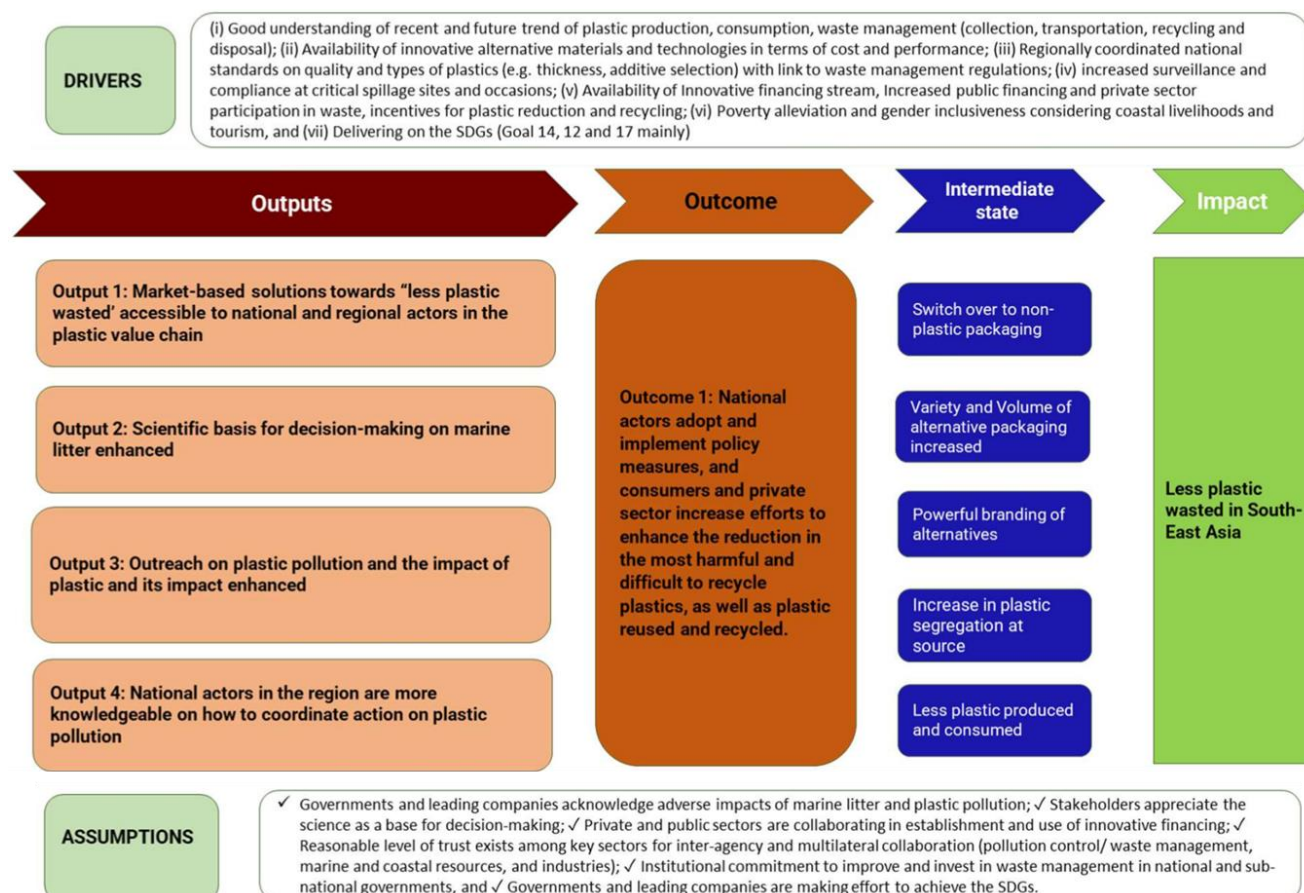
66. The project theory of change (ToC), in both phases of the project, focused on the ways in which the four outputs of the project, i.e. market based solutions, strengthened scientific basis for decision making, outreach and enhanced coordination contributed to the impact level change of 'less plastic wasted in South East Asia'. The TOC from 2018, included in the original project document, was adapted in the project extension proposal of 2022, making few changes. The most important one concerned the outcome level, with in 2022 the adoption and implementation of policy measures to enhance the reduction of most harmful and difficult to recycle plastics, plastic reuse and recycled added. Moreover, in addition to the role of consumers (with their awareness focused on in the 2018 version) in the later version there was explicit attention to the role of the private sector at the outcome level of the framework. These appear useful additions to the ToC which were also reflected in the adapted results framework, with explicit attention to the development and implementation of national marine litter policies and plans and the role of the private sector, in particular small and medium enterprises. While the original ToC divided the outcome in three subsections, the 2022 version clubbed all the issues together as a single outcome.
67. Other changes included that plastic pellet producers and packaging manufacturers and users were no longer singled out in the intermediate state of the change framework while the state of 'less plastic produced and consumed' was added. Finally, some of the output level statements were formulated from a results rather than an activity perspective with in particular output 4 adding more details in this respect. Drivers (called enablers in the ToC of 2018) and assumptions remained unchanged in the 2022 version of the framework.
68. A detailed ToC can be of help in order to identify the various steps of change expected and/or required to reach outcome level results. In the case of the project, however, the ToC versions do not identify the intricate links and relationships amongst the various change levels. Rather, they merely show that all aspects of one result level link with all the aspects of the next level. The clubbing of outcome level changes under a single outcome, as done in the extension phase, did not help in this respect. Though the 'Pathway for Change', as included in the original project document, did identify some useful intermediate steps, it did not show these based on the outputs of the project. Given the additions to the updated version of the ToC and the remaining large overlap between the two iterations, for the present assessment, use was made of the updated ToC of 2022. For details see Table 6 and Figure 2 below.

Table 6: Justification for Reformulation of Results Statements

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC Project Extension Phase	Justification for Reformulation
(LONG LASTING) IMPACT		
No changes made		
INTERMEDIATE STATES		
Plastic pellet producers and packaging manufacturers, and users (e.g. retailers) supporting plastic recycling	This intermediate state is left out of the TOC of the extension proposal	The project moved away from these kind of specific issues, towards the broader aspects of the plastic value chain
Incentives plastic recycling	Less plastic produced and consumed	Taking a broader approach beyond recycling to include production and consumption of plastics
PROJECT OUTCOMES		

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC Project Extension Phase	Justification for Reformulation
Reduction in most harmful and difficult to recycle plastic	One single outcome: National actors adopt and implement policy measures, and consumers and private sector increase efforts to enhance the reduction in the most harmful and difficult to recycle plastics as well as plastic reused and recycled	The reformulation allows for focus on the roles of various stakeholders, including policy makers and consumers. Mind that the indicators for the outcome level change were not adapted, but remained the same
Increase in plastic reused and recycled (especially bottle to bottle recycling)		
Region-wide awareness on plastic pollution and public support for policies to fight it		
OUTPUTS		
Market based solutions to reduce single use plastic and to increase plastic re-use and recycling	Market-based solutions towards ‘less plastic wasted’ accessible to national and regional actors in the plastic value chain	This reflected moving up the value chain towards addressing plastic product’s design (and EPR) and other issues up the value chain aiming to decrease plastic waste
Strengthening the scientific base for decision making	Scientific basis for decision-making on marine litter enhanced	This adaptation better aligned the focus of the project in terms of data gathering on marine litter
Outreach on marine litter and plastic pollution	Outreach on plastic pollution and the impact of plastic and its impact enhanced	Additional focus on the impact of plastic pollution
Regional networking	National actors in the region are more knowledgeable on how to coordinate action on plastic pollution	Specification of the output area around capacities for coordination

Figure 2: Theory of Change at Review



V. REVIEW FINDINGS

A. Strategic Relevance

Alignment to UNEP's Medium Term Strategy²¹ (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities

69. For assessment of the project's alignment with the POW and the UNEP Strategic Priorities, assessment has taken into consideration, the original project design, adaptations made to the design in the inception phase of the project and design aspects of the extension phase of the project. For this, use was made of the MTS of the periods 2018-2021 and 2022-2025 and the PoWs of 2018-2019, 2020-2021, 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 and interview data. Regarding the latter two PoWs, the one of 2022-2023 was extended for two years, to also cover the period 2023-2024. Below details are provided for all related project design aspects.
70. It is important to observe that the focus on marine litter and plastic pollution was not yet explicitly articulated in the PoW 2018-2019 which in terms of waste related issues, focused on improved urban solid waste management and increased national waste recycling rates. This changed in the PoW of 2020-2021, when 'Increased prevention and significant reduction of marine pollution, including marine debris and nutrient pollution' was added as a development outcome. This would suggest that the project was ahead of its time and that with the adaptation of the PoW, it became explicitly in line with the development outcomes of the subprogramme.
71. In terms of expected accomplishments for the period 2018-2021, which focused on 'Policies and legal and institutional and fiscal strategies and mechanisms for waste prevention and sound management' for both PoWs, the project was well aligned. In the initial phase, the project focused on 'Regionally coherent national marine litter plans, policies, regulations and/or standards to prevent and reduce plastic pollution' as well as the output of 'market-based solutions', which focused both on government policies in two countries as well as on private companies and pilot demonstrations, often of sub-national government agencies in charge of solid waste management. This was further enhanced in the inception phase of the project, with the addition of 'Number of governments at all levels that are implementing waste prevention and sound management policies and good practices' as an outcome level indicator. This addition was reinforced in the extension phase results framework of the project. Outputs for both POWs focused on aspects of advisory services, data and assessment and technical support with slight differentiation over time with which the project aligned well in both the initial and extension phases.
72. Major change can be observed in the PoWs for the period 2022-2023 which was extended to the period 2024-2025. This PoW responded to the MTS for the period 2022-2025,²² which included substantial changes compared to the previous MTS. This concerned the overall organization of the programme in line with the three environmental crises identified as facing the world, i.e. the reduction of biodiversity, the climate crisis

²¹ UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs), of the Sub-programmes. <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents>.

²² United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme Fifth session, For people and planet: the United Nations Environment Programme strategy for 2022–2025 to tackle climate change, loss of nature and pollution, Nairobi, 17 February 2021.

and environmental pollution. The subprogramme of Chemical, waste and air quality, of which the project was a component, was transformed into the chemicals and pollution action subprogramme, one of the three thematic sub-programmes, with this as well as the other thematic subprogrammes, supported by foundational and enabling subprogrammes. In terms of the theory of change, the setup of the subprogramme adapted its approach. While in the PoWs of 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 outputs were identified specific to each of the issues of Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality, for the period 2022-2025, the ToC took on a more integrated approach, recognizing the interrelationships between aspects of chemicals, waste and air quality related issues.

73. At the level of development outcomes, in the PoW combined period 2022-2025, the project proved well aligned in terms of science-based sound waste management, decline in volume of waste discharged and environmental quality improved through pollution prevention and action as included in the PoW. The value chain approach used by the project was important in this respect, with inclusion of the entire life cycle of plastics from production of plastics and addressing the volume of 'virgin plastic' to its eventual discarding and the focus on circularity in the plastics value chain in the project results framework in both phases of the project.
74. At the level of expected accomplishments, in the same period, the focus on environmental outcomes and improved waste management through circular processes and reduced releases of pollutants to the ocean are well reflected in the project's results framework. This is less the case in terms of human health related results which is less explicit in the project framework. It can be observed that while in the MTS 2018-2021 human health was dealt with at the level of 2030 impact, in the 2022-2025 MTS, human health has been included at the 2025 outcomes level.
75. While for the PoWs of the periods 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 the project outputs related to the waste-related results, in terms of PoW results of the period 2022-2023/2024-2025, the project can be considered well aligned and to have contributed towards the following output level changes:
1. Regional and national integrated policy has shifted towards the sound management of chemicals and waste
 2. Land-based sources of pollution in fresh water and oceans, including marine litter and nutrients, are reduced
 3. Global plastic pollution is reduced
 5. Inst. capacity to adopt and act on national and international commitments is enhanced
 6. Resource efficiency and circularity in key sectors are improved
 9. Use of harmful chemicals in products and processes is reduced in key sectors
 12. Markets, supply chains, trade and consumer behaviors have shifted towards reduced pollution, influenced by transparency enabled by digital technologies
 13. Sound science, data, and statistics, analysis, information and knowledge are generated and shared
76. The project in terms of its alignment with the MTS and PoWs proved well aligned, both in terms of its design, and in terms of adaptations made in the inception phase as well as the extension phase of the project. However, there was no explicit indication of the anticipated contribution of the SEA circular project to the Expected Accomplishment indicators of the PoW, which is a requirement in the UNEP Review Criteria Ratings Matrix. Therefore, the assessment of this part is 'Satisfactory'.

Rating for Alignment to UNEP MTS, PoW and Strategic Priorities: Satisfactory²³

²³ Ratings are provided in line with the specifics of requirements as included in the UNEP Review Criteria Ratings Matrix of Management Led Terminal Reviews.

Alignment to Donor/Partners Strategic Priorities

77. For assessment of alignment with donor priorities, the Sida regional strategy Asia Pacific for the period 2022-2026²⁴ and strategic documents from before this period were used triangulated with interview data. The present SIDA strategy was developed in the context of rapid economic development in the region and reduction of the proportion of people living in poverty with rising income disparities and other aspects of increased inequality and deteriorating aspects of environmental and climate related developments in the region.
78. The Sida strategy for the period 2022-2026 put an important focus on sustainable management and use of natural resources, including restoration of services provided by ecosystems and improved adaptability and strengthened resilience to climate change. It does this in particular through support to regional collaboration and regional initiatives for management of cross-border issues, taking into account the role played by intergovernmental organizations and contributing to gender equality and the realization of human rights. A particular focus is given to coastal and marine environment as well as waste management in line with relevant international conventions.
79. As such, the project fits very well in the strategic approach of Sida, with SEA circular providing support to regional cooperation to address the issues of plastic pollution and marine litter, in close cooperation with COBSEA as the inter-governmental mechanism in relation to marine resources in the region, while also cooperating with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The use of a gender equality and human rights-based approach of the project fits within the Sida strategy, which highlights these aspects as key part of the development process. The six main countries participating in the project are also among the Sida priority countries in the Southeast Asia region. Swedish Ambassadors in the region, moreover, were very supportive, participating in SEA circular events, with plastic pollution a priority area for the Government of Sweden.
80. In terms of Sida's earlier approaches that informed the development of the original project document, the project aligned well with the perspectives of the organization, including increased regional integration and collaboration for sustainable development and the use of a rights-based approach to environmental programming, applying principles like empowerment, non-discrimination, transparency, accountability and participation and making use of a gender equality approach. The project, moreover, aligned well with Sida's overall focus on ending poverty and making use of a people-oriented perspective, with a multi-dimensional perspective on poverty in terms of Sida's framework concerned, including access to resources, power and voice, opportunities and choice and human security.²⁵
81. Though both the original and the extension phase document referred to the contribution of the project to the Sida strategy, it did not provide any details on how this was to be achieved. With the Sida strategies not containing indicators as such, it remained unclear how the project contributed to the donor programmatic strategy. Such details are a requirement in the UNEP performance assessment tool. Therefore, the overall rating of this aspects is as follows:

Rating for Alignment to Donor Partners Strategic Priorities: Satisfactory

²⁴ Government Offices of Sweden, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Strategy for Sweden's regional development cooperation with Asia and the Pacific Region in 2022–2026.

²⁵ Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden, Strategy for Sweden's regional development cooperation Asia and the Pacific region 2016-2021, Stockholm; Sida, A Human Rights Based Approach to Environment and climate change, February 2015; Sida, Gender Analysis – Principles & Elements, March 2015; Sida, Dimensions of Poverty, Sida's Conceptual Framework, 2017.

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

82. In terms of global, regional and sub-regional priorities, alignment with the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI), UNEA Resolutions, selected SDGs and the INC process. Secondary sources were reviewed and results triangulated with interview data.

83. The project aimed to leverage and strengthen the COBSEA intergovernmental mechanism for regionally coherent action, networking and knowledge sharing throughout the project period. The project was in support of and well aligned with the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI). As stated in the UNEP-Sweden agreement regarding the project:²⁶

“The project....contributes directly to implementation of relevant provision of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP-MALI), focusing on land-based sources of marine litter.”

84. Also, when looking at the overall goal and specific objectives of the COBSEA RAP MALI, as presented in Box 1 below, the project fits well within the plan. This includes the project's focus on a circular plastic economy, enhancing marine litter monitoring and the science – policy making linkages regarding plastic pollution and marine litter, improved knowledge development and sharing and supporting of national efforts in addressing plastic pollution and marine litter.

Box 1: Details on the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI)

Overall goal:

To consolidate, coordinate, and facilitate cooperation, and implement the necessary environmental policies, strategies and measures for sustainable, integrated management of marine litter in the East Asian Seas region.

Specific Objectives:

- i. Prevent and reduce to the minimum marine litter pollution in the marine and coastal environment of the East Asian Seas Region;
- ii. Foster sustainable consumption and production in a multi-stakeholder whole lifecycle approach to prevent and reduce leakage at source;
- iii. Remove to the extent possible already existent marine litter by using environmentally acceptable methods;
- iv. Improve monitoring and assessment of marine litter and its impacts for a science-based approach;
- v. Enhance knowledge sharing and awareness about marine litter and its impacts amongst all stakeholders and all groups of society in the East Asian Seas Region;
- vi. Support national efforts towards adequate institutional, policy and implementation frameworks, cross sector coordination and regional and international cooperation.

Main Actions:

1. Preventing and reducing marine litter from land-based sources
2. Preventing and reducing marine litter from sea-based sources
3. Monitoring and assessment of marine litter
4. Activities supporting the implementation of COBSEA RAP MALI

COBSEA, COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter 2019. Secretariat of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) and United Nations Environment Programme, Bangkok, 2019.

²⁶ Agreement between Sweden and UNEP on support to the project on Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in Southeast Asia, 16 July 2018.

85. This does not mean that there is a one-on-one relationship between all the specific objectives of the COBSEA plan and the project objectives. This goes for example for the removal of existing marine litter, which was an issue explicitly excluded from the SEA circular project in the original prodoc. On the other hand, the focus of the project on the entire value chain of plastic production meant inclusion of aspects at the production level aspects of the value chain which went beyond the remit of COBSEA and the RAP MALI. This focus became especially pronounced in the extension phase of the project, which brought it more in line with the UNEP Plastics initiative.
86. Moreover, in terms of the COBSEA Strategic directions for the period 2023-2027, the project appears to fit well within these directions which include COBSEA addressing land and sea-based pollution, coastal and marine ecosystem conservation and management, and regional coordination. This with marine pollution reduction as one of the strategic objectives of COBSEA in this period, in addition to support sustainable ecosystems and mitigate and adapt to climate change.
87. The project responded to the UNEP Assembly resolutions 1/6 on Marine plastic debris and microplastics, 2/11 on Marine plastic litter and microplastics, as well as the UNEA 3 resolution on Marine litter and microplastics (UNEP/EA.3/L.20) which gave UNEP a strong mandate to support initiatives focused on addressing marine litter, in close partnership with Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans.
88. The project was designed to contribute to in particular three of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, including:
- SDG 14, Life below water**, target 14.1 “By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution”.
 - SDG 12, Responsible consumption and production**, target 12.4 “By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment” and target 12.5 “By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse”
 - SDG 17, Partnerships for the goals**, target 17.17 “Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships”
89. The initial phase of the project was also aligned with the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) of 1995 which aimed to prevent the degradation of marine environment from land-based activities and the East Asia Seas Action Plan, which included addressing marine pollution as a key element.²⁷
90. The project extension phase added to the relevance of the project as at that time in the second half of 2022 the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) process, to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, was started, with the project aiming, amongst others, to contribute to the capacities of the participating countries in terms of their involvement in the process. One of the outcome level indicators of the project extension phase results framework referenced to the INC process, while one of the output level indicators focused on the number of countries referencing best practices and recommendations from SEA circular for the INC process.

²⁷ UN Environment Programme, COBSEA, Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in Southeast Asia, July 2018.

This aspect of the project, however, required to respect the firewall, existing between UNEP and the INC process, as UNEP also acts as the Secretariat to the INC, facilitating the INC process and as such was to be an impartial stakeholder in the process.²⁸

91. While the project was fully aligned with global, regional, sub-regional and national priorities, there was no indication in relevant design documentation on anticipated identifiable contribution of the project to global, regional, sub-regional and/or national environmental results' indicator(s).

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

Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence

92. In terms of coherence of the project with other plastic pollution and marine litter interventions of other stakeholders, under output 1, the project coordinated with four other projects on support to companies in terms of plastic neutrality as an end goal for businesses as part of corporate plastic accounting. Many of the events organized by SEA circular were conducted in close cooperation with partners, selected based on the topics of the events concerned. The organization of the five iterations of the SEA of Solutions brought together a wide range of stakeholders on plastic pollution and marine litter enhancing coordination amongst them while facilitating opportunities for synergy and avoiding duplication.
93. In the project document, at various stages, details were provided on how project activities were linked to those of other stakeholders working on similar issues, contributing to shared results in terms of achievements concerned. This, for example, included the plastic footprint challenge, production of reports on plastic recycling, organization of roundtables, cooperating with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) project and GESAMP WG40 on marine litter monitoring, working with MOOC on inclusion of plastic pollution and marine litter in online training courses and synchronizing of advocacy campaigns with activities from the UN Environment led Global Clean Seas campaign and using when possible the regional nodes of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) and the community of practice of 10YFP.²⁹
94. In 2023, the project within the UNEP programmatic setup became linked to the UNEP Plastic Project which responded to the identification of plastics as one of the high impact sectors in terms of pollution. This concerned one of the larger projects within the wider Circularity in Sectors Programme Coordination Project (PCP) of the organization, with both concerning efforts within the organization to have projects feed into wider programmatic approaches which would be able to create synergy across initiatives and enhance aspects of efficiency.
95. Once the management aspects of the UNEP new Delivery Model Policy had become fully operational in the beginning of 2023, this also meant that the project from then onwards was managed by the Industry and Economy Division rather than the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. The formulation of the extension phase of the project had taken these programmatic and managerial changes into account with some of the changes made to the setup of the SEA circular result framework aimed at bringing the SEA circular project more in line with the wider theory of change that was at the time being

²⁸ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), SEA circular Project Extension Proposal 2023-2024, Final, Submission to Sida, dated 28 November 2022.

²⁹ UN Environment Programme, COBSEA, Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in Southeast Asia, July 2018.

developed for the UNEP Plastics Initiative. Thus, the SEA circular project, in the extension phase, became more aligned with other plastic pollution and marine litter related initiatives that had started in the meantime within UNEP.

96. The project also received support and cooperated with other plastic pollution related initiatives and received co-financing in some instances:³⁰

- Material Flow Analysis in Thailand was conducted jointly with PPP Plastics, which leveraged USD 16,000 in co-financing
- COBSEA leveraged additional funding to engage the National University of Singapore to conduct an extensive review of research on marine plastics in the COBSEA/ASEAN+3 countries
- UNEP Law Division provided support towards the development of a toolbox on human rights and plastic pollution and organized targeted training for duty bearers on a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) to plastic pollution prevention
- Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) provided in-kind support towards the development of marine litter monitoring training modules for national marine litter monitoring training programmes
- Numerous organizations and entities provided support towards the successful preparation and implementation of the five SEA of Solutions events over the lifetime of the project, including in developing the programme, organization of sessions, side events and exhibition booths
- Through the GPML, the project supported the COBSEA Secretariat with the development of a regional knowledge node on marine litter, accessible on the GPML website

97. Due to the some overlap in membership, the ASEAN endorsed Regional Action Plan for Combating Marine Debris in the member states, partly overlapped with the COBSEA RAP MALI. However, regular communication between the COBSEA Secretariat, COBSEA's Working Group on Marine Litter (WGML) members, project staff and the ASEAN Secretariat enabled cooperation rather than duplication of effort.

98. The development of the National Action Plan on Marine Litter in Cambodia, was supported in close cooperation with UNDP Cambodia, with training and capacity building for policy makers on EPR, HRBA and gender equality.

99. The design of the intervention shows complementarity of results to other UNEP interventions as well as those of other organizations and there has been active engagement with other planned interventions in the design stage. However, there was no explicit identification of the benefits of such collaboration with interventions of other stakeholders.

Rating for Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence: Satisfactory

Rating for Strategic Relevance: Satisfactory

B. Quality of Project Design

100. An assessment of the original design of the project was conducted as part of the Mid-term review³¹ of 2021 based on the Project Document of July 2018 and adaptations made in the inception phase of the project, which results were included in the MTR Report of the project. The present assessment of the project design made use of that

³⁰ SEA circular annual reporting.

³¹ UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Reducing Marine Litter by addressing the Management of the Plastic Value Chain in South-East Asia (SEA circular), Mid-Term Review Report, November 2021.

initial assessment while adding details on the design of the project extension phase, as included in the Project Extension Proposal of November 2022. Use was made of the format provided by the UNEP Evaluation Office for such an assessment, including the application of the UNEP rating system concerned. The review of the original project design scored 4.20 which reflected a rating of 'moderately satisfactory'. The present review of the design of the project, including the design quality of the project extension phase, scored a rating of 4.36, i.e. slightly higher and thereby the design was considered as 'satisfactory'. For details, see Table 7 below.

Table 7: Overall quality of project design score

	SECTION	RATING (1-6)	WEIGHTING	TOTAL (Rating x Weighting)
A	Operating Context	4	0.4	1.6
B	Project Preparation	5	1.2	6.0
C	Strategic Relevance	6	0.8	4.8
D	Intended Results and Causality	4	1.6	6.4
E	Logical Framework and Monitoring	5	0.8	4.0
F	Governance and Supervision Arrangements	6	0.4	2.4
G	Partnerships	4	0.8	3.2
H	Learning, Communication and Outreach	4	0.4	1.6
I	Financial Planning / Budgeting	5	0.4	2.0
J	Efficiency	5	0.8	4.0
K	Risk identification and Social Safeguards	5	0.8	4.0
L	Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects	3	1.2	3.6
M	Identified Project Design Weaknesses/Gaps		0.4	
			TOTAL SCORE:	4.36 (Sum Totals divided by 10)

1 (Highly Unsatisfactory)	< 1.83	4 (Moderately Satisfactory)	>=3.5 <=4.33
2 (Unsatisfactory)	>= 1.83 < 2.66	5 (Satisfactory)	>4.33 <= 5.16
3 (Moderately Unsatisfactory)	>=2.66 <3.5	6 (Highly Satisfactory)	> 5.16

Rating for Project Design: S=5 Satisfactory

C. Nature of the External Context

101. Conflict: No such issues were identified for the SEA circular as a regional project in the design document, but mention was made of a conflict sensitivity analysis to be performed in the inception phase of the project, in order to minimize conflict that could raise during the implementation or as a result of the project. No details were added in the extension phase document.

102. Natural disaster: COVID-19 pandemic as a ‘natural disaster’ affecting all participating countries and the world globally, provided a challenging context to reach results. Risks regarding the COVID-19 pandemic were reiterated in the risk analysis in the extension phase design document. The pandemic and the measures to prevent the spread of the disease affected project implementation with government and private sector partners in 2020-2022 less able to focus on project activities resulting in delays in project implementation. It also took project management time to shift from in-person approach to meetings and trainings to the use of online way of working as well as home based in combination with office-based work. For additional details, see Annex 1.
103. Changes in national governments: Related issues were identified in Malaysia and Thailand in terms of changes / constraint in terms of governance issues. Aspects of staff turnover were reiterated in the risk analysis in the extension phase design document. Moreover, internal government reorganization of responsibilities and staffing changes at times negatively affected project implementation.

Rating for Nature of the external context: Moderately Unfavourable

D. Effectiveness

Availability of Outputs

104. Output related issues were assessed for the initial and the extension period of the project for each of the four project output areas, including: Output 1: Market-based solutions towards ‘less plastic wasted’, Output 2: Scientific basis for decision-making on marine litter enhanced, Output 3: Outreach on marine litter and plastic pollution and Output 4: Regional networking for exchange, cooperation and integration. For each of these four outputs, results achieved are discussed in terms of reported results as well as details on indicator related data. Details on achievements on output level results were informed by annual reports, other secondary data and primary data gathering through interviews.³²

Output 1: Market-based solutions towards ‘less plastic wasted’

Results in the period 2018-2022:

- 1.1 Stakeholders in Southeast Asia measure and report their plastic footprint
- 1.2 Stakeholders in Southeast Asia demonstrate the ability to manage the plastic value chain better
- 1.3 Business incentives for plastic reduction and recycling identified and applied

105. In its initial phase, the project supported measurement and reporting on plastic footprints by companies, with roundtables, training events on baseline data and monitoring resulting in enhanced willingness of selected companies to measure their footprint and committing to waste less plastic with the introduction of the concept of plastic neutrality. This included case studies of private sector partners conducted to

³² Each of the sections on output level results is informed by primary data, annual reports, other secondary data gathered as part of the review process. UN environment programme, Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia, SEA circular, Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South East Asia, Inception Phase Report, Final report, resubmitted on 12 July 2019; UN environment programme, Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia, SEA circular, 2019 Annual Report, revised report, submitted 9 April 2020; UN environment programme, Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia, SEA circular, Annual 2020, February 2021; UN environment programme, Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia, SEA circular, Annual Progress Report 2022 (Plastik), 31 December 2022; UN environment programme, Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia, SEA circular, Annual Progress Report 2023; UN environment programme, Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia, SEA circular, Annual Progress Report 2024.

document results and learnings. Voluntary commitments to reduce their plastic footprint were received from several stakeholders. Some of the studies focused on the use of plastic credits as a way to reduce plastic pollution and marine litter, with studies concluding that this can be used as a temporary means to address reducing plastic waste but cannot be considered a sustainable approach.³³ Findings of the case studies showed that in order to reduce waste leakage and scale up plastic waste collection for recycling there was a need to focus on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) an environmental policy approach that emerged in the 1990s, which is a means to hold the producers of plastics responsible for the management of the waste that is produced at the end of the use cycle of plastic products. EPR is increasingly recognized globally as a useful tool for accelerating the transition to sustainable waste management and a circular economy. The approach recognizes that producers and importers should be held responsible for the reduction of the environmental impact of their products.

106. In terms of management of the plastics value chain, the project developed case studies on best practices and market transformative solutions regarding plastic value chain transformations and made them available on the SEA circular website. This included three pilot sites identified in close cooperation with local governments to demonstrate improved plastic value chain management in Malaysia and Thailand. These case studies aimed at enhancing the understanding on a variety of plastic pollution and marine litter related issues and how these were dealt with in specific contexts in order to inform policy making and planning in participating countries and beyond.
107. Several assessments were conducted, regarding Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), The project, in cooperation with World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Philippines, developed a white paper on the requirements for the implementation of the newly agreed EPR law and developed a series of four toolkits on EPR in the Philippines, with a focus on the policy makers, business sector, local government and civil society.³⁴
108. Good practice examples and solutions to reduce plastic waste were presented at the annual SEA of Solutions event that UNEP and COBSEA organized annually as part of project activities, with details presented under Output 4 below.³⁵

³³ United Nations Environment Programme, International Solid Waste Association, Assessing the Contribution of Plastic Credit Schemes to Reducing Plastics Pollution and Improving Recycling, 2022, Nairobi; United Nations Environment Programme, Risks and opportunities of plastic credit financing instruments being introduced into the informal waste management sector, 2022, Nairobi.

³⁴ United Nations Environment Programme, COBSEA, WWF, SEA circular, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Law of the Philippines: A Whiter Paper, November 2022; United Nations Environment Programme, COBSEA, WWF, SEA circular, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Law, Toolkits for the Philippines, Toolkit 1: The EPR system and Policy Landscape, November 2022; United Nations Environment Programme, COBSEA, WWF, SEA circular, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Law, Toolkits for the Philippines, Toolkit 2: The EPR system and Business Sector, November 2022; United Nations Environment Programme, COBSEA, WWF, SEA circular, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Law, Toolkits for the Philippines, Toolkit 3: The EPR system and Waste Management Sector, November 2022; United Nations Environment Programme, COBSEA, WWF, SEA circular, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Law, Toolkits for the Philippines, Toolkit 4: The EPR system Civil Society, and General Public, November 2022.

³⁵ The Annual Report of 2022 included an overview of fifteen good practices documented, including: A Micro-business-driven Solution for Zero-waste Communities, An Ecosystem Business Model for Small Communities and a Renewed Sense of Value towards Plastic, An incentive model for behaviour change in managing plastic waste, A Plastic Offset Programme is Encouraging Companies to Reduce their Plastic Footprint, City-university collaboration for plastic-free cities, Community-based Plastic Credit Solution – A Holistic Attempt to Make Coastlines Plastic-free, Drinking Water System with Zero Plastic Packaging, Enabling Hotels to Become more Sustainable through Voluntary Collective Action, Fostering collaboration for upcycling and circularity in the Philippines, Influencing Value Chains to Reduce Plastic Use, Innovative Local Strategies for Effective Plastic Waste Management Models, Sustainable and ethical collection infrastructure for plastic waste, Sustainable Funding Mechanisms that Empower Communities And Clean Oceans, Technology-enabled Reusable Packaging, Turning Plastic Trash into Treasure. Source: UN environment programme, COBSEA, SEA circular, Annual Progress Report 2022, December 2022.

109. In addition to case studies, a range of other knowledge products were developed, in particular in the first phase of project implementation, with peaks in number of studies in 2020 and 2022. In total, 82 knowledge products were developed with an additional 31 from partners posted on the SEA circular website. Though the amount of knowledge products was impressive, there did not appear to have been a clear and explicit strategy behind the development of the products. This resulted in them informed by immediate needs of the project and the participating countries. For an overview of the 113 knowledge products, produced by the project and its partners, see Table 8 below.

Table 8: Details on knowledge products developed with project support³⁶

Issue	Number of knowledge products
Types	
Case study	27 (of which 4 combined with tools / manuals)
Country fact sheet	9
Event report	3
Index	1
Research/Assessment	23 (of which 5 including case studies, 1 with tools/manual)
Tools and manuals	20
Others	30
Year of publication	
2018	2 or 2%
2019	8 or 7%
2020	47 or 41%
2021	15 or 13%
2022	37 or 32%
2023	3 or 3%
2024	1 or 1%
Geographical coverage	
Global	5
Regional	20
Six participating countries	5 (of which 2 include all 6 participating countries)
Cambodia	6
Indonesia	3
Malaysia	6
Thailand	9
Philippines	13
Vietnam	3

³⁶ Total number of knowledge products adds up to 113, with 82 developed by SEA circular while the remainder developed by partners on similar issues and posted on the SEA circular website. Classification is based on title of the knowledge products and details provided online.

Issue	Number of knowledge products
Knowledge partner China	1
KP Republic of Korea	1
KP Singapore	2
None indicated/other	40
Themes	
Plastic circularity	31
Human rights/gender equality	14
EPR	9
Plastic circularity and Marine litter monitoring	8
Plastic waste assessment	8
Marine litter monitoring	7
Plastic circularity with other aspects	3
Informal sector	1
Other	33

110. With a variety of knowledge products developed during the first four years of the project, a knowledge resource deck was developed. This compendium was updated during the extension phase of the project, at which time it included over eighty items produced through project support, organized by research and assessments, case studies, tools and manuals, country profiles and videos. This compendium has allowed easier access based on the five broad categories of types of knowledge products provided. In terms of language, all knowledge products were produced in English with only one resource indicated to be translated in Khmer, Malay, Tagalog, Thai, and Vietnamese which concerned the COBSEA and CSIRO Marine Litter Monitoring Methods Handbook Part II of March 2023. All knowledge products were made accessible through the SEA circular website as well as the web platform of the Regional Node which was launched in November 2022 and will be discussed below as part of Output 4. Moreover, knowledge products developed with support of the project and its partners were posted on the UNEP knowledge library, Wedocs.

Results in the period 2023-2024:

- 1.4 A regional Plastics Circularity guidance framework developed by bringing the learnings from the 6 countries in South-East Asia that integrate a human rights-based approach for market-based solutions, which will support stakeholders in the plastic value chain to improve the rate of collecting, sorting, and recycling as part of the EPR scheme**
- 1.5 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in four countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines and Viet Nam) are more knowledgeable on how to increase plastic waste collection and recycling through engagement with Producer Responsibility Organizations (PROs)**

111. In the extension phase of the project, output 1 became focused on EPR as a way to address aspects of the plastic value chain, including waste collection and recycling. This focus on EPR was, moreover, linked with the work of the UNEP Plastics Initiative of which the SEA circular project had become a part during the extension phase. This focus included extensive consultations with key partners in the region, including the Alliance of

Waste Pickers, UN Habitat and the Global Action Partnership for EPR, a cooperation amongst UNEP, OECD, GIZ, Prevent Waste Alliance, EMF and WWF.

112. The project focused on the use of a human rights-based approach to EPR concerning the need to include informal sector waste workers and their organizations in the development of EPR legislation, policies and schemes, from which countries would be able to benefit in their engagement in the INC negotiations. A targeted study on EPR and the informal sector in the region was based on consultations and research in the participating countries with drafts reviewed by a wide range of stakeholders. The study resulted in various recommendations for National and local government agencies, Producer Responsibility Organizations (PROs), Informal waste sector associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other major plastic business stakeholders.³⁷ While the study includes details on the informal waste sector, it does not provide many details on SMEs in the formal sector and how these could deal with EPR.

Performance based on Output level Indicators:

113. In terms of project performance concerning output 1 indicators from the project results framework, details are presented in Table 9 below for both the initial project period and the project extension period.

Table 9: Performance on Output 1 indicators

Indicator	Performance assessed
Project phase 2018-2022 (no baseline data and targets available)	
1.1 Number of companies operating in South-East Asia publishing sustainability reports with information on Plastic Footprint	While plastic footprint training was provided to 153 entities, including 142 companies, 3 local government bodies, 5 educational institution and 3 hospitals, only few companies ended up publishing sustainability reports with these reports providing not sufficient granular details on plastic footprint to be of use
1.2 Number of pilot demonstration on environmental sound waste management supported	Two pilot demonstrations were implemented in Malaysia in Petaling Jaya and Penang. The demonstration site in Koh Samet, Thailand, was severely delayed due to COVID-19 related issues. With enhanced focus on market-based solutions, the project moved away from adding demonstration sites
1.3 Changes in policies in Malaysia and Thailand concerning recycled plastics	In Malaysia, the government launched the National Policy and Action Plan on Marine Litter 2021-2030 while in Thailand the National Action Plan on Marine litter was developed with support from the project
Project extension phase 2023-2024	
1.4 A regional Plastic Circularity guidance framework developed for the Southeast Asia (ASEAN) region to inform the INC process including HRBA Baseline: 0 (2022); Target 1 (2024)	Rather than an overall plastic circularity framework, the project focused on EPR from a rights-based perspective (see details under 1.5 below)
1.5 A set of evidence-based recommendations developed for PROs to increase plastic waste collection and recycling through engagements with SMEs for Southeast Asia Baseline: 0 (2022); Target: 1 (2024)	Focus in the extension phase has been on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) with a regional report on EPR and the informal waste sector in ASEAN, making use of a rights-based approach which includes several recommendations for Producer Responsible Organizations (PROs) as well as for governments, waste pickers and informal waste sector associations, plastic producers and NGOs with a focus on the inclusion of informal waste sector workers in EPR processes In addition, with the support of the project, an EPR helpdesk was established under the Global Action Partnership (GAP) for EPR to provide technical assistance to governments and PROs world wide

Legend: **Green:** Indicator achieved; **Light green:** Achievements but level could not be verified; **Red:** Indicator not achieved

³⁷ United Nations Environment Programme, Facilitating a Human Rights-Based Approach to Reduce Plastic Pollution: Extended Producer Responsibility for Plastic Packaging and the Informal Waste Sector in ASEAN, Nairobi, 2024.

114. Of the total of five indicators regarding output 1 over both phases of project implementation, two can be considered to have been achieved (indicated in green in the table above). A third indicator (indicated with light green in the table above) showed results but with the lack of a target, it cannot be assessed whether the indicator reached the level of results expected. Two other indicators, indicated in red, were not achieved for different reasons indicated.
115. The shift towards a focus on EPR in the project extension phase was based on the needs of the participating countries, which were interested in EPR as an important way to address plastic pollution and marine litter that focused on the entire plastic value chain and included a mechanism to finance the plastic waste management that would be a reduced but nevertheless a remaining part of a more circular plastic economy. Several consultation meetings were conducted with participating countries as well as other stakeholders to inform the EPR report, including policy makers, informal waste pickers and PROs.
116. In terms of the relative importance of the various results identified by the indicators, it can be observed that the two indicators that were reached are the most important indicators in terms of contribution to reaching outcome level results with these respectively representing policy level changes and recommendations for EPR implementation. These output level results were, moreover, timely in terms of the ongoing INC negotiations. In terms of their ownership by the countries concerned, this has varied across the participating countries in the region as they have been in different stages of addressing plastic pollution and marine litter, including through the adoption of EPR legislation and policies.



Informal waste sector workers

(Photo credits: Francesca Montevercchi, Sea circular website)

117. What was not or not sufficiently assessed in the indicators shown above included the knowledge products that were developed as part of output 1, which were presented above on key topics in relation to plastic pollution and marine litter. These studies are owned and applied to varying degrees by the participating countries as countries are in different stages of the process of addressing marine litter and plastic pollution.

Output 2: Scientific basis for decision-making on marine litter enhanced

Results in the period 2018-2022:

2.1 Marine litter status and trends are monitored, assessed and reported at national and regional levels

2.2 Decision makers and the academic community in the region have access to marine litter research and data on marine litter

2.3 Obstacles and opportunities for policies and regulations to reduce plastic wastage and pollution based on best available evidence are identified

118. Output 2 was led by COBSEA, who at the time of the start of the project, had just agreed on the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP MALI) to guide its work and established the Working Group on Marine Litter (WGML) during its Inter-Governmental meeting 24 of 2019. During the 2022 meeting of the working group, a Monitoring Expert Group (MEG) was established as part of the WGML, in order to further support monitoring efforts within COBSEA. Regular changes of some of the point persons in the working group appeared a constraint for its operation and required ongoing attention to capacity development. The WGML has provided recommendations to the Intergovernmental meetings of COBSEA. The SEA circular project supported a P3 level post to support building a plastics portfolio within COBSEA.
119. Focus of Output 2 was on support to marine litter monitoring to inform country level policy making and planning. Several types of assessment were supported as part of the output area. This included development of a hotspot assessment methodology and its implementation in the participating countries, assessment of landfill composition and identification of plastic types unfit for recycling. The project worked with UN Habitat and GPML to develop a regional model and to map waste leakage and waste flow analysis to inform evidence-based policy making, priority investments and proposals to improve waste management infrastructure. In partnership with UN-Habitat, hotspot assessments of plastic waste leakage were conducted at city-level in SEA circular countries making use of UN-Habitat's Waste Wise Cities Tool. This resulted in assessments in the cities of Kep and Sihanoukville in Cambodia, Seremban in Malaysia, Chonburi in Thailand and Hoi An and Tam Ky in Vietnam.³⁸
120. COBSEA's RAP MALI recognized that the lack of science-based monitoring was a key constraint to addressing marine litter in the region as a transboundary problem. In 2022, regional guidance for harmonized monitoring, including common objectives, core indicators, and shared standards, were developed in partnership with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) with inputs from participating countries. This Regional Guidance was adopted by COBSEA and proved an important achievement in terms of the RAP MALI, as well as contributing to SEA circular results under Output 2. This was followed by the development of two Handbooks on Marine litter monitoring, in which Part 1 provided an overview of Marine litter, approaches to international marine litter monitoring programmes, best practices and emerging technologies. The second part of the handbook provided details on survey methods and their implementation, including inland, river and coastal surveys as well as sea trawl surveys.³⁹

³⁸ UN environment programme, COBSEA UN Habitat, SEA circular Identifying plastic waste leakage hotspots and flows in South-East Asia, June 2022; UN environment programme, COBSEA UN Habitat, SEA circular Waste Wise Cities Tool in Chonburi, Thailand, Waste Wise Cities, The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2021; UN environment programme, COBSEA UN Habitat, SEA circular Waste Wise Cities Tool in Hoi An, Vietnam, Waste Wise Cities, The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2021; UN environment programme, COBSEA UN Habitat, SEA circular Waste Wise Cities Tool in Kep, Cambodia, Waste Wise Cities, The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2021; UN environment programme, COBSEA UN Habitat, SEA circular Waste Wise Cities Tool in Seremban, Malaysia, Waste Wise Cities, The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2021; UN environment programme, COBSEA UN Habitat, SEA circular Waste Wise Cities Tool in Sihanoukville, Cambodia, Waste Wise Cities, The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2021; UN environment programme, COBSEA UN Habitat, SEA circular Waste Wise Cities Tool in Tam Ky, Vietnam, Waste Wise Cities, The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2021.

³⁹ The aim of harmonizing national marine litter monitoring programmes did not mean producing identical programmes across the region but focused on better data comparability through definition of specific common objectives, use of common core indicators and associated recommended methods and data standards identified and agreed at regional level and informed by International guidance. Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia & Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research

121. Country level marine litter monitoring programmes were established in all participating countries in close cooperation with national level partners to establish robust baselines which could form the foundation of the harmonized monitoring programme at country and regional levels. The handbooks were used in training events, workshops and webinars in order to build capacities after which the methodology was used in the conduct of surveys in each of the participating countries.
122. While individual country level monitoring reports were produced, participating countries were reluctant to publish these and instead supported the development and publication of a regional report on marine litter status and trends, based on national marine litter monitoring efforts and inputs. This guidance provided a regional baseline regarding marine litter as well as practical recommendations to address monitoring needs and capacities in the region in line with global guidelines on monitoring methodologies for robust data collection.⁴⁰ Technical consultations in the COBSEA WGML resulted in the development of a pathway towards the harmonization of national marine litter monitoring. Training modules were included in MOOC to enhance access to the materials to a wider group of interested stakeholders.
123. Assessments revealed varying levels of debris at coastal sites, in rivers and inland, with coastal areas scoring highest. Single use items were the most common whole items found within the region such as plastic bottles, labels and food wrappers. Most common fragmented items were polystyrene foam. For recommendations provided by the study, see Figure 3 below.

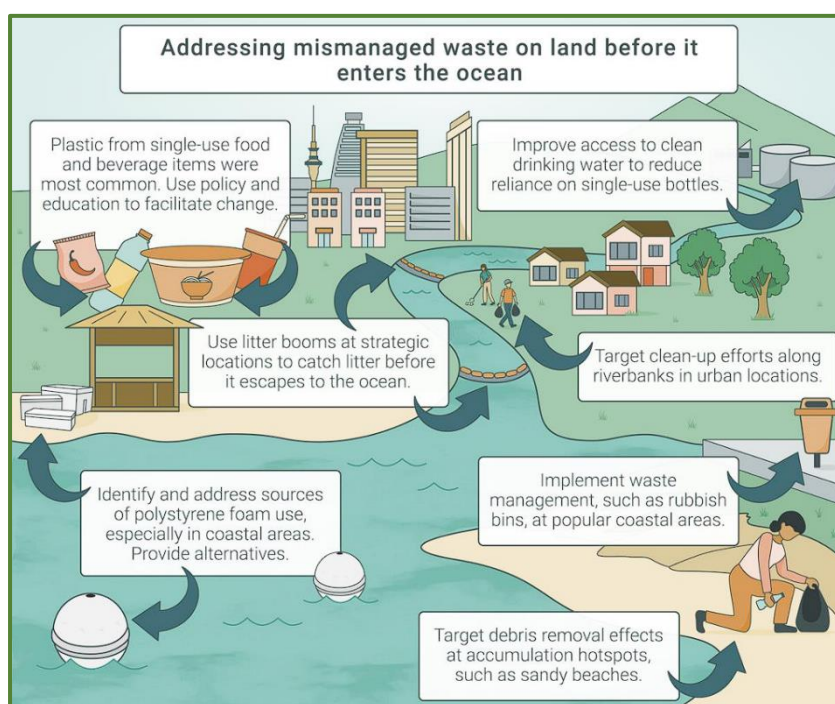


Figure 3: Recommendations of the regional marine litter assessment

With most of the marine litter originating from mismanaged waste on land, the focus of recommendations was on addressing issues at source.

Source: CSIRO and COBSEA, *Towards a Regional Assessment on Marine Litter in the East Asian Seas (Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam) 2024*, Bangkok: United Nations Environment Programme.

Organization, Regional Guidance on Harmonized National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes. Monitoring Efforts and Recommendations for National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes, 2022, Bangkok: United Nations Environment Programme; COBSEA & CSIRO, Marine Litter Monitoring Methods Handbook. Part 1, 2022, Bangkok: United Nations Environment Programme.; COBSEA & CSIRO, Marine Litter Monitoring Methods Handbook, Part II, 2022, Bangkok: United Nations Environment Programme; CSIRO and COBSEA, *Towards a Regional Assessment on Marine Litter in the East Asian Seas (Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam) 2024*, Bangkok: United Nations Environment Programme. UN Environment programme, COBSEA, CSIRO, Regional Training on Marine Litter Monitoring, Advancing Data Analysis in the East Asian Seas, Bangkok, Thailand, 15-17 September 2024.

⁴⁰ Towards a Regional Assessment of Marine Litter in the East Asian Seas, Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

124. A review of marine litter research, requested by COBSEA and funded from non-project resources, was carried out by the National University of Singapore covering the 13 member states of the ASEAN plus 3 countries. The study provided a comprehensive review of the current knowledge and scientific research on pollution from marine plastics in ASEAN+3, as well as the related approaches and work streams by international and regional inter-governmental bodies and initiatives with a relevant mandate or scope in this sphere. The study showed that, while there was a substantial amount of research conducted on the issue of marine litter in the region, that variation in methodologies limited comparison and that critical gaps remained in priority policy areas and in applying scientific findings to decision-making.⁴¹

Results in the period 2023-2024:

2.4 Implementation of the national marine litter plans and national marine litter policies of 5 countries (Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam) accelerated by training and capacity building for relevant stakeholders, informed by the guidance and knowledge products from SEA circular

125. In the extension phase of the project, while the indicator focused on the number of trainings, the results actually included acceleration of the implementation of national marine litter plans and policies due to those trainings. Nevertheless, reporting focused in particular on the latter, with a regional workshop conducted on “Advancing Data Analysis and Data Comparability in the East Asian Seas” making use of the national data of participants, strengthening the understanding on harmonized monitoring methods with a follow up workshop conducted in 2024, together with the MARE DESIGN project.⁴² A regional level assessment was conducted in 2024, resulting in the document “Towards a Regional Assessment on Marine Litter in the East Asian Seas (Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam)” endorsed by the COBSEA Inter Governmental Meeting (IGM) 26.

Performance based on Output level Indicators:

126. When assessing the indicators of output 2, it can be observed that important results were achieved. However, with the lack of targets for the output level indicators in the period 2018-2022, reaching of planned results cannot be ascertained for that period. The target of the single indicator in the extension phase could be achieved. For details see Table 10 below.

Table 10: Performance on Output 2 indicators

Indicator	Performance assessed
Project phase 2018-2022 (no baseline data and targets available)	
Number of COBSEA countries publishing marine litter monitoring results	Though none of the countries published national level monitoring data, they did produce internal country level reports and participating countries published a regional monitoring document based on the national level data. On a more basic level, China, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Singapore have established national marine litter monitoring programmes while such programmes are under development in Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

⁴¹ National University of Singapore, COBSEA, Status of research, legal and policy efforts on marine plastics in ASEAN + 3, A gap analysis at the interface of Science, law and policy.

⁴² MARE DESIGN project

Indicator	Performance assessed
Number of COBSEA countries that incorporate pollution loading as well as environmental, social and economic impact indicators in marine litter reporting	Four COBSEA countries have incorporated pollution loading and socio-economic and environmental impact indicators in marine litter reporting (China, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Singapore), while five others are incorporating these indicators into the development of national marine litter monitoring programmes (Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam), which is guided by the Regional Guidance on Harmonized National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes
Number of COBSEA countries that include a citizen-science approach in baseline data development and national monitoring programmes	Five COBSEA countries have applied a citizen-science approach under the International Coastal Clean-up, incl. China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. The Regional Guidance on Harmonized National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes also includes recommendations for strengthening and incorporating robust data from a citizen science approach.
Number of new research projects / partnerships on marine litter and plastic pollution, including environmental, social and economic impacts and governance aspects	Two research projects on plastic credit schemes and risks and opportunities of plastic credit financing instruments were conducted with support from SEA circular. The first project by the International Solid Waste Association was a situational analysis of the nascent plastic credits scheme. The second research project was conducted by implementing partner Yunus Environment Hub. This research was focused on the impact plastic credits have on informal waste collectors. Both reports presented recommendations for practitioners. EPR research study conducted (see details under Output 1)
Project extension phase 2023-2024	
Number of training and capacity building activities for the implementation of national marine litter plans and national marine litter policies in 5 countries (Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam). Baseline: 1 (2021); Target: 5 (2024)	1 national training and pre-training on marine litter monitoring methodology and methods, enhancing the capacities of over 30 participants and 12 organizations in Malaysia on marine litter monitoring using a source-to-sea approach. 1 national marine litter monitoring survey campaign in Kuala Terengganu, including collecting data from 303 transects (inland, river and coastal) and 27 trawl samples. 1 regional training on advancing marine litter data analysis to strengthen the capacity of 31 government officials and practitioners, with all participants stating in the post-event survey that their ability to analyze marine litter data was “much better” or “somewhat better” thanks to the training. 1 online module developed on marine litter data analysis to support COBSEA participating countries and practitioners in analyzing marine litter data. 1 first-of-its-kind regional assessment on marine litter monitoring using on-the-ground and harmonized data from Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam, endorsed by the COBSEA participating countries in October 2024 at the COBSEA Twenty-sixth Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM-26), Siem Reap, Cambodia.

Legend: **Green**: Indicator achieved; **Light green**: Achievements but level could not be verified; **Red**: Indicator not achieved

Output 3: Outreach on marine litter and plastic pollution

Results in the period 2018-2022:

3.1 Project products and results reach target groups and inform efforts to tackle marine litter

3.2 Consumer awareness of solutions to marine litter and plastic pollution is increased to inform decision making and behavior change

127. A communication strategy was developed, which included a variety of target groups, including governments, regional and global platforms, institutions and intergovernmental organizations, UN partners, donor organizations and development partners, regional knowledge partners, scientific community and research institutes as well as businesses and industry. Multiple means of engagement were identified and used including outreach events, websites, newsletters, media releases, social media posts (via UNEP Regional Office Asia and the Pacific and UNEP Communications Division who had a wider following and reach), publication of knowledge products and development and online sharing of audio-visual materials.⁴³
128. The SEA circular website was setup and revamped in 2020, with a new knowledge management structure including a dedicated section on HRBA. In the same year, a separate part of the website for the SEA of Solutions (SoS) events was established. Use of the SEA circular project and SoS websites increased over time. The project worked with the UNEP Communication Division in its headquarters on project branding and format design for knowledge products of the project. Country profiles of all nine COBSEA countries were developed and updated in 2020 including visualization of the themes of plastic waste management, plastic pollution and marine litter. Three videos were produced and launched at the SEA of Solutions event of 2020. Training materials were included in the Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) and offered to a wide range of stakeholders, with translation of the contents in several of the languages in the region to enhance accessibility. Training materials on HRBA were prepared and integrated in the MOOC course. The marine litter and plastic resource data base was hosted at the SEA circular website.
129. With the support of the partner Meshminds, the short film 'Plastik' was produced which focused on individual as well as collective action to combat plastic pollution in the region. The film was awarded for the best international short film at FECICAM 2022. The project organized various side events at UN conferences and fora to enhance participants attention to issues of plastic pollution and marine litter, making use of a rights-based approach.
130. To inform the outreach part of the project in terms of attitudes and behavior of both entrepreneurs and consumers, an initial business and consumer incentives survey was conducted in 2019/2020, in cooperation with Food Industry Asia, with assessment of perceptions, attitudes and behaviors towards plastic pollution and aspects of plastic circularity. The survey showed that awareness and concerns among both consumers and businesses was perceived as having increased over time, but that this had not necessarily led to a change in practices and behavior. Both groups expected governments to act, including in relation to sorting of waste at source, waste collection and facilitating recycling through better labeling. The survey was again conducted in 2022 towards the end of the original project period. However, results in the second iteration were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in the extensive use of plastic materials for personal and professional protection against infection by the virus and as packaging material for online food and other purchases. This meant that results were not comparable across the two surveys and the 2022 study results were not publicized.⁴⁴
131. The campaign *100 Days to #BeatPlasticPollution* targeted youth and aimed to raise their awareness and support behavioral change on plastic pollution and support consumers

⁴³ SEA circular, SEA circular 2020 Communications Strategy. Annex to the SEA circular 2020 Workplan.

⁴⁴ Perceptions on plastic waste: Insights, interventions and incentives to action from businesses and consumers in South-East Asia, was published while the second survey remained internal.

to make informed decisions and make their own individual pledges aimed at the reduction of plastic pollution and marine litter. The project supported this UNEP campaign at the regional level.

Output 3 results in the period 2023-2024:

3.3 Best practices of plastics circularity inform national accelerated solutions and the International Negotiations Committee (INC) for an International Agreement to End Plastic Pollution through Southeast Asia regional dialogues and knowledge exchange platforms

3.4 Consumer awareness of solutions to marine litter and plastic pollution is increased to inform decision-making and behavior change

132. The acceleration of solutions developed in the initial phase of the project as well as other knowledge products were used to inform stakeholders through regional dialogues and knowledge exchange platforms in order to end plastic pollution and facilitate active country participation in the ongoing INC process.
133. In order to enhance access to knowledge products on the SEA circular website, the resource section was overhauled and developed as a publication repository with the above-mentioned resource deck provided as a means to facilitate access to the various types of publications. Moreover, support was provided to the development of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML as a knowledge platform linked to the Global Digital Platform of GPML, which is detailed under output 4 below. Several events were organized to enhance the use of solutions included in the knowledge base and bringing experts, industry leaders, academics, advocates and youth to explore opportunities to address plastic pollution and marine litter.
134. With a focus on aspects of gender equality, the training workshop “Improving awareness about the role of women in the informal sector in the prevention of marine pollution from plastics” was organized in Vietnam, together with Viet Nam National University. The workshop aimed to enhance knowledge of policy makers, researchers, PROs, and private sector stakeholders about the vital role that women play in addressing marine pollution, especially through plastic waste management. This was done in support of the implementation of Viet Nam’s National Action Plan on Management of Plastic Waste in the Ocean.
135. Other events included the conference on “Corporate Sustainability and Environmental Rights in Asia” jointly hosted by UNEP and UNDP. The conference featured a panel discussion on “Plastic Pollution in Asia: Business Models Integrating a Rights-Based Approach.” Other examples included the “Asia Pacific Youth Environment Forum 2023” and the “Plastics Circularity Investment Webinar” which showcased the proactive measures taken by participating countries, including national action plans and circular economy roadmaps, initiatives such as EPR schemes, plastic bag taxes, and product restrictions, aiming to address plastic pollution and marine litter.
136. In 2024, the project conducted several events in cooperation with partners to engage with various stakeholders along the plastic value chain in Southeast Asia, including three regional events: the reuse portal webinar, co-organized with WEF and WWF, the regional multi-stakeholder knowledge sharing meeting on plastic pollution, and the session ‘Bridging Rights and Responsibilities: Tackling plastic pollution together with the informal sector’.
137. Throughout the project period, press releases, web stories and news items were shared through SEA circular, COBSEA and wider UNEP Regional Office channels on project knowledge products, activities and events, including outcomes of a virtual roundtable

with the hotel and hospitality sector, the side event at the UN Forum on Responsible Business and Human Rights, the Perceptions on Plastic Waste study and launch webinar, the marine litter research database (featured by GPML and COBSEA), and other events/webinars and resources related to plastic pollution and human rights by UNEP and partners.

138. The video “Plastics: Not So Fantastic!” was produced and disseminated through multiple channels in order to raise awareness on the need to reduce single use and unnecessary plastics, which video reached over 37 million viewers. A sentiment analysis conducted by UNEP Headquarters Communications unit under students showed that the video successfully captured their attention with the primary takeaway the identification of alternatives to plastics and the need to address product design to enhance circularity. Students were likely to share the video with their peers and the survey showed that the video positively influenced student attitudes towards reducing plastic waste and adopting sustainable practices.
139. While an online consumer survey was planned initially to be conducted in 2024, this was not realized, leaving a gap in terms of understanding shifts in consumer attitudes and behavior in relation to plastic use, plastic pollution and marine litter over the timeframe of the project.

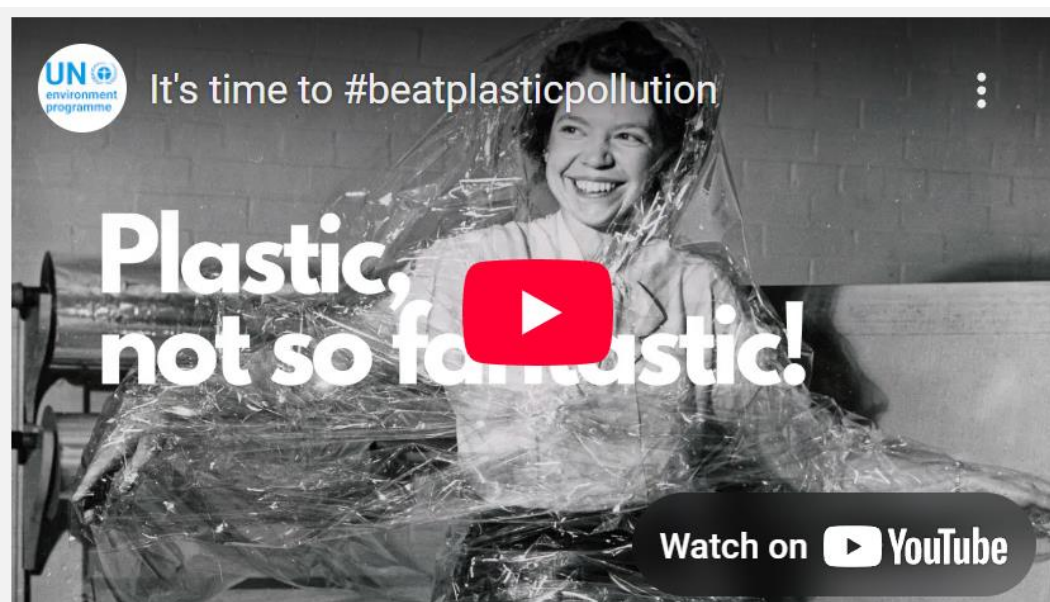


Figure 2: Access to the short Video ‘Plastic, not so fantastic!’ on the SEA circular website (<https://sos2024.sea-circular.org/>)

Performance based on Output level Indicators:

140. In terms of achievement of output level indicators of Output 3, it can be observed that substantial results were achieved, though it could for most of the indicators not be established whether this was in line with the targets, as these were missing for most of the output level indicators. One of the indicators for the period 2023-2024 on numbers of consumers reached did have a target which could be reached. However, this did not include any details on the changes made by consumers reached in terms of their attitudes and behaviors, as no consumer survey was conducted as part of the extension phase of the project.
141. The project managed to conduct considerable outreach, including several short videos using online accessibility and participated in several advocacy campaigns. The reach of consumers was substantial with the sentiment survey conducted in relation to one of the

initiatives, showing sharing of the videos. However, contribution to changes in attitudes and behavior has remained less clear.⁴⁵ For details, see Table 11 below.

Table 11: Performance on Output 3 indicators

Indicator	Performance assessed
Project phase 2018-2022 (no baseline data and targets available)	
3.1 Number of individuals completing Massive Open Online Course and distribution among stakeholder groups (government, private sector, academia, civil society and community-based organizations)	A total of 9,636 participants registered for the MOOC on marine litter, with 5,455 registering for one of the five languages used in the Asia region rather than English, including representative from across stakeholder groups There are no data on the number of participants who completed the training course
3.2 Change in consumer awareness in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam (added in inception phase)	The business and consumer incentives survey from 2020 and 2022 did not reveal positive changes, which was considered due to the COVID pandemic and the enhanced use of single use plastics for personal and professional protection The 100 Days to #BeatPlasticPollution campaign reached over 21 million consumers with awareness raising messages through social media but no changes in levels of awareness were assessed
3.3 Increased media coverage of social and economic impacts of plastic pollution and marine litter	Initial results from query on media reporting on marine litter, plastic pollution and their impacts over the past 5 years, in English as well as Indonesian, Khmer, Malay, Tagalog, Thai and Vietnamese media, show that, in 2016, there were a total of 94 articles, rising to 343 in 2017, 1560 in 2018 and 1944 in 2019. In 2020 the total number of articles was 1221. In 2022 a total of 3,165 articles about the socio-economic impacts of plastic pollution and marine litter have been published in mass media, with data originating from 'Meltwater', a service for media monitoring. While some of the rise can link to the project attention to the subject, the rise originated before the start of the project. Another issue concerns the increase in attention to single use plastics for protective gear due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
Project extension phase 2023-2024	
3.1 Number of stakeholders accessing SEA circular resources and information, including through mechanisms of the GPML and UNCT in Southeast Asia region Baseline: 0 (2021); Target: 100,000 visits and 10,000 downloads (2024)	▪ 120,000+ visits to access SEA circular's knowledge products in UNEP Document Repository (wedocs). ▪ 37 million+ consumers reached through the international PSA video "Plastics: Not So Fantastic!," which raises awareness about the negative impacts of plastic waste and urges viewers to reduce unnecessary plastic usage. ▪ 64,000+ stakeholders accessed SEA circular's website in 2024, of which 59 percent were new users and 77 percent were female ▪ 50 percent increase in website traffic compared to 2023; 88 percent surge in page views. ▪ 82 knowledge products developed and disseminated through SEA circular website and UNEP document repository
3.2 Number of consumers reached through awareness raising campaigns Baseline: 20 million (2021); Target: 30 million (2024)	More than 37 million consumers reached through the international video "Plastics: Not So Fantastic!," which raised awareness about the negative impacts of plastic waste and urged viewers to reduce unnecessary plastic usage In 2023 there proved to be a spike in the use of the keywords 'plastic pollution' and 'marine litter' by social network users (of over 600 percent) and enhanced number of engagement with related content (of over 2,000 percent increase, mainly on platform X, formerly known as Twitter) after INC-2 and INC-3 (Source: Meltwater in SEA circular Annual Report 2023)

Legend: **Green:** Indicator achieved; **Light green:** Achievements but level could not be verified; **Red:** Indicator not achieved

⁴⁵ This means that 'ownership' of the issues by the consumers reached could not yet be ascertained, which is one of the assessment criteria used in the UNEP rating system.

Output 4: Regional networking for exchange, cooperation and integration

Results in the period 2018-2022:

4.1 Regionally coherent national marine litter plans, policies, regulations and/or standards to prevent and reduce plastic pollution

142. SEA circular provided support to the development of National Action Plans in the participating countries, including through hiring of national consultants to support the process. A format was drafted to inform the process at country level and policy papers drafted to guide policy and legal frameworks. The Law Division of UNEP provided support to several of the countries in terms of legislative governance implementation of marine litter policies, regulations and plans. Progress reporting format was adopted by COBSEA IGM-25 part 2 in 2022 with testing in 2023 and the first full round of progress reporting in 2024.
143. The project enhanced coordination with the ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN working group on coastal and marine environment in order to identify synergies with the RAP MALI. Knowledge sharing was facilitated through meetings with the ASEAN Secretariat and its working group with regular means of communication established in order to enhance coordination with a focus on three priority areas:
- Harmonization of monitoring and baseline assessment tools and efforts including guidance from COBSEA, ASEAN and the World Bank
 - Marine litter knowledge management, including the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML and the ASEAN Regional Knowledge Management Centre for Marine Plastic Debris
 - Private sector engagement and economic standards for plastic management

4.2 Information sharing and stakeholder engagement to support targeted action on reduction in plastic pollution and wastage

144. The Sea of Solutions (SoS) offered a discussion forum that served as a platform, which fostered sharing of information, best practices, meaningful dialogue, collaboration and partnership opportunities in promoting circularity among stakeholders in Southeast Asia. It brought the different types of stakeholders together, including those from government, private sector, academia, civil society, as well as representatives from informal waste picker associations. It was organized on an annual basis from 2019 to 2024 except for 2023.⁴⁶
145. SoS events included a set of keynotes, special remarks, and panel discussions featuring regional stakeholders and experts in plastic circularity, bringing together policymakers, businesses, civil society organizations, youth, and other development actors. It provided an opportunity to discuss specific regional and country related issues as well as providing perspectives from outside of the region and showcase good practices. SEA of solutions became a flagship event and served as a way to exchange best practices, enabled meaningful dialogue, and supported stakeholders to enhance circularity in the plastic value chain in Southeast Asia. Results of the discussion of each of the iterations of the event were documented in separate reports.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ In 2023 there were other regional fora and initiatives organized while in that year the project management had passed from the UNEP Regional Office to the Industry and Economy Division of the organization, resulting in delays in project implementation.

⁴⁷ UN environment programme, COBSEA, SEA circular SEA of Solutions 2019, Solutions with Science, Solutions through innovation and technology, and Local solutions to plastic pollution, Daily reports online; UN environment

146. The SOS event became Asia-Pacific's biggest networking event for the plastic value chain. The 2022 iteration was organized in partnership with EB Impact in collaboration with the World Economic Forum's GPAP. SOS 2022 spotlighted 12 impactful and unique solutions and concluded with five recommendations and action points for the multi-stakeholder forum at the first INC meeting in Uruguay, incorporating human-rights and gender issues. For details, see Table 12 below.

Table 12: Details on the SEA of Solutions events 2019-2024

Year	Theme	Location	Description
2019	Partnership week for marine plastic pollution prevention	In person, Bangkok, Thailand	SoS 2019 recognized that plastic waste has choked rivers and seas, threatening ecosystems and livelihoods in South-East Asia and that striving for cleaner seas, less plastic wasted and a more circular economy requires fundamental changes throughout the plastic value chain
2020	Wasting less plastic and keeping it out of the ocean – Has the needle moved?	Virtual event	SoS 2020 united seekers and providers of market-transforming policy, business and technology solutions, enabling networking among plastic value-chain stakeholders to facilitate information exchange, collaboration, and partnerships that resulted in reduced single-use plastic production, use of alternative packaging, and increased collection for recycling, including in response to the COVID pandemic
2021	Accelerating solutions to reduce plastic waste	Virtual event	SoS 2021 revisited and showcased actions and innovations to support countries, industries, and communities to get back on track and build back better – with renewed commitments, solutions, and clear directions on the way forward, including in response to the COVID pandemic
2022	A spotlight on solutions to end plastic pollution in South-East Asia	Virtual event	SoS 2022 spotlighted solutions, exhibited effective approaches to tackle the plastic pollution crisis while the inclusive and sustainable nature of the solutions was brought to the fore through how these addressed gender, human rights, and responsible business conduct
2024	Delivering actions to end plastic pollution in Asia Pacific	Hybrid event, Thailand and virtual	SoS 2024 aimed to facilitate collaboration among solution seekers and providers to catalyze actions and innovations towards circularity in the plastic value chain in an effort to end plastic pollution in the Asia Pacific region.

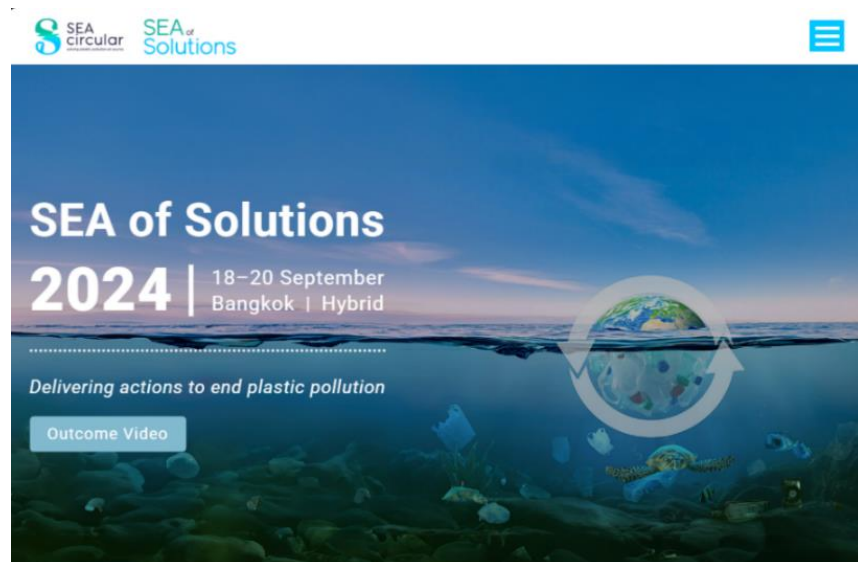


Figure 4: SEA of Solutions materials made available on the SEA circular website (<https://sos2024.sea-circular.org/>)

programme, COBSEA, SEA circular SEA of Solutions 2020, "Partnership week for marine plastic pollution prevention", 24-26 November 2020, Report; UN environment programme, COBSEA, SEA circular SEA of Solutions 2021, "Accelerating solutions to reduce plastic waste", 16-18 November 2021; UN environment programme, COBSEA, SEA circular SEA of Solutions 2022, "A Spotlight on Solutions to end plastic pollution in South-East Asia", 23-24 November 2022, Virtual Event, Outcomes Report; UN environment programme, COBSEA, SEA circular SEA of Solutions 2024, "Delivering Actions to End Plastic Pollution", 18-20 September 2024, Outcome Report.



Figure 5: Plastic circularity framework introduced at SoS 2022

147. Over the life of the project, SEA circular convened regular coordination meetings across 20 projects on plastic pollution and marine litter in the South-East Asia Region. The project organized a variety of knowledge sharing events with partners and project staff participated in relevant events throughout the project period, contributing from the SEA circular project experiences including at the ESCAP Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, the Ad hoc Expert Group on marine litter and microplastics (AHEG) and at regional forums including the UN Forum on Responsible Business and Human Rights as well as UNEP's 7th International Marine Debris Conference.

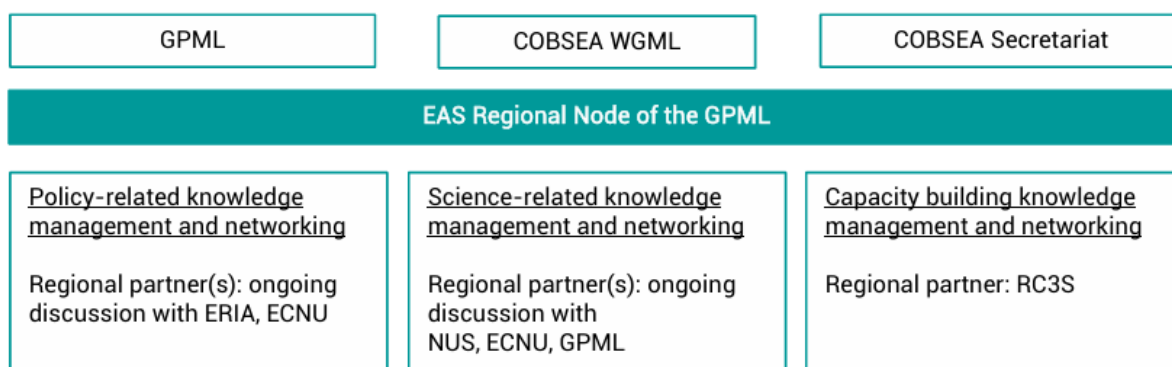
4.3 An East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML improves knowledge management on marine litter

148. SEA circular supported the establishment of a regional node of the GPML, which had three pillars, all included in the Terms of reference which was agreed in the COBSEA IGM 25 of September 2021:

- Online knowledge portal to map the policy space and existing initiatives and provide access to relevant data
- Science hub to develop a research network and inventory of marine litter initiatives and pilot a hotspot assessment methodology
- Capacity hub for broader knowledge management and networking

149. A possible hosting arrangement was discussed with the Regional Capacity Center on Clean Seas (RC3S) in Bali, Indonesia while National University of Singapore was partnered with to inform the research part of the node, including to update and extend the marine litter research data base, develop a research network, identify capacity building resources and design a catalogue of experts. Other partners included GPML for the linkage with the Global Digital Platform and ERIA, ECNU to support the policy related knowledge network. The RAP MALI biennial workplan 2023-2024 included the draft web platform of the East Asian Seas Regional Node of the GPML and plans to launch the regional research network. For details, see Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: SEA circular project Knowledge Management Framework



Source: UN environment programme, COBSEA, SEA circular, 2020 Work Plan, Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South-East Asia.

Results in the period 2023-2024:

4.4 Guidelines developed for managing the plastic value chain, building on SEA circular's solutions and recommendations for evidence-based national marine litter plans, policies, regulations, and harmonization of standards in Southeast Asia (also formulated as: harmonization of standards and practices through ASEAN and COBSEA)

150. A comprehensive study was conducted to shed light on the present landscape of plastic reuse schemes and glean insights into reuse systems globally. The study provided an overview of key stakeholders involved in reuse across geographical areas, highlighting challenges and opportunities in scaling up reuse solutions, as well as delineating key trends in reuse development. The study provided UNEP with critical insights into its reuse portfolio under the broader UNEP Plastics Initiative. Specifically, it aimed to illuminate how UNEP could effectively address barriers hindering the scaling of reuse solutions and carve out a distinctive role of UNEP compared to other stakeholders.⁴⁸
151. National action plans were either developed or in the process of development in the participating countries. However, the existence of these plans did not necessarily mean that these were developed with contributions from the project. This actually varied across the participating countries. The plan from Malaysia did refer to support obtained from UNEP, COBSEA and SEA circular project. The plan of Indonesia, on the other hand, makes reference to support from IMO, FAO and NORAD while the National Action Plan of Vietnam mentions support from the Royal Norwegian Embassy and UNDP.⁴⁹ For details of the plans in the participating countries see Table 13 below.
152. In Cambodia, SEA circular initiated a project in collaboration with UNDP, providing support to Cambodia to develop a National Action Plan on Marine Litter. The project included training and capacity building activities for policy makers on EPR, including the use of a rights-based approach. Technical consultations were held in Cambodia with development partners, national stakeholders, and the Ministry of Environment to

⁴⁸ UN environment programme, Assessing the contribution of plastic credit schemes to reducing plastic pollution and improving recycling, Nairobi, 2022.

⁴⁹ The SEA circular project did provide a useful overview of the various plans and policy related documents in the participating countries, without however, providing an analysis in relation to the support provided by the project. SEA circular Results Framework 2023-2024 Updated 241130, Internal Spreadsheet. Ministry of Environment and Water of Malaysia, National Marine Litter Policy and Action Plan 2021-2030, Putrajaya, Malaysia; National Action Plan on Marine Plastic Litter from Sea-based Sources, Indonesia, 2023-2024; National Action Plan for Management of Marine Plastic Litter by 2030, Hanoi, January 2020;

coordinate the various efforts that were underway. Technical working groups were established to draft elements of the National Action Plan for completion in October 2022. The Situation Analysis for Cambodia was updated and was translated into Khmer upon request of the Ministry for completion by November 2022. A NSI report was developed for Cambodia, identifying data sources and gaps to inform evidence-based development and implementation of the National Action Plan.

Table 13: Overview of national action plans developed in the participating countries

Country	Plan
Cambodia	The National Waste Strategy and Action Plan for Cambodia 2018-2030
Indonesia	National Plastic Waste Reduction Strategic Actions for Indonesia (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, June 2020)
Malaysia	Malaysia's National Policy and Action Plan on Marine Litter 2021-2030 (Maritime Institute of Malaysia, 2021) launched at SOS 2021
Philippines	The National Plan of Action for the Prevention, Reduction and Management of marine Litter (National SWM Commission, 2021)
Thailand	Thailand's National Action Plan on Marine Litter developed but not yet launched at the termination of the project
Vietnam	National Action Plan for Management of Marine Plastic Litter (MoNRE, 2020)

4.5 The implementation of UN Country Framework of at least 3 SEA countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Viet Nam) incorporates joint UN initiatives to support respective countries to accelerate solutions to end plastic waste

153. A briefing session organized in February 2024, provided UN Resident Coordinators (RCs) in Asia-Pacific with insights and tools to spearhead effective UN actions against plastic pollution in the region. The meeting raised the awareness of RCs about the global initiatives against plastic pollution and the ongoing INC process. It provided a platform for sharing and discussing global and regional outlooks, exchanging experiences at the country level and identifying good practices in addressing plastic pollution that could guide the planning for future UN actions in countries in the region.
154. Regional networking events and activities were conducted, integrating the HRBA and gender equality objectives into national marine litter plans, policies, and regulations. Stakeholders were sensitized on human rights and gender issues along the plastic value chain, and inclusive actions were advocated for. Information about human rights issues in the plastic value chain was shared among different stakeholders, and actions were catalysed to prevent and reduce plastic pollution.
155. At country level, the project initiated a joint initiative with UNDP in Cambodia for the development of a National Action Plan (see details above).

4.6 The 5th SEA circular's SEA of Solutions on Circularity for Ending Plastic Pollution Forum showcases innovative solutions and strengthened strategic partnerships that have accelerated progress to end plastic pollution in South-East Asian region

156. From September 18-20 of 2024, SEA circular organized the 5th SoS under the theme "Delivering Actions to End Plastic Pollution". The event attracted more than 600 participants, online and in-person on site, who discussed science and evidence-based actions, policy and regulatory measures, finance and investment, circularity in the plastic value chain, and community engagement for behavior change. Additional opportunities for networking and knowledge sharing were offered through an exhibition space and field visits featuring stakeholder initiatives. Building on the growing momentum for a

global plastics treaty, the event underscored the critical need for strengthened legislation, mandatory EPR schemes, innovative upstream financing solutions, and a coordinated, inclusive approach across the entire plastics value chain.

157. SOS 2024 included the dissemination of the recommendations from the EPR report to a wide variety of participating stakeholders and facilitated dialogues, knowledge exchange and building of capacities of government representatives, international organizations, PROs, the private sector and informal waste pickers and their associations across the region.
158. As part of the present review, a mini survey was conducted targeting participants of the last SEA of Solutions event in 2024. The survey showed that respondents had learned both in terms of using knowledge gained to change their own behavior as well as making changes within their organizations. In terms of sustainability of such results of the event they regarded that ownership and capacities were in place, but that this was less the case in terms of financial means to sustain results. Improvements were considered possible in several parts of event organization and implementation, while in terms of recommendations many respondents wanted to see the event continue in the near future. For details see Box 2 below.

Box 2: Details on the results of the SEA of Solutions mini survey

A total of 46 respondents participated to the mini survey. Composition of respondents included 61 percent men and 39 percent women, with 28 percent from CSOs, 21 percent from the private sector, 19 percent from academia, 13 percent from government agencies and 6 percent from UN agencies, with the remainder from development partners and media. Most of the respondents (84 percent) were from within Asia while 61 percent of them participated in-person in the event in Bangkok. One in five of the respondents had participated also in the 2022 iteration of the SEA of Solutions, with decreasing number for the earlier years.

In terms of learnings from the event, the highest scores were obtained for understanding on EPR, knowledge on strategies for reduce, recycle and reuse and knowledge on community engagement for behavior change. Moreover, knowledge on policy and regulatory measure, knowledge on circularity in the plastic value chain and monitoring of marine litter were mentioned as important learnings. Least recognized issue in terms of knowledge development concerned finance mechanisms.

Regarding changes informed by the learnings at personal and organizational levels, 57 percent of respondents indicated that knowledge of the SEA of Solutions informed changes made in their own way of working while 48 percent commented that their participation had informed changes made in their organizations. Moreover, 35 percent responded that SEA of Solutions has helped them in participation in multilateral or bilateral cooperation.

In terms of sustainability of results identified at personal and organizational level, 67 percent of respondents indicated that ownership needed to continue results for a limited or long time were in place while 63 percent answered that capacities for this were in place. Forty-four percent considered financial means to be in place to sustain results.

Enabling factors identified for reaching results included: learning on specific issues and abilities for networking. Constraining factors identified for reaching results included: lack of financing of initiatives, lack of follow up after the event and lack of political commitment.

When asked for ways in which the event could be improved, all options appeared relevant ranked from most important: improvement in term of timing and frequency of event; in terms on in-person/online participation; management of the event; design of the event; financial aspects and selection/quality of speakers and panelists at the event. One remark concerned the need for translation for the inclusion of informal waste pickers to the discussions, who not necessarily are conversant in English.

Lessons learned focused on Reduce, reuse and recycle as well as different aspects of EPR. Good practices focused also on these two issues as well as inclusion of the informal waste sector, consumer awareness raising and showcasing of good practices during the event.

Recommendations concerned different types of follow up, sustaining the event in the future and documentation of results of SEA of Solutions and SEA circular in general and make them available to stakeholders. Details on follow up included expansion to funding as well as enhanced awareness raising and stakeholder engagement post SoS events.

Performance based on Output level Indicators:

159. Regarding output 4, several results could be achieved though not all could be compared to targets or could be fully achieved. The conduct of the five iterations of the Sea of Solutions over the implementation period of the project stands out as a clear success in terms of the discussions on plastic pollution and marine litter in the region and beyond and has provided opportunities to share good practices and learnings across the participants and coordination of actions. Also, the development of the East Asian Seas Regional Node has been commendable with a substantial amount of case studies, guidelines, and training materials as well as videos developed and made accessible to a wide range of stakeholders and the general public. For details, see Table 14 below.

Table 14: Performance on Output 4 indicators

Indicator	Performance assessed
Project phase 2018-2022 (no baseline data and targets available)	
4.1 Number of COBSEA countries adopting or revising national marine litter action plans or equivalent in line with COBSEA RAP MALI	Six COBSEA countries developed national plans, including Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Contribution of SEA circular varied across these plans. China, Republic of Korea and Singapore have several policies, plans and regulations related to marine litter and plastic waste in place.
4.2 Number of national or local/municipal regulations adopted, aiming to tackle marine litter e.g., by reducing or eliminating single use plastic, expanding markets for alternative materials, promoting plastic segregation and recycling, etc.	All COBSEA countries have adopted laws and regulations to address generation, management and discharge of waste, promote a circular economy, and/or address marine litter.
4.3 Number of products or polymers subject to recycling or reduction mechanism adopted regionally/by multiple countries	The number of products or polymers subjective to recycling or reduction mechanisms adopted regionally or by multiple countries has increased since the start of the project. The exact number has not been published.
4.4 Year-on year percent increase in regional marine litter knowledge hub online content as well as traffic	The East Asian Seas Regional Node was formally established in October 2022 by COBSEA IGM 25. The web platform of the Regional Node was launched in November 2022, providing access to knowledge on marine litter policy, regulatory frameworks, the research database, information on the research network and capacity building resources, including knowledge products developed by SEA circular.
4.5 Year-on year percent increase in participation in a SEA of Solutions partnership week across government, private sector, academia and civil society, with particular attention given to the participation/representation of disadvantaged groups	2020 compared to 2019: 25 percent increase (total for 2020 of 750 participants) 2021 compared to 2020: 13 percent increase (total for 2021 of 850 participants) 2022 compared to 2021: 550 unique participants with 995 total registrants Composition of participants in 2022: • Government agencies: 12 percent • Private sector agencies: 34 percent • Civil society organizations: 25 percent • International organizations: 14 percent Fifty-five percent of participants were women

Project extension phase 2023-2024	
4.1 A set of regional guidelines for the harmonization of standards and practices for managing the plastic value chain with reference to knowledge products of SEA circular Baseline: 0 (2022); Target: 1 (2024)	1 regional study on plastic reuse schemes conducted to develop guidelines for establishing and implementing re-use systems for businesses in the region 1 EPR study conducted with recommendations for different types of stakeholders
4.2.1 Number of joint initiatives with other UN agencies to support respective countries to accelerate solutions to reduce plastic pollution Baseline: 1 (2020); Target: 5 (2024)	Four additional joint initiatives with other UN agencies to accelerate solutions to reduce plastic pollution engaging with the RC system, GEF-8, UNDP and UN-Habitat.
4.2.2 Number of stakeholders participating in Southeast Asia regional dialogues for knowledge exchange on best practices for plastics circularity Baseline: 850 (2021); Target: 1000 (2024)	2023: Five regional events and workshops organized to build the technical and scientific capacity and enable peer-to-peer learning of stakeholders to reduce plastic pollution in the region, including with regard to the INC process 2024: 1,149 policy makers, business leaders, investors, and civil society actors engaged in regional events and workshops including: • Three regional events and workshops, incl. SEA of Solutions 2024, organized to build partnerships, and technical and scientific capacity to enable peer-to-peer learning of stakeholders in reducing plastic pollution in the region • One intergovernmental meeting, the COBSEA Twenty-sixth Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM-26), strengthened the collaboration between COBSEA participating countries (including 73 participants, representatives and observers) to reduce plastic pollution and marine litter • One working group meeting on marine litter, the Sixth Meeting of the Working Group on Marine Litter (WGML-6) with 49 participants and observers, which focused on advancing regional collaboration and strategies to tackle marine litter, including informing countries on the INC process • One capacity-building workshop in Lao PDR focused on strengthening regional actions to address transboundary haze and plastic pollution in Southeast Asia

Legend: **Green:** Indicator achieved; **Light green:** Achievements but level could not be verified; **Red:** Indicator not achieved

160. With three of the outputs scoring MS and one scoring S, the overall score of availability of outputs resulted in MS.

Rating for Availability of Outputs: Moderately Satisfactory

Achievement of Project Outcomes

161. There has been relatively limited reporting on the achievement of outcome level results in the annual project reporting. While several of the targets had been set in the project document, some were not defined. Baseline data for outcome level indicators were mostly established in the Inception phase of the project and included in the inception report. In the annual report of 2020, there was an attempt to report on the indicators included in the prodoc. For some of the indicators on reduction of single use plastics and collection of PET bottles, this was done through the provision of data from subnational entities in the participating countries, which did not result in a national level overview as foreseen in the indicators concerned, resulted in a patchwork of a variety of data across the participating countries (for details see table 14 below).
162. For the indicator of consumer awareness, that was included in the framework, baseline data reflected the results of the consumer survey conducted in 2020 with no targets

formulated. Though this was followed up in 2022 with an additional survey, due to the COVID pandemic and the heightened use of single use plastics, results were not comparable with the initial survey data, and the project decided not to publish the results of the second survey and not to make use of the data concerned.

163. In the extension phase of the project, all three outcome areas were clubbed into one outcome statement with the addition of the inclusion of the adoption and implementation of policy measures, for which also separate indicators were included in the results framework additions of this period of the project. For the assessment of reaching outcome level results, the revised theory of change of the project extension phase was used as this is the most up to date one and included most of the results identified in the TOC from the 2018 prodod.
164. For most of the outcome level indicators, results were achieved, though the extent to which these were in line with the targets set for these indicators could not be established for most of the indicators, both in the initial as well as in the extension phase of the project (for details see Table 15 below). Nevertheless, stakeholders did consider the project to have created important momentum around addressing plastic pollution and marine litter in the region.

Table 15: Performance on Outcome indicators

Indicator	Performance assessed
Project phase 2018-2022 (no targets available)	
1. Reduction in single use plastic production and sale (plastic shopping bags, plastic straws and/or plastic cutlery) Baseline: Indonesia 6.5% increase; Malaysia 3.9% increase; Thailand 4.16% increase; Vietnam 7.2% increase; between 2016 and 2017 Target; Reduction in annual rate of increase	A range of policy measures including reduction or elimination targets have been adopted. This includes e.g.: Cambodia : As of 2018, supermarkets and shopping malls charge KHR 400/bag (~USD 0.10/bag) as of 2017, reducing distribution by 30%. Indonesia : Ban of single-use/disposable plastic bags (transparent bags made from various plastics, including PE and thermoplastics) in Jakarta as of July 2020, in Bali as of June 2019, in Bogor City (2018 in shopping centers and retail stores; 2019 in traditional markets) has reduced circulation of plastic bags by 41 tons/month. Malaysia : Road map of single use plastics (2018-2030). Cessation of permit issuance for plastic import 2018. No straw by default initiate started in 2019 for fixed premises, with expansion beyond straws and bags to food packaging, plastic film, cutlery food containers, cotton buds, poly bags etc. The Philippines : Single use plastics banned in national government offices and local government units since 2020. Thailand : Single use plastic bags banned in stores starting 2020 (still allowed in fresh markets & rural areas); ban on plastic shopping bags thinner than 36 microns, single use plastic cups thinner than 300 microns & plastic straws by 2022. Viet Nam : No more single use plastic or disposable plastic bags in 80% of coastal communities by 2025, 100% by 2050; Replacement of nylon bags in Quang Nam province with ecological bags (Annual report 2020)
2. Variety of alternative packaging (items) Baseline: 0 (no systematic documentation so far); Target: 50	Alternative packaging materials developed and in use include e.g. materials based on/derived from bamboo, sugarcane, cotton, paper, seaweed and poly lactic acid. There are numerous applications including e.g. in packaging as well as food and beverage (Annual report 2020)
3. Increase in collection of PET bottles for recycling (by tonnage) Baseline: 44-59% in Bangkok; 32-43% in Phuket; 20.8-27.9% for Kuala Lumpur (all in 2018); Target: 40% increase	PET bottle collection rate in Viet Nam 21% (Ho Chi Minh 74%, Hanoi 39%); The Philippines 21% (Metro Manila 39%); Thailand 32% (Bangkok 52%, Phuket 38%); Indonesia 22% (Jakarta 69%); Greater Kuala Lumpur 23% (Annual report 2020)

Indicator	Performance assessed
4. Packaging recycling rate Baseline: Standardization of recycling rate definition by Q1 2020; Target To be determined in Q1/Q2 2020	Cambodia: Low, estimated to be 1% by the Ministry of the Environment at the 2020 Waste Summit in Phnom Penh. 30% of fishing nets from one coastal community were purchased for recycling; 52% were discarded into the ocean. Indonesia: 17 ~20% recycled by private individuals and SMEs; Malaysia: 20%; The Philippines: 25% recovered, although higher for high residual-value plastics (especially PET bottles, also HDPE products) and lower for low residual-value plastics (e.g. < 5% for plastic bags and thin sachets) (Annual report 2020)
5. Increased consumer awareness on marine litter and plastic pollution Baseline: 54% of consumers recycling and converting their plastic waste into useful products, 38% more have interest to do so in the next 12 to 18 months; 49 % say if a product is made from non-recycled material, they are less likely to buy it; Target to be determined after Q2 2020	Perceptions on plastic waste report and the underlying data identifies how consumers and food and beverage businesses perceive plastic waste issues in five South-East Asian countries. Several other initiatives have characterized awareness, including e.g. Malaysia: 3R campaign exists and thousands of awareness initiatives rolled out but effects on public consciousness small so far, possibly because of lack of enforcement (KeTTA, 2017; Moh 8 and Abd Manaf, 2014; Cyclos, 2019); Viet Nam: 50% of households/small businesses lack knowledge about the impact of discharging plastic waste into the environment; 63% do not understand regulations on SWM and environmental protection; 5- 9% of households discharge directly into the environment (Borongan and Huno, 2020) (Annual report 2020)
6. Number of governments at all levels that are implementing waste prevention and sound management policies and good practices, in accordance with relevant multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant international agreements with UNEP support Baseline: Cambodia and Phnom Penh in 2018; Target: 8 additional countries and cities in Southeast Asia by 2022, in collaboration with WB, WWF and other city-based projects	Implementation initiated at two SEA circular project demonstration sites in Malaysia (Petaling Jaya and Penang), with planning and partnership building progressing at one site in Thailand (Koh Samet). Additional financial support for three further sites has been secured, with site identification and planning to commence in 2021. The project is directly supporting five COBSEA countries at national level in revising/adopting national plans (Annual report 2020).
Project extension phase 2023-2024	
7. Number of Southeast Asia countries have adopted or revised national marine litter policies, regulations or equivalent to prevent or reduce plastic pollution in line with the COBSEA Regional Action Plan Marine Litter (RAP MALI) Baseline: 5 (2022); Target 6 (2024)	All six targeted Southeast Asia countries developed national marine litter policies and regulations in line with COBSEA RAP MALI <i>(Mind that contribution of SEA circular to the development in each of these countries varies, with some like Indonesia and Vietnam referring to support from other projects in their National Action Plan)</i>
8. Number of SEA countries have implemented policy measures to reduce plastic pollution and promote circularity in the plastic value chain, in accordance with relevant multilateral environmental agreements and international agreements including the INC process to End Plastic Pollution Baseline: 4 (2022); Target 6 (2024)	More than 37 policy measures and initiatives were implemented by the six participating Southeast Asian countries to reduce plastic pollution and marine litter and promote plastic circularity. These measures align with various multilateral environmental agreements and international negotiations on plastics though many prove to be dated before the project implementation phase But: Several of these measure predate project implementation
9. Amount of plastic waste collection by PROs in Southeast Asia region increased through efforts aimed at collection and recycling Baseline: tbc (2022) Target: 20% increase in volume, tonnage (2024)	Malaysia: 35% in 2023 (Source: Malaysia Recycling Alliance). Data on the amount of plastic waste collected and recycled have not been collected on a systematic basis, due to the absence of monitoring systems in participating countries.

Indicator	Performance assessed
10. Increase in the percentage of consumers having indicated to stop buying products with non-recyclable packaging Baseline: 49% (2020) Target: 55% (2022)	Data specific to the indicator are not available as no follow up consumer survey was conducted in 2024. However, in terms of reach of consumers by the project, more than 37 million consumers were reached through awareness raising activities in 2022, which is an increase of 85 percent, or 17 million consumers reached, compared to 2020.

Legend: **Green:** Indicator achieved; **Light green:** Achievements but level could not be verified; **Red:** Indicator not achieved

165. While most of the assumptions identified in the TOC of the project appear to have been in place in the region, this may be less the case for the assumed innovative means of financing in place while some of the assumptions will have varied in terms of their realization across the participating countries. In terms of the drivers of change, these have both been in place and have been positively affected by the project, including enhancing the understanding of the production, consumption and waste management aspects of plastic pollution and marine litter, and national standards in place on quality and types of plastics. Limitation in terms of assumptions and drivers is that the project has not made a systematic effort to assess any of these over the life of the project in the participating countries.
166. Reviewing the reach of outcome level changes, those most important for reaching of intermediate state level changes have been in place as far as government policy measures have been concerned, but this appears to be less the case in terms of consumer awareness and private sector efforts to reduce plastic pollution and marine litter. In particular in the extension phase of the project, much of the focus was on national level legal and policy changes and supporting development and implementation of national level plans.

Rating for Achievement of Project Outcomes: Moderately Satisfactory

Likelihood of Impact

167. The project document details the various negative impacts of plastic pollution and marine litter in terms of the ecological, environmental and human health related issues as well as the socio-economic effects concerned, in particular for coastal communities, fishing based communities, workers in the informal waste management sector and other vulnerable groups.
168. In terms of the 'pathway for change' as presented in the original prodoc of 2018, outcome level results were to contribute to impact level changes in terms of reduced spillage of plastic to waterways and coastal areas. In the theory of change, impact was identified as 'less plastic "wasted" in Southeast Asia'. No impact level indicators were identified in the prodoc.
169. Overall, the term impact in the prodoc was almost used as identical to the term result or what in terms of evaluation has been at times termed as 'effect', an intermediate level of result, in between outputs and impact level change. In UNEP's terminology, the term impact is defined as:

... long-lasting results arising, directly or indirectly from a project. Impacts are intended and positive changes and must relate to UNEP's mandate.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ UNEP, Glossary of Results definitions, Version 8, December 2023.

170. Nevertheless, the prodoc did include one output level indicator, of output 2 on Strengthening the scientific basis for decision-making, that makes mention of impact level change, which indicator reads as:

Number of COBSEA countries that incorporate pollution loading as well as environmental, social and economic impact indicators in marine litter reporting

171. The document, however, does not detail what these environmental, social, and economic impact level indicators would be.
172. Impact level change at the level of the participating countries has been uneven across these countries, as they have been in different phases of economic development and have had different institutional capacities in terms of reducing marine litter and plastic pollution at the start of the project. Moreover, various of the project initiatives have been at the sub-national level which has, without scaling up results so far, limited geographical coverage of the results. Thus, also impact level change can only be expected to vary, both across as well as within participating countries. At the regional level, the strengthened capacity of COBSEA as regional intergovernmental mechanism stands out, with enhanced capabilities to coordinate and support aspects of marine litter, including its cross-boundary aspects, in the region.
173. As mentioned above, in the project ToC, impact is formulated as: 'Less plastic wasted in South East Asia'. While making use of the UNEP tool⁵¹ provided and with the output level results partially achieved while also having achieved results at the outcome level (which though could not be assessed compared to targets concerned) and with assumptions and drivers both partially in place, the expected likelihood of the project contributing to impact level change can be considered to be 'Moderately Likely'.

Achievement of Likelihood of Impact: Moderately Likely

Rating for Effectiveness:	Moderately Satisfactory
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E. Financial Management

Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures

174. The project management throughout the entire project period adhered to the UNEP Financial Policies and Procedures, including the original project period 2018-2022, in which the management responsibility was under the Regional Office Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), as well as the project extension period, 2023-2024, when the responsibility shifted to the Industry and Economy (IE) Division of UNEP. Over the entire project period, project management remained under the same Financial Officer, who remained based in Bangkok, while from 2023 onwards his reporting line shifted from the head Financial Regional Officer to the Senior Administrative Officer of the IE Division. The remaining funds for the initial project period were transferred from the UNEP ROAP to the IE Division, where also the additional funds for the project extension period were received. Any budget adaptations during the lifetime of the project were discussed upfront with Sida, the donor agency.
175. With the move of the project to the IE Division, financial management of the project became part of the management system of the division, which was a much larger entity, compared to the ROAP. Though procedures and reporting mechanisms to the donor

⁵¹ UNEP Review Criteria Ratings Matrix of Management Led Terminal Reviews.

remained the same, with the Financial Officer now part of a much larger team of finance and administration related staff, there were additional opportunities to learn from one another and to leverage administrative capacities that had not been available to the project as part of the UNEP Regional office.

Rating for Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures: Highly Satisfactory

Completeness of Financial Information

176. Most of the financial information required was made available to the evaluator, with details provided in Annex VII.
177. When comparing the budget of the project versus expenditure, the following can be observed. Given that in the original budget the project operation cost, including staffing, were included at the output level, while these costs were separated out in the budget for the extension phase, it is difficult to compare the figures concerned. For details see Table 16 below.

Table 16: Details on totals of project budget and expenditure 2018 - 2024

Description	Budget 2018-2022 (USD)	Budget 2023-2024 (USD)	Total Budget (USD)	Total Expenditure 2018-2024
Output 1	1,574,075	517,050	2,091,125	1,264,219
Output 2	1,578,825	162,165	1,740,990	838,668
Output 3	1,606,075	344,000	1,950,075	740,718
Output 4	1,140,825	542,298	1,683,123	848,902
Subtotal	5,899,800	1,565,513	7,465,313	
Project coordination[#]	<i>(included in outputs)</i>	606,841	606,841	2,687,584
UN PSC at 8 percent	471,984	173,788	645,772	493,714
TOTAL	6,371,784	2,346,142	8,717,926	6,873,805

Output 1: Market-based solutions towards "less plastic wasted"

Output 2: Scientific basis for decision-making on marine litter enhanced

Output 3: Outreach on plastic pollution and its impact enhanced

Output 4: National actors in the region are more knowledgeable on how to coordinate action on plastic pollution

Project coordination includes MTR and Terminal Review

Sources: UNEP, Terms of reference, Terminal Review of the UNEP project SEA circular – SEA circular (Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South-East Asia); United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), SEA circular Project Extension 2023-2024 Proposal (Final) Submission to SIDA, Date: 28 November 2022; SEA circular Expenditure breakdown by Year by Outputs, Internal Spreadsheet.

178. To assess the expenditure versus the budget, the exchange rate issues between the SEK and the USD need to be taken into consideration. Based on the details as presented in table 16 below, the utilization rate amounted to 97 percent.
179. When looking at the yearly expenditure, it can be observed that the project had its least annual expenditure in the period 2018-2019, i.e. the start of the project and in 2023, during the first year of the project extension phase, when management shifted from ROAP to the IE Division. The percentage of coordination costs (primarily personnel and operational costs) relative to the sub-total of project costs varied from 23 percent in

2020 and was highest during 2022 and 2023, reaching two thirds of expenses in 2022 but reducing afterwards. For details see Table 17 and 18 below.

Table 17: Calculation of Utilization Rate of resources received in USD and SEK

Items	USD	SEK
(A) Sea circular Phase One budget	6,371,784	55,000,000
(B) Actual cash transferred	5,977,325	55,000,000
(A - B)) Exchange rate loss 2018-2022	394,459	
(C) Phase one Expenditure	4,736,361	
(B - C) Carry over Balance	1,240,964	
(D) Additional Contribution from Sida	1,105,178	13,000,000
(E) Sea circular Extension Phase Budget	2,346,142	
(B+D) Total Budget including Extension Phase adjusted for carry over balance and FX loss	7,082,503	68,000,000
Utilization	6,873,805	65,740,000
Utilization rate	97%	97%

Table 18: Details on annual project expenditure 2018 - 2024

Description	2018-2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Output 1	138,989	490,489	229,401	98,955	135,855	170,530	1,264,219
Output 2	64,838	260,723	282,323	73,607	25,139	132,038	838,668
Output 3	121,072	150,465	78,034	113,421	94,754	182,972	740,718
Output 4	81,819	257,186	132,851	53,962	37,670	285,414	848,902
Project coordination [#]	222,999	351,282	536,689	662,368	360,513	553,733	2,687,584
Sub-Total	629,717	1,510,145	1,259,298	1,002,313	653,931	1,324,687	6,380,091
UN PSC 8%	50,191	110,019	99,790	74,888	52,851	105,975	493,714
TOTAL	679,908	1,620,164	1,359,088	1,077,201	706,782	1,430,662	6,873,805
% Project coord / Sub total	35	23	43	66	55	42	42

Output 1: Market-based solutions towards "less plastic wasted"

Output 2: Strengthening the scientific basis for decision-making

Output 3: Outreach on marine litter and plastic pollution

Output 4: Regional networking

[#] Project coordination includes MTR and Terminal Review

Sources: UNEP, Terms of reference, Terminal Review of the UNEP project SEA circular – SEA circular (Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South-East Asia); United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), SEA circular Project Extension 2023-2024 Proposal (Final) Submission to SIDA, Date: 28 November 2022; SEA circular Expenditure breakdown by Year by Outputs, Internal Spreadsheet.

Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: Satisfactory

Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff

180. During both periods of project implementation, communications between the Fund management officer and the Project manager have been regular and satisfactory with two weekly meetings and additional communication when required. In particular in the initial project period, this was facilitated by the relatively small size of the team in ROAP, but nevertheless continued through two weekly meetings in the extension phase of the project.
181. The only limitation to the communication between FMO and Project manager happened after December 2024, at the termination of the project period, when the Project manager was no longer in place and the FMO had to deal with the financial closure of the project without the detailed knowledge of the project manager available on a regular or intermittent basis.

Rating for Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff: Satisfactory

Rating for Financial Management: Highly Satisfactory

F. Efficiency

182. There have been delays in project implementation. On the one hand this was related to the getting all, as well as the right, human resources in place. This was only realized in November 2019, more than one year after the start of the project, when the entire project team was in place. This partly related to the inability of UNEP to start the recruitment process of new staff before the funds had been received to pay for their salaries. With the ROAP being a relatively small office, there was no way in which the office could relocate some of the workload of existing staff members to perform functions at the start of the SEA circular project, until new staff members would be recruited.
183. Another cause of delay concerned the COVID pandemic, which hit Southeast Asia hard, in particular during 2020-2022, a large part of the original project period. While project management, staff and partners adapted their ways of working, making use amongst others of online means for meetings and training, this nevertheless resulted in delays in implementation (for details see Annex 1).
184. A final cause for delay happened in the extension phase of the project, when due to UNEP's new Delivery Model policy, responsibility of the project shifted from the ROAP to the IE Division. Though staff members of the project remained the same and were not relocated, they now had to report to the IE Division rather than to the ROAP. These changes in the organizational structure of the project within UNEP resulted in inefficiencies and delays in implementation as it took time for the new management setup to become practiced by all.
185. Though the transfer of project responsibilities to the IE Division resulted initially in delays of project implementation, it also brought some benefits to the project. As SEA circular within the division became part of a programmatic setup including ten projects on plastic pollution and marine litter, this provided opportunities for coordination and cooperation within UNEP. Also, in terms of hiring consultants, the project could make use of the existing relationships of the division. Given the large size of projects, the division was also able to hire specialists across these projects, which went for example for the EPR consultant, who had worked on other assignments for the division. Efficiency was enhanced through organization of events back-to-back whenever possible.
186. The delays incurred in the initial project period were a primary reason for the justification of the project extension, which was also supported by the results of the MTR conducted in 2021. In order to be able to respond to the changes in the context regarding plastics

programming and in particular the start of the INC on the plastics treaty, it was considered necessary to add additional objectives and revisions to the results framework and additional budget. Thus, rather than opting for a one year no-cost extension, the project was extended for a two-year period with an additional budget to cover its expenses till the end of 2024 and the results framework amended with expansion of some of the results.

Rating for Efficiency: Satisfactory

G. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring Design and Budgeting

187. In the original project document, monitoring and evaluation were planned based on the results framework, as included in the project document with key details provided in the prodoc. The detailed monitoring framework was developed jointly by UNEP ROAP and COBSEA Secretariat, which was finalized in the Inception phase of the project.
188. In that 6 months period, the original project results framework of the 2018 prodoc was adapted and improved, with addition of baseline data at the outcome level, while targets had already been included at this level in the original prodoc. Moreover, means of verification and responsibilities concerned were included at the outcome level (version of 22 May 2019). However, data on several of the indicators were not available in practice at the assessment levels concerned. Moreover, the indicators at the output level of the results framework remained without baseline data and targets as well as means of verification and responsibilities concerned, limiting the conduct of performance assessment.
189. The original framework, as well as the updated framework at the end of the inception phase, included activities and milestones, as well as partners and their roles, which informed annual work planning. What remained missing at the end of the inception phase was a clear monitoring framework, including means of verification and responsibilities for monitoring output level results as well as details on any capacity building requirements in terms of monitoring and the use of results-based management for partners. The project steering committee played an important role in terms of monitoring achievements of the project milestones, including quality of their delivery.
190. An important addition in the inception phase of the project concerned the identification of mainstreaming of a HRBA in the project, making use of three rights-based principles. However, this framework was presented as activities and included in the main narrative of the inception report. Thus, it was not included in the results framework and no data was gathered on results achieved in terms of the implementation of the HRBA mainstreaming framework.
191. Though both the project design report and the inception phase report made mention of tracking contributions to the achievement of the donor's regional strategy and its integrated approach to addressing marine litter and plastic pollution, it was not specified how this was to be done, while the Sida strategy did not include any indicators.
192. For the extension phase, changes and additions were made to the results framework informed by a gap analysis conducted.⁵² In terms of indicators at outcome level, adaptations were made, which included additional indicators, while such adaptations were in line with similar type of results from the initial project phase. An overview of

⁵² SEA circular extension, GAP Analysis (Internal Document).

outcome level indicators in the two phases of the project is provided in table 19 below. The indicators for the period 2023-2024 reflect more specific details of the issues addressed by the outcome indicators for the period 2018-2022. Nevertheless, each of these new indicators required specific means of verification, apart from the data gathered earlier.

Table 19: Comparison of Outcome level indicators 2018-2022 versus 2023-2024

Outcome Indicator 2018-2022	Outcome Indicator 2023-2024
- Reduction in single use plastic production and sale (plastic shopping bags, plastic straws and/or plastic cutlery) - Variety of alternative packaging (item0) - Increase in collection of PET bottles for recycling (by tonnage) - Packaging recycling rate	Amount of plastic waste collection by PROs in Southeast Asia region increased through efforts aimed at collection and recycling
Increased consumer awareness on marine litter and plastic pollution	Increase in the percentage of consumers having indicated to stop buying products with non-recyclable packaging
Number of governments at all levels that are implementing waste prevention and sound management policies and good practices, in accordance with relevant multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant international agreements with UNEP support	- Number of Southeast Asia countries have adopted or revised national marine litter policies, regulations or equivalent to prevent or reduce plastic pollution in line with the COBSEA Regional Action Plan Marine Litter (RAP MALI) - Number of SEA countries have implemented policy measures to reduce plastic pollution and promote circularity in the plastic value chain, in accordance with relevant multilateral environmental agreements and international agreements including the INC process to End Plastic Pollution

193. Moreover, at the output level of the results framework for the project extension period, new indicators were included. The extension phase document provided details of a monitoring plan, which included for each of the added four outcome and eight output level indicators descriptions of the indicator baseline data and targets for the two-year timeframe, data collection methods and sources, frequency of data gathering and person(s) responsible. With the inclusion of new indicators, the indicators from the period 2018-2022 were no longer assessed. Adequate budgeting for monitoring was included in both phases of the project as well as budgeting for a midterm and final project evaluation.

Rating for Monitoring Design and Budgeting: Moderately Satisfactory

Monitoring of Project Implementation

194. Monitoring focused on the quarterly assessment of the implementation of project activities, identified in the annual workplan and approved by the project steering committee. Workplan monitoring made use of a workplan costed spreadsheet, including the scheduled activities in each of the output areas, their deliverables, partners and target groups as well as quarterly timing and budgetary and expenditure details. The costed workplan spreadsheet of 2022 was shared with the evaluator, as well as the updated results framework spreadsheet of 2023/24. The latter included updates of results achieved at output levels in terms of indicators from the results framework for the period 2023-2024 and related activities. This spreadsheet included various links that provided access to websites and documents that contained evidence in relation to results concerned. However, the indicators of the earlier project period 2018-2022 were no longer assessed in the project extension period.

195. When assessing the actual availability and quality of data at output and outcome levels, it can be observed that 12 of the total of 15 indicators at output level in the first phase of the project lacked targets, with two of them lacking quantitative data. This was improved in the extension phase of the project, when all the 8 indicators had targets and data. The situation with outcome level indicators differed, as in both phases all of these had baseline data and targets. Nevertheless, four of them had insufficient data to assess exact levels of reaching the targets while one had no quantitative data in the first phase of the project. The situation also at this level improved during the extension period, though also at this time half of the four indicators did not have quantitative data to assess their achievement. For details see Table 20 on output level indicators and Table 21 on outcome level indicators below.

Table 20: Availability and quality of monitoring data on output level indicators

Output 1 indicators 2018-2022	
1.1	Number of companies operating in SE Asia publishing sustainability reports with information on Plastic Footprint
1.2	Number of pilot demonstration on environmental sound waste management supported
1.3	Changes in policies in Malaysia and Thailand concerning recycled plastics
Output 2 indicators 2018-2022	
2.1	Number of COBSEA countries publishing marine litter monitoring results
2.2	Number of COBSEA countries that incorporate pollution loading as well as environmental, social and economic impact indicators in marine litter reporting
2.3	Number of COBSEA countries that include a citizen-science approach in baseline data development and national monitoring programmes
2.4	Number of new research projects / partnerships on marine litter and plastic pollution, including environmental, social and economic impacts and governance aspects
Output 3 indicators 2018-2022	
3.1	Number of individuals completing Massive Open Online Course and distribution among stakeholder groups (government, private sector, academia, civil society and community-based organizations)
3.2	Change in consumer awareness in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam
3.3	Increased media coverage of social and economic impacts of plastic pollution and marine litter
Output 4 indicators 2018-2022	
4.1	Number of COBSEA countries adopting or revising national marine litter action plans or equivalent in line with COBSEA RAP MALI
4.2	Number of national or local/municipal regulations adopted, aiming to tackle marine litter e.g., by reducing or eliminating single use plastic, expanding markets for alternative materials, promoting plastic segregation and recycling, etc.
4.3	Number of products or polymers subject to recycling or reduction mechanism adopted regionally/by multiple countries
4.4	Year-on year percent increase in regional marine litter knowledge hub online content as well as traffic
4.5	Year-on year percent increase in participation in a SEA of Solutions partnership week across government, private sector, academia and civil society, with particular attention given to the participation/representation of disadvantaged groups
Output 1 indicators 2023-2024	
1.4	A regional Plastic Circularity guidance framework developed for the Southeast Asia (ASEAN) region to inform the INC process including HRBA
1.5	A set of evidence-based recommendations developed for PROs to increase plastic waste collection and recycling through engagements with SMEs for Southeast Asia
Output 2 indicators 2023-2024	
2.5	Number of training and capacity building activities for the implementation of national marine litter plans and national marine litter policies in 5 countries (Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam).
Output 3 indicators 2023-2024	

3.4	Number of stakeholders accessing SEA circular resources and information, including through mechanisms of the GPML and UNCT in Southeast Asia region
3.5	Number of consumers reached through awareness raising campaigns
Output 4 indicators 2023-2024	
4.6	A set of regional guidelines for the harmonization of standards and practices for managing the plastic value chain with reference to knowledge products of SEA circular
4.7	Number of joint initiatives with other UN agencies to support respective countries to accelerate solutions to reduce plastic pollution
4.8	Number of stakeholders participating in Southeast Asia regional dialogues for knowledge exchange on best practices for plastics circularity

Legenda: **Green:** quantitative data available; **Yellow:** no targets provided; **Red:** quantitative data not available

Table 21: Availability and quality of monitoring data on outcome level indicators

Outcome indicators 2018-2022	
1	Reduction in single use plastic production and sale (plastic shopping bags, plastic straws and/or plastic cutlery)
2	Variety of alternative packaging (items)
3	Increase in collection of PET bottles for recycling (by tonnage)
4	Packaging recycling rate
5	Increased consumer awareness on marine litter and plastic pollution
6	Number of governments at all levels that are implementing waste prevention and sound management policies and good practices, in accordance with relevant multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant international agreements with UNEP support
Outcome indicators 2023-2024	
7	Number of Southeast Asia countries have adopted or revised national marine litter policies, regulations or equivalent to prevent or reduce plastic pollution in line with the COBSEA Regional Action Plan Marine Litter (RAP MALI)
8	Number of SEA countries have implemented policy measures to reduce plastic pollution and promote circularity in the plastic value chain, in accordance with relevant multilateral environmental agreements and international agreements including the INC process to End Plastic Pollution
9	Amount of plastic waste collection by PROs in Southeast Asia region increased through efforts aimed at collection and recycling
10	Increase in the percentage of consumers having indicated to stop buying products with non-recyclable packaging

Legenda: **Green:** quantitative data available; **Yellow:** Insufficient data available; **Red:** quantitative data not available

196. As part of project implementation, data were gathered on participation of men and women and representatives of vulnerable groups in project activities on an incidental basis but there was no systematic bringing such data together for analysis and to inform adaptive project management.
197. A quarterly tracker to monitor responses to the recommendations of the MTR report from November 2021 was developed, though monitoring of the follow up beyond March 2022 proved lacking with mostly missing data in the spreadsheet concerned.⁵³

Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation: Moderately Satisfactory

Project Reporting

198. Annual project reports were prepared by the Project Coordinating Group, led by the project manager. Reporting was done along the results framework and annual work

⁵³ Project Spreadsheet Quarterly Tracker MTR SEA circular 2022, internal document.

plans with in addition to reporting on results, financial progress reporting on an annual basis.

199. Project reporting included the following details, in line with the original prodoc and thus according to UNEP and donor requirements:

- Report on the inception phase of the project, after 6 months from the start of the project;
- Quarterly progress monitoring reports starting at the end of the 9th month from the start of the project;
- Annual progress and financial reports (the first report at the end of 12months from the start of the project); and
- Completion report covering both substantive and financial aspects at the end of project.

200. Though reporting covered all output and outcome areas, in some instances data provided did not necessarily correspond with the indicators concerned at output and outcome level. Moreover, while human rights principles and activities were added in the Inception Phase of the project and included in the Inception Report (see details below), no systematic monitoring and reporting was conducted on each of the three rights-based principles applied to each of the output areas of the project. What was included in the annual project reports concerned accounting for activities conducted in terms of the application of a rights-based approach without reflecting on the three principles concerned.

201. The evaluator could confirm the preparation of the Inception phase report, as well as the annual progress and financial reports and the draft of the project completion report. Moreover, outcome reports were produced on each of the SEA of Solution events⁵⁴, as well as reports of advocacy campaigns conducted⁵⁵ and a so-called 'Project Impact Report'⁵⁶ was produced, which documented the output and outcome level achievements of the project and included success stories and lessons learned.

202. Project reporting included a section on lessons learned in the reports of 2019 - 2023. Details concerned often referred to challenges and ways in which these were addressed. This means that those lessons were not in line with the UNEP definition of lessons learned, which is meant to include:

*Lessons learned reflect the new knowledge or understanding gained by the experience of implementing a project that is applicable to, and useful in, other similar contexts.*⁵⁷

203. In terms of project reporting, there has not always been sufficient consistency in reporting, through using similar overviews throughout the project period, which would have allowed for easy comparison and analysis over time. Each of the reports provides a snapshot of all the activities performed during the one-year period covered by the report. One does not get informed about the increased results over time and how these have coalesced (or not). This has limited the analytical value of annual reporting. Though this has provided a good overview of activities in each of the project years and has worked to a certain level in terms of accountability, it has missed opportunities in terms of learning over time across the years and the way in which results built up.

Rating for Project Reporting: S

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting:	Moderately Satisfactory
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⁵⁴ SOS Outcome reports <https://www.sea-circular.org/sea-of-solutions/>

⁵⁵ UN environment programme, Plastic, not so fantastic! Engagement and outreach report; UNEP, COBSEA, SEA circular, Campaign Report for 100 Days to #BEATPLASTICPOLLUTION.

⁵⁶ UNEP, COBSEA, SEA circular, Turning the Plastic Pollution, Achievements of the SEA circular project.

⁵⁷ UNEP, Glossary of Results Definitions, Version 8, December 2023.

H. Sustainability

Socio-political Sustainability

204. There has been a high level of ownership of the project objectives and results achieved, though countries have been in different stages of development of institutional capacities. The ownership of the issues concerned by a wide range of stakeholders, including government, private sector, academia, civil society and informal waste sector associations can be seen from the vast and increasing numbers of participants to the SEA of Solutions events, organized by the project over the period of its implementation. Moreover, there has been continued support from COBSEA as inter-governmental mechanism and from the WGML which was established in the early days of project implementation. The intergovernmental mechanism has meant that decisions made were agreed across all the COBSEA countries, increasing the level of ownership of results achieved. This also meant that there was a sense of joint ownership of the issues created across the countries in the region.
205. The INC process provided enhanced momentum to the implementation of the project and some of the extended ownership will at least partly depend on the realization of a plastics treaty in the latter part of 2025 as with a global plastics treaty in place, there will be more of a political push behind addressing plastic pollution and marine litter, which will be regarded more as a priority in the region, in alignment with global development requirements. Nevertheless, even without a treaty, countries could continue on their path towards the implementation of EPR.
206. Political will in participating countries increased over time and is presently perceived as stronger compared to the start of the project. At that time, there was limited understanding on EPR. Some of the countries in the region developed considerable since that time in terms of EPR legislation and planning, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Vietnam. However, the practice of implementation and enforcement is an ongoing process with a need to involve sub-national and local levels of government as well as other stakeholders.
207. Though overall political commitment appears to have increased, it also shifted in some cases. Originally, the government of Malaysia planned for mandatory EPR by 2026, but they took a step back to this approach based on a change in government. Also, in other countries in the region, shifts in government have at times meant changes in terms of political commitment to the issue of marine litter and plastic pollution. Moreover, the COVID crisis resulted in increased use of plastic for personal and professional protection purposes and as packaging material and reduced the political will to confront plastic pollution. Moreover, high levels of tourism in several countries in the region affect the government's willingness to address the issues.
208. In a more generic way, sustainability in socio-political terms, was to be enhanced through contributing to the establishment of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, to be negotiated by Member States. Though this process was expected to conclude in November 2024, it has continued into 2025 with the second part of the fifth session of the INC scheduled for August 2025.⁵⁸

Rating for Socio-political Sustainability: Moderately Likely

⁵⁸ <https://www.unep.org/inc-plastic-pollution>.

Financial Sustainability

209. During the project implementation, there was shifting attention to the financial aspects of addressing plastic pollution and marine litter. In the early stages of the project, focus was on plastic footprint assessment to inform plastic reduction initiatives, funded by the businesses concerned and on plastic credits, which provided means of funding for plastic pollution reduction. Also, EPR included a focus on the financial aspects of the issues, with more responsibility shifted towards the producers of plastics.
210. In the extension phase, the project was aligned with the UNEP Plastics Initiative, in which support to finance action was one of the components of the programme, aimed for governments to enhance capacities to develop fiscal policies and financial institutions to have increased capacity to support circular opportunities. In a meeting with all the UN Resident Coordinators from the participating countries, they requested a focus on financing in addition to policy level support as the policies would need financial support in terms of their implementation. However, at that time UNEP also played the role of facilitator of the INC process, and it was seen as inappropriate at that time for the SEA circular project to engage in financing issues, which were seen as highly politically loaded.
211. When the SEA circular project was terminated other project support in the region on the issues of marine litter and plastic pollution continued, as part of the UNEP Plastics Initiative, including support in all of the six participating countries with timeframes upto 2028. Thus, financial and technical support on plastic pollution and marine litter has continued in the region.⁵⁹ Several countries, including Malaysia, Republic of Korea and Vietnam, having conducted additional assessments after the termination of the SEA circular project making use of their own resources.
212. COBSEA, as an intergovernmental mechanism, has its own core funding through annual contributions from its member states. However, this usually covers the costs of the Secretariat and key operating costs while it is not sufficient to cover other costs, in particular those of project-related activities, including those of the WGML meetings and training courses. Those activities depended on project funding. Also, the staff position on marine litter was no longer filled after project termination and it may be challenging for countries to continue marine litter assessments. The termination of SEA circular as a project has left a funding gap for COBSEA in terms of its activities. This gap has been partly filled in the coming years by other projects of the UNEP Plastics Initiative as well as other marine litter projects⁶⁰ that focus on countries in SE Asia.
213. Though all the participating countries achieved middle income status, it is not always easy to get government funding for the type of activities that were supported by the SEA circular project, and in some cases, it was expected to take considerable amounts of time to achieve this. Though some of the National Action Plans have some resources included, it may be difficult to access these in time.
214. The project document of the UNEP Plastics Initiative, of which the SEA circular project became a part in the extension phase of the project, included an exit strategy, which addressed financial components. This included the focus on market-based solutions, characterized by their cost effectiveness and can thus be implemented by partners

⁵⁹ This includes the China Trust Fund (2024-2025/0.5M USD); GEF 8 Plastics Integrated Program (2024-2029/2.6M USD); UNPDF Asia Pacific project (2023-2026/1.5M USD) and the Japanese Supplementary Budget project (2025-2026/1M USD).

⁶⁰ One of these concerns the Marine litter prevention through reduction, sustainable design, and recycling of plastic packaging (MA-RE-DESIGN) project, which was recently extended till July 2026.

without outside financial support. Furthermore, the project document included assistance to key stakeholders to mobilize new funding sources to adopt circular economic approaches to reduce plastic pollution and to ensure sustainability.⁶¹

Rating for Financial Sustainability: Moderately Likely

Institutional Sustainability

215. Important part of the institutional strengthening of the project was achieved through working with COBSEA as an intergovernmental mechanism and strengthening its capacities in the process. This included the establishment of the WGML and the monitoring expert group to support the work on marine litter assessment, the development of a harmonized monitoring system and enhanced capacities for its implementation. However, the number of staff trained within a country has so far remained limited.
216. Nevertheless, as indicated above, several countries, including Malaysia, Republic of Korea and Vietnam, having conducted additional assessments making use of their own resources, after project support in this respect terminated. This has been facilitated by the availability of all training materials online and with the handbook translated into various languages of the participating countries. It will be useful for the participating countries to make use of their enhanced capacities to conduct the same survey a few years down the line, in order to assess the effects of any legislative and policy measures provided in the meantime on the marine litter prevalence.
217. A key advantage of working with COBSEA was that the intergovernmental mechanism is there to stay after the project was phased out. Thus, the enhanced capacity of COBSEA will be of use to the participating countries beyond the life of the project. Therefore, aspects of policy development and partnership building in relation to marine litter can be expected to continue in the future. Moreover, COBSEA has the opportunity to extend its membership in the region and in this way enhance its financial base, which together with other fund-raising initiatives could strengthen the organization and further enhance its capacities.
218. The SEA of Solutions was a highly successful initiative and created a widely recognized brand regarding coordination and cooperation around addressing plastic pollution and marine litter in the region and beyond. UNEP and COBSEA plan to make use of the SoS legacy to bring all plastic projects in the Asia and Pacific region together as part of an SoS event to be organized in December 2025 as a joint UNEP - COBSEA initiative.
219. Through the project, country and regional capacities to participate in the INC process were enhanced which countries will be able to use in the upcoming round of final negotiations later in 2025.
220. A substantial knowledge platform was developed with the support from a variety of partners and participating countries, which has become a part of the GPML knowledge node in the region, accessible to all stakeholders as well as the general public in the region.

Rating for Institutional Sustainability: Likely

Rating for Sustainability (Likelihood): Moderately Likely *(lowest rating of the three aspects)*

⁶¹ UNEP, ONE UNEP Plastic Project on Accelerating a Global Circular Plastic Economy to Reduce Plastic Pollution and its Impacts, Project Document.

I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

Preparation and Readiness

221. Project design was detailed in the Project Document from July 2018 which included a description of the context and justification of the project, project strategy, management and implementation arrangements, and details on monitoring, evaluation and reporting as well as main issues of a communication strategy. The document contained the project results framework and the budget, including financial details for the project inception phase, which started after the signing of the project agreement in July 2018.
222. The project enhanced its preparedness during the inception phase of the project, which lasted for six months, from the start of August 2018 to end of January 2019, and which resulted in a detailed inception report. During this period the results framework was enhanced and details on the application of a rights-based and gender equality approach were detailed and the annual workplan and budget for 2019 were presented. The report also included further details on the development of a project communication strategy, and a concept note for the first iteration of the SEA of Solutions, the project event that would be organized on an annual basis throughout the project period (except for 2023). The Steering Committee was set up, and the first meeting conducted as well as the TOR developed to guide the Project Implementation Group. Social, economic and environmental safeguards were identified and detailed, a stakeholder analysis conducted, and key partners and their roles identified.⁶²
223. The six months of the Inception phase proved not enough to address the human resource recruitment issues which constrained project implementation in the first year of the project's life. It was only in November 2019 that the full project team was in place, including the project manager rather than the first quarter of 2019, as required in the TOR for the Inception period. This negatively affected project performance in the early phase of project implementation.

Rating for Preparation and Readiness: Moderately Satisfactory

Quality of Project Management and Supervision

224. There have been various levels of project management and supervision. At the highest level, supervision and approval of annual workplans was in the hands of the Project Steering Committee. This committee was composed of members from UNEP, two and, from 2021 onwards, three of the participating countries, representatives from partner NGO, universities, the donor Sida and ASEAN, with some of the latter having the status of observers. Some changes were made over time as some of the partners changed. While until 2022, the meeting was chaired by the Deputy Director of UNEP ROAP, in 2023 and 2024, the meeting was co-chaired by UNEP ROAP and UNEP Industry and Economy Division, as a result of the internal changes of project implementation within UNEP based on their new Delivery Model policy.
225. Steering committee meetings discussed the achievements of the project during the year in line with the annual report preparations and informed the development of the annual report as well as the work plan of the coming year. Human resource changes as well as any relevant financial issues were discussed. The TOR of the Steering Committee was

⁶² UN Environment Programme, COBSEA, Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in Southeast Asia, Project Document, July 2018; Project Inception Phase: Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South East Asia Terms of Reference; UNEP, COBSEA, SEA circular, Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South East Asia, Inception Phase Report, Final report, re-submitted on 12 July 2019.

revised and the updated TOR adopted by the Third meeting of the committee. In addition to formal steering committee meetings, informal virtual webinars were organized for project steering committee members and observers to inform them of the approved workplans and final annual reports after both had been finalized. These webinars provided an opportunity for PSC members to present 'spotlight presentations' on their work and experiences regarding plastic pollution and marine litter.

226. While the Steering Committee was largely management and implementation oriented, more strategic issues in terms of the direction of the project were discussed in the annual donor meetings chaired by UNEP. While these were organized by UNEP ROAP in the initial phase of the project, they were called by UNEP IE Division in the extension phase, with inclusion of UNEP ROAP representatives to the meeting.
227. Project management and supervision changed in 2023 when the project shifted from being managed and supervised by the ROAP to the UNEP IE Division, which required a substantial amount of adaptation from staff and was largely seen as resulting in delays in project implementation.
228. Project staff were considered well qualified, worked well with partners and were seen as providing good technical support to participating countries. There have been several changes in project staffing over the life of the project. At times, temporary job openings were used to fill staffing gaps while recruiting new team members.
229. Adaptive management has been practiced in particular in the Inception Period and in the transition from the initial phase to the extension phase of the project, with in both periods implementation aspects of the project adapted to fit the changing context concerned. Outside of these periods, adaptive management has been constrained by the limitations of the project results framework, notwithstanding improvements of the framework made both in the inception phase and in the project extension document.

Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision: Moderately Satisfactory

Stakeholders' Participation and Cooperation

230. The project has successfully involved a wide range of stakeholders in its implementation. This was informed by a wide-ranging stakeholder mapping and analysis in the project document. This goes for all the project output areas, including the SEA of Solutions events. In trainings, the inclusion of women has been ensured while in terms of EPR related issues, the voice of informal waste workers and their associations has been included in the discussion and the formulation of recommendations for PROs and other stakeholders in the development and implementation of EPR processes. Multiple consultations have been conducted throughout the project period, including roundtables and other forms of consultation with relevant stakeholders and more broadly through the SEA of Solutions, sharing learnings.
231. Though there was a clear focus on the socio-economic aspects of EPR for informal waste workers and to aspects of human rights and gender equality throughout the project implementation, the human rights related framework presented in the Inception Report of the project was not used to demonstrate results concerned.
232. While livelihood related aspects, in particular of informal waste workers, were incorporated as part of the use of a human rights-based approach, the positive effects of those have not yet been made explicit.

Rating for Stakeholders' Participation and Cooperation: Satisfactory

Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

233. The SEA circular project has integrated human rights and gender equality into its design and implementation, making these fundamental components throughout project execution. In many South-East Asian countries, the plastic management system relies on a combination of formal and informal stakeholders. Notably, the informal sector plays a substantial role in the collection and recycling of plastic waste. Yet, this informal sector primarily comprises vulnerable groups, intensifying the human rights concerns associated with plastic pollution, especially the right to health, the right to science and information, and the rights of future generations. SEA circular promoted gender equality and the use of a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to identify and support people-centered and equitable solutions and actively engage with all groups of society, including informal waste workers, and coastal communities who are most vulnerable to the impacts of marine litter.
234. Capacities in relation to HRBA were limited at the start of the project including in the project team which required additional expertise. This was addressed among others through partnering with OHCHR and UNDP as well as working with the UNEP law division in order to mainstream HRBA and through support from Dalhousie University in the development of a rights related training programme focused on all stages of the plastics value chain.
235. While the original results framework did not include details on the use of a rights-based approach and results concerned, mainstreaming of an HRBA across outputs was done in the Inception phase of the project with details provided in the Inception report. This included the following three principles, which were applied to each of the outputs of the project:
- Participation and empowerment
 - Accountability and transparency
 - Non-discrimination and equality
236. For each of these principles, results in terms of each of the four output areas of the project were identified. These were mostly presented as activities rather than results. For details, see Table 22 below.

Table 22: Activities identified regarding use of a Human Rights-based approach

Participation and Empowerment	Accountability and Transparency	Non-Discrimination and Equality
Output 1: Market-based solutions		
Create channels for participation and advocacy of disadvantaged groups including waste pickers:	Raise awareness of rights and responsibilities, including business and human rights, and develop the capacities of duty-bearers (governments and businesses) to fulfil their obligations and address the needs of disadvantaged groups Build relationships between rights-holders and duty bearers by working together.	Provide targeted support and direct priority attention to those most vulnerable or facing multiple discrimination, such as women and children in coastal communities and working in the informal economy
Output 2: Strengthening the scientific basis for decision-making		

Participation and Empowerment	Accountability and Transparency	Non-Discrimination and Equality
Create channels for participation and advocacy of disadvantaged groups including waste pickers Make findings and information material available in accessible formats and languages as needed	Promote strong central and local accountability mechanisms and national capacity to monitor the realization of economic and social rights seeking alignment with international standards	Strengthen capacities for data collection and analysis to ensure that data are disaggregated, as far as possible, on the grounds of race, colour, sex, geographic location and so forth
Output 3: Outreach		
Engage and support civil society organizations (CSO) and representatives of disadvantaged groups to broaden partnerships for tackling marine litter and strengthen the voice of right holders to articulate expectations of duty-bearers Supporting media and communications campaigns that reach and engage disadvantaged groups	Undertake social impact analysis, including gender analysis of marine litter with a focus on vulnerable groups to inform project design and outreach Increase the incentives for better performance by duty-bearers	Tailor outreach campaigns to direct priority attention towards those suffering discrimination and disadvantage in the context of marine litter and plastic pollution:
Output 4: Regional networking		
Ensure equitable participation of human rights / gender equality advocacy organizations and representatives of disadvantaged groups in regional workshops and national consultations to inform inclusive measures Invite and enable human rights / gender equality advocacy organizations and representatives of disadvantaged groups to participate actively in constituency engagement events (such as SEA of Solutions Week).	Put human rights and gender equality on the agenda of regional events (such as SEA of Solutions Week) and promote alignment with international standards	Identify and share good practice examples of inclusive marine litter action plans, policies, regulations and market-based solutions that engage disadvantaged groups and mainstream human rights and gender equality

Source: UNEP Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South East Asia Inception Phase Report Final report, resubmitted on 12 July 2019.

237. The project document included analysis of rights holders and duty bearers in relation to plastic pollution and marine litter related issues. While people have the right to a clean environment as part of their well-being, duty bearers, including government agencies, bear responsibilities in this respect with capacity development activities aimed at supporting these in practice.
238. A report developed by the SEI identified vulnerable and marginalized groups in relation to the project objectives. Informal waste workers, in particular women and children, were seen as facing multiple disadvantages, such as low earnings, health risks and weak social protection measures. While informal waste workers are an important part of the waste management and recycling sector in South-East Asian countries, their contributions to the recovery and recycling of valuable plastics are often largely overlooked and unsupported. As major consumers and users of plastic goods, women were identified as possibly exposed to greater risks, but they could also be champions of

mitigating the risk of marine plastic litter through responsible consumption and waste disposal practices.⁶³

239. In the first year of project implementation, several issue papers were developed on the use of a HRBA and aspects of gender equality with inputs from sister UN agencies. For details see Boxes 3 and 4 below.

Box 3: A Human Rights Based Approach to Preventing Plastic Pollution

"A human rights-based approach is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyse inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress."

"A human rights-based approach is guided by the principles of equality, participation and inclusion to protect the interest of right-holders, including marginalized and disadvantaged groups, and to hold duty-bearers, including governments, businesses and people of power."

"A human rights-based approach recognizes and addresses the underlying causes of discriminate impacts of pollution and environmental degradation on vulnerable groups; aims to empower and engage these groups in participatory processes; and helps to build the capacity of governments, plastic producers and polluting industries and other duty bearers to act and protect human rights and the environment."

Source: United Nations Environment Programme, Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia, A human rights-based approach to preventing plastic pollution, Issue Brief 01, Bangkok, 2019.

240. In terms of accountability, enhancing capacities of duty bearers, including governmental and private sector stakeholders, in December 2020 the project started a dialogue series on the use of a human rights-based approach in terms of responsible business practices in plastics management. Events were organized jointly with UNEP Law Division, sister UN agencies, the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre in Indonesia and Dalhousie University. Based on this dialogue series, SEA circular and partners developed a toolbox on human rights and plastic pollution and action-oriented training materials. Dedicated space was created for HRBA related information on the SEA circular website. The toolbox on HRBA and plastic pollution was launched in 2021, including the conduct of a series of trainings for duty bearers.
241. Project staff participated in various forums presenting aspects of the project, in particular its use of a human rights-based approach, sharing of lessons learned.
242. In 2022, as part of a Regional Dialogue Series, the project organized, a training on the Human Rights-Based Approach and a dialogue on EPR in the plastic value chain, in collaboration with the Asian Institute of Technology, including the position of the informal waste sector in the region. Over 100 people participated in this event, with representation from government agencies, businesses, start-ups and entrepreneur communities from within as well as outside of South-East Asia. Stakeholders were sensitized on human rights and gender aspects as key components of enabling policies and market-based solutions to reduce plastic pollution and marine litter. Participants were provided with case examples of policies on the HRBA, frameworks and tools for

⁶³ United Nations Environment Programme, Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia, and Stockholm Environment Institute, Marine plastic litter in East Asian Seas: Gender, human rights and economic dimensions, Bangkok 2019.

application, and guidance for implementing the HRBA in business. This informed the extension phase of the project.

Box 4: Gender Equality and Preventing Plastic Pollution

Gender equality means that the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of all individuals irrespective of their sex or gender identity are considered, valued and favoured equally in economic, social and political spheres of society. Dismantling inequality may require targeted support of socially disadvantaged groups to create a level playing field.

Differences in vulnerability to environmental risks are not inherently linked to physiological characteristics such as sex but are a product of inequalities in socio-economic status and income as well as exposure, including discrimination based on gender, social class, ethnicity, age, and (dis)ability.

Evidence shows that gender equality is critical to achieving human rights and sustainable development from promoting economic growth, reducing poverty and environmental degradation, to improving health and food security.

Elements of gender mainstreaming include: situation and gender analysis; use of targeted approaches for women and girls; engage and empower women and women's organizations; raise awareness and promote accountability.

Source: United Nations Environment Programme, Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia, Gender Equality and Preventing Plastic Pollution, Issue Brief 02, Bangkok, 2019.

243. The training highlighted the rights and responsibilities of government, businesses, civil society organizations and other stakeholders in the various stages of the plastics life cycle, including:⁶⁴
1. the extraction of fossil fuels.
 2. the production of the plastic products from the extracted fossil fuels.
 3. the transportation of those plastics products.
 4. the use of plastic products, including packaging, and corresponding generation of plastic waste.
 5. the management of plastic waste including efforts to collect, sort, reuse or recycle. Or alternatively, the disposal of plastic waste including placement in landfills, dumping, leaking into nature, and incineration.
244. Plastics were identified as able to have a negative impact on human rights at each of the stages of the plastics life cycle. For an overview of the conclusions of the Issue Brief developed, see Box 5 below.
245. At the United Nations Responsible Business and Human Rights Forum, Asia-Pacific, on 21 September 2022, SEA circular organized a session titled Plastic Circularity Through Responsible Business Conduct: Realizing the Right to a Healthy Environment, which focused on the interconnectedness of responsible business conduct, EPR, and how a rights-based approach could support the achievement of plastic circularity in an inclusive way, to gradually mainstream the informal waste management sector towards green jobs. This session informed and shared progress on efforts to sensitize actors in the plastic value chain on a rights-based approach and discussed what actions were needed to help businesses, governments, and communities to shift away from business

⁶⁴ Source: United Nations Environment Programme, Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia, and Dalhousie University, Marine & Environmental Law Institute, Plastics, human rights and business responsibilities, Issue Brief, August 2022.

as usual to an inclusive circular and more sustainable and resource-efficient plastics economy.

Box 5: Plastics, human rights and business responsibilities

“The negative human rights impacts of plastic pollution are international in scale, but human health, marine life and coastal ecosystems in the East Asian Seas region have been especially impacted by plastic. The brunt of these human rights impacts trickle-down at each stage of the plastic lifecycle from the initial extraction of fossil fuels to the disposal of plastic. These impacts also disproportionately affect vulnerable and marginalized groups in the East Asian Seas region.”

“The successful transition away from plastics and its human rights impacts can be facilitated if governments and businesses recognize and adhere to what are increasingly authoritative principles and norms of international human rights law, including the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and business responsibilities to respect human rights. Adherence to these principles by governments and businesses will help to shift away from harmful plastics and ultimately restore marine life, healthy coastal ecosystems and human health.”

Source: United Nations Environment Programme, Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia, and Dalhousie University, Marine & Environmental Law Institute, Plastics, human rights and business responsibilities, Issue Brief, August 2022.

246. Checklists were developed for key stakeholders in terms of human rights perspectives in the various stages of the plastic value chain, including for Government Officials, Civil Society, and for businesses. The checklists each illustrate practical steps that these stakeholders could take to implement a human rights-based approach to the plastics pollution challenge in the various stages of the plastics value chain.⁶⁵
247. In the extension phase of the project, much of the support focused on the concept of EPR and its implementation in the region. While several other organizations supported aspects of EPR, the project concentrated on the use of a rights-based approach in EPR with a particular focus on the role of the informal sector in waste management and recycling in the region and the need for any EPR legislation and plans to include the interest of informal waste workers, as they are the ones presently engaged in most of the waste management, in particular in urban settings.
248. A report on EPR was developed, using a mixed-methods approach which combined literature review, policy analysis, structured and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders along the plastic value chain in six ASEAN countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam). The report highlighted opportunities within current EPR implementations to benefit informal waste pickers and provided strategic recommendations to strengthen EPR implementation, improve working conditions for waste workers, and promote a just, inclusive transition for the informal waste sector and in this way prevent their further marginalization and inter-generational poverty transfer.⁶⁶
249. The EPR related recommendations were designed to inspire businesses to take a leading role in addressing plastic pollution through the HRBA, such as including waste pickers

⁶⁵ Dalhousie University, Business, Marine & Environmental Law Institute (MELAW) and Schulich School of Law, Business, Human Rights, and the Environment: Overcoming the Plastics Challenge: A Checklist for State Institutions and Government Officials; Business, Human Rights, and the Environment: Overcoming the Plastics Challenge: A Checklist for Civil Society; Human Rights, and the Environment, Overcoming the Plastics Challenge, A Checklist for Responsible Business Plastic Action.

⁶⁶ United Nations Environment Programme, Facilitating a Human Rights-Based Approach to Address Plastic Pollution: Extended Producer Responsibility and the Informal Waste Sector in ASEAN, 2024 (draft version).

and the informal sector in solutions and contributing to a sustainable and equitable future for all. The report aimed to facilitate the implementation of EPR through HRBA in the region and inform the INC process.

250. EPR was further supported through a dialogue on Extended Producer Responsibility and Training on the Human Rights Based Approach in the Plastic Value Chain and a webinar organized in July 2024 to introduce the draft of the report and collect additional insights, attracting 74 participants including representation of SMEs across the region. In line with the accountability principle, the project provided support to PROs in the Southeast Asian region through the development of an EPR Helpdesk. While this helpdesk supported some of the countries in the region, the setup was meant to be accessible to stakeholders globally.
251. In 2023, the “Corporate Sustainability and Environmental Rights in Asia” conference convened on 5 October in Bangkok, was jointly hosted by UNEP and UNDP. The conference featured an important panel discussion, titled “Plastic Pollution in Asia: Business Models Integrating a Rights-Based Approach.” The discussion brought together experts, industry leaders, scholars and advocated to address plastic pollution in the Asia-Pacific region. Moreover, as part of the UN Responsible Business and Human Rights Forum, held from September 25-27, in 2024, the SEA circular project organized the session titled “Bridging Rights and Responsibilities: Tackling Plastic Pollution together with the Informal Sector.”
252. Though the human rights framework, as presented above, could have been used as a means to monitor the use of a human rights-based approach across the project, this was in practice not done in a systematic way. Instead, human rights related activities were reported ad hoc, without reference to the three principles, and thus not indicating the extent to which progress was achieved on any of these three principles in terms of project support over the lifetime of the project.
253. The inclusion of a human rights-based approach has been strong throughout the project with a gender equality approach assumed to be part of this but not always sufficiently made explicit and targeted.

Rating for Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality: Satisfactory

Environmental and Social Safeguards

254. Social, economic and environmental safeguards were identified in the Inception Report including standards, their aim and the project response concerned (Inception report pages 31-32). The project consistently assessed the environmental as well as the socio-economic aspects of project interventions to a moderate level of quality, detail and consistency. Usually, focus was on risks related to the pandemic, in relation to the application of a human rights-based approach, changes in the political and institutional landscape and internal factors to the project. While risks were identified in each of the annual reports, addressing these risks or mitigating their effects was not consistently included for all the issues identified. In other cases, like the risk of COVID-19 in the 2020 annual report, project responses were provided without first providing an assessment of the issues and risks posed by COVID-19 in the region in terms of project implementation. In the extension phase, particularly the effects of the use of EPR on vulnerable groups, including the informal waste sector workers, were identified and recommendations made to address such risks. In this period there has been less explicit attention to risks in annual reporting, with a focus on challenges in the 2023 report. No details of the project’s environmental footprint were available.

Rating for Environmental and Social Safeguards: Satisfactory

Country Ownership and Driven-ness

255. In terms of the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project and the realization of outcome and intermediate stage level changes, the project was working primarily through COBSEA and the ministries represented in the intergovernmental agency and in particular through those represented in the Working Group on Marine Litter. This did lead to some constraints in particular in the extension phase, when the project moved to a focus on EPR related issues, as the government agencies that were represented in COBSEA were not necessarily the ones in charge of EPR-related issues. Though the government agencies participating in the SEA of Solutions covered a broader range of agencies, with the project partnering with COBSEA as the main implementing agency, this limited the project's opportunities in this respect.

Rating for Country Ownership and Driven-ness: Moderately Satisfactory

Communication and Public Awareness

256. Communication and public awareness were included as one of the project output areas and as such were well covered by the project, with targets and results as shown above under the analysis of the evaluation criterion of effectiveness concerning output 3. Through the use of social media and the development of short videos for online consumption, as well as selected advocacy campaigns, the project was able to reach a large number of stakeholders and consumers, beyond the targets identified in the design of the project.

Rating for Communication and Public Awareness: Highly Satisfactory

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance: Satisfactory

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

257. The project was highly relevant from a variety of perspectives. It was well aligned with UNEP's Medium Term Strategy and POW and can be seen as ahead of its time with the issues of marine litter more clearly identified in the latest MTS of UNEP. The project aligned well with donor and partner strategies. In an increasingly crowded field of plastic pollution and marine litter, the project maintained its relevance in particular through the use of a human rights-based, and gender equality approach, which has set the project apart from other plastics related initiatives. The project further enhanced its relevance once the INC process on a global plastics treaty got under way, which further enhanced the momentum in the region in terms of addressing marine litter and plastic pollution.
258. The project design was set up as a co-implementation among UNEP and COBSEA, with UNEP leading output 1 and 3 and COBSEA leading output 2, with both organizations involved in output 4. This setup worked well in terms of outputs 2 and 4. This as the focus in output 2 was on the relationship between science and policy making, which concerned a clear shared objective of both organizations, where in particular the marine litter assessment provided important results both at country and regional levels. Also, the national action planning and coordination across stakeholders in output 4 fitted well with the remit of both organizations. The project overall fitted well with UNEP's mandate, supporting inter-governmental cooperation and coordination, facilitating the science policy linkages, piloting initiatives and building capacities at various levels.
259. However, the co-implementation arrangement was less advantageous in terms of output 1, focused on market-based solutions. This as the mandate areas of UNEP and COBSEA in relation to this output only partly overlapped. In particular working at the upstream areas of the plastic value chain in terms of the use of virgin plastics and adaptation of the design of plastics products so that they produce less waste that cannot be recycled, important from a UNEP perspective, was not necessarily part of COBSEA's mandate. Also, the Ministries working on the upstream aspects of the plastics value chain were not necessarily the agencies represented in COBSEA. On the other hand, for COBSEA marine litter included other aspects beyond plastics in terms of ocean pollution. Thus, while COBSEA was a relevant partner to achieve part of the project objectives, it was less the case with some of the work conducted under output 1.
260. Human rights and gender equality were mainstreamed across the project, and this was informed by an initial assessment conducted by the Stockholm Environment Institute as well as by human rights and gender related analytical pieces. The use of a HRBA to marine litter and plastic pollution was relatively new, which related to the UN human rights council resolution, which was adopted by the General Assembly in 2022, regarding the right to a clean and healthy and sustainable environment. In the Inception phase of the project, the approach was further qualified through the use of the principles of participation and empowerment, accountability and transparency and non-discrimination and equality, in a framework across the four output areas of the project. However, the lack of the use of this framework in monitoring and reporting has left this approach without the necessary information on results achieved at the level of the principles concerned. In the extension phase the approach focused on the inclusion of vulnerable groups in EPR processes, which included gender and youth dimensions. Though human rights and gender equality were mainstreamed, the human rights-based approach and the framework of the Inception report were not used to inform and monitor the use of a broader people-centered approach across the project result areas.

261. Through the project, the plastic pollution and marine litter agenda has become more prominent in the region while at the same time regional cooperation on marine litter was enhanced through COBSEA and its WGML. With support from the project, COBSEA's capacity was further enhanced, including through the functioning of the WGML and the establishment of the Regional Activity Center in Bali as the lead technical support institute for COBSEA.
262. The initial phase of the project in terms of output 1 on market-based solutions focused much on plastic credits, informed by plastic footprint assessments and a focus on reduce, recycle and reuse, with pilot initiatives in selected countries and economic sectors. This shifted due to country needs as well as internal UNEP changes, with the project becoming part of the wider UNEP Plastics Initiative, with more focus on the upstream aspects of the value chain. This resonated well with country requirements and with the move of various countries towards developing legislation and implementation plans for Extended Producer Responsibility. Moreover, the start of the INC process played a role, with the need for UNEP, as the secretariat to the committee, to facilitate the process while at the same time abstaining from influencing the negotiation process.
263. A remarkable number of studies were conducted and training materials developed, while these were all made available through the SEA circular website and included in the GPML Regional Node for ease of access after project termination. The established knowledge base provides further opportunities to enhance access to the information concerned for policy makers as well as for the various types of stakeholders in marine litter and plastic pollution related issues.
264. In terms of science - policy linkages, the results in the development of a harmonized assessment system for marine litter across the participating countries stand out, which data can be used as a baseline and an important means for future comparison regarding the results of any forthcoming policy making and planning regarding reducing marine litter.
265. The outreach part of the project has been very successful in terms of reaching stakeholders as well as citizens of the participating countries, outperforming the targets set, making use of social media and short internet-based videos. However, the results in terms of changes in attitudes and behaviors of the target groups could not be ascertained due to the lack of a follow-up survey towards the end of the project.
266. Through the SEA of Solutions, UNEP and COBSEA developed a strong means of coordination and learning around plastic pollution and marine litter in the region. The annual events succeeded in bringing together all relevant stakeholders in the various parts of the plastics value chain. Through the SEA of Solutions, UNEP has shown the convening role that it has been able to play in terms of marine litter and plastic pollution, bringing key stakeholders together to share viewpoints and discuss from the various perspectives of their organizations, taking into consideration country and local contexts. With UNEP and COBSEA planning to continue the organization of the event towards the end of 2025, it has the potential to become one of the important legacies of the SEA circular project, sustaining coordination and learning across stakeholders in the plastics value chain in the region.
267. The project has been able to produce important results in each of the output areas of the project. The assessment of reaching outcome level results was constrained by the limitations of the project results framework, including missing targets on outputs in the results framework of the initial project design and missing data for several output level indicators in the initial project phase and some of the outcome level indicators in both project phases.

268. Reporting was much dependent on qualitative reporting and was primarily activity and less output and outcome focused. Nevertheless, reporting revealed a substantial number of achievements beyond what could have been assessed through the indicators in the results framework. This partly shows the innovative character of the project, in which it was difficult to define a suitable results framework from the start. For the extension phase, important improvements were made in this respect. Results at the outcome level could not clearly be confirmed, which was partly due to the high level of these results, including in terms of city and national level enhanced recycling and reduced pollution levels. The project did not necessarily have the potential to have results at these levels within the timeframe of six years.
269. Limitations in the design of the original project document and in the limitations in the project's ability to monitor its results need to be understood in the timeframe concerned, with plastic pollution and marine litter programming making use of a value chain approach being relatively new. Therefore, the project broke new ground in several ways, while its indicator-based monitoring system was not necessarily sufficiently equipped to capture results achieved at output and outcome levels.
270. In terms of sustainability, ownership of the issues in the region was in place in terms of the development of legal frameworks, policies and plans for plastic pollution and marine litter with a high level of interest in EPR. This will need to be translated in actual implementation of these policies and plans at national and subnational levels with especially the position of lower administrative levels of importance, given their role in waste management-related issues. Also, in terms of capacities, the prospect of sustainability was substantial with further opportunities to institutionalize marine litter training in the region. Sustainability of results was moderately likely in terms of the financial resources needed. While much has depended on the project level resources concerned, several on-going projects on plastic pollution and marine litter, as part of the UNEP Plastics initiative and beyond, can be expected to continue financial support in the region. Though national marine litter related planning may include a resource envelope, accessing such funding is not always easy or timely.
271. Integration of the SEA circular project under the UNEP Plastics Initiative in the extension phase of the project, and including this shift in the design of the extension phase, was useful as it brought the project more in line with other UNEP supported plastics initiatives in the region and responded to the wider UNEP programmatic theory of change. The project benefitted from the specific knowledge available in the Industry and Economy Division as well as from the capacity of the Division to recruit specialized consultants in a timely way. On the other hand, the shift in oversight and management responsibilities resulted in delays in implementation.
272. At country level, implementation depended on UNEP partnerships at the country level with sister UN agencies as well as NGOs like WWF to enable the organization to support country level initiatives, including the EPR study which gathered data in three of the six participating countries. With country level activities vital to obtain results, UNEP may need to strengthen its ability to inform the UN country level frameworks in terms of marine litter and plastic pollution.

UNEP Evaluation Office Validation of Performance Ratings:

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

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

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

In this instance the Evaluation Office validates the overall project performance rating at the **'Satisfactory'** level.

B. Summary of project findings and ratings

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

Table X: Summary of project findings and ratings⁶⁷

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
Strategic Relevance	Calculated score (using UNEP weighted rating spreadsheet)	S	Rating validated	S
1. Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and strategic priorities	The project in terms of its alignment with the MTS and POWs proved well aligned, both in terms of its design, and in terms of adaptations made in the inception phase as well as the extension phase of the project. However, there was no explicit indication of the anticipated contribution of the SEA circular project to the Expected Accomplishment indicators of the POW, which is a requirement in the UNEP Review Criteria Ratings Matrix.	S	Rating validated	S
2. Alignment to Donor/Partner strategic priorities	Though both the original and the extension phase document referred to the contribution of the project to the Sida strategy and partner priorities, they did not provide any details on how this was to be achieved. With the Sida strategies not containing indicators as such, it remained unclear how the project contributed to the donor programmatic strategy.	S	Rating validated	S
3. Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	While the project was fully aligned with global, regional, sub-regional and national priorities, there was no indication in relevant design documentation on anticipated identifiable contribution of the project to global, regional, sub-regional and/or national environmental results' indicator(s).	S	Rating validated	S
4. Complementarity with relevant existing interventions/coherence	The design of the intervention shows complementarity of results to other UNEP interventions as well as those of other organizations and there has been active engagement with other planned interventions in the design stage. However, there was no explicit identification of the benefits of such collaboration with interventions of other stakeholders.	S	Rating validated	S

⁶⁷ Most criteria will be rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated, also on a six-point scale, from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU).

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
Quality of Project Design	Rating using the Quality of project design score from the Inception Report.	S	Rating validated	S
Nature of External Context	Rating using the Quality of project design score from the Inception Report.	MU	COVID-19 appears to be the only factor that affected project implementation. Rating adjusted to Moderately Favourable.	MF
Effectiveness	Calculated score	MS	Rating validated	MS
1. Availability of outputs	MS, S, HS, S Achievement vary across the output areas, with compared to the indicators, outputs 2, 3 and 4 most successful and output 1 moderately successful. Moreover, the most important outputs to reach outcome level results are usually achieved with good quality and ownership of outputs.	S	The comment and ratings provided on the left columns indicate a 'Satisfactory' rating for this sub-criterion. However, in para. 160 of the report, the Rating assigned to this criterion is 'Moderately Satisfactory' ("With three of the outputs scoring MS and one scoring S, the overall score of availability of outputs resulted in MS"). Based on the analysis presented, which considers the formulation of results across both periods, the Evaluation Office validates the output level performance at Satisfactory.	S
2. Achievement of project outcomes	Reviewing the reach of outcome level changes, those most important for reaching of intermediate state level changes have been in place as far as government policy measures have been concerned, but this appears to be less the case in terms of consumer awareness and private sector efforts to reduce plastic pollution and marine litter. In particular in the extension phase of the project, much of the focus was on national level legal and policy changes and supporting development and implementation of national level plans.	MS	Rating validated	MS
3. Likelihood of impact	In the TOC, impact is formulated as: 'Less plastic wasted in South East Asia'. While making use of the UNEP tool provided and with the output level results partially achieved while also having achieved results at the outcome level and with assumptions and drivers both partially in place, the expected likelihood of the project contributing to impact level change can be considered to be 'Moderately Likely'.	ML	Rating validated	ML
Financial Management	Calculated score	HS	Rating validated	HS
1. Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures	Timely approval of cash advances, regular analysis of expenditure, timely report submission, timely revisions when needed	HS	Rating validated	HS
2. Completeness of project financial information	Assessed as satisfactory (see Annex VII)	S	Rating validated	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Communication between finance and project management staff	While communication was highly satisfactory during the project period, it proved more constrained after December 2024 due to termination of the project manager with the financial aspects of the project still to be finalized and closed without regular inputs from the project manager (for details see Annex VII)	S	Rating validated	S
Efficiency	The project had a single project extension with additional resources with justified amendments of the results framework with relevant sequencing of activities and the use of cost-effective approaches though targets could not always be verified or exceeded.	S	Rating validated	S
Monitoring and Reporting	Calculated score	S	Overall Rating adjusted to 'Moderately Satisfactory'.	MS
1. Monitoring design and budgeting	Notwithstanding improvements in the inception phase of the project, the results framework of the project had substantial limitations, which limited monitoring and evaluation.	MS	Para. 189 states: "What remained missing at the end of the inception phase was a clear monitoring framework, including means of verification and responsibilities for monitoring output level results". In addition, "the indicators at the output level of the results framework remained without baseline data and targets as well as means of verification and responsibilities concerned, limiting the conduct of performance assessment". Rating adjusted to "Moderately Unsatisfactory".	MU
2. Monitoring of project implementation	Even with adapted indicators, several of these lacked data in practice. Gender specific aspects of participation as well as other vulnerability characteristics were gathered on an ad hoc basis without further analysis of data to inform project management.	MS	Rating validated	MS
3. Project reporting	Notwithstanding the limitations of the results framework, project reporting made use of qualitative information based on the actual project implementation, which provided relevant data to inform project management with analysis in terms of lessons learned as part of annual reporting though with less attention to increased results over time.	S	Rating validated	S
Sustainability	Calculated score	ML	Rating validated	ML
1. Socio-political sustainability	Though overall political commitment appears to have increased, it has also shifted in some of the countries participating over time.	ML	Rating validated	ML
2. Financial sustainability	With several direct follow up support after SEA circular termination, financial sustainability is moderately likely, though in the longer term there appears to be a funding gap at COBSEA. Though notwithstanding the Middle-income country status of participating countries, access to government sources to address plastic pollution and marine litter is not necessarily to be taken for granted.	ML	Rating validated	ML

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Institutional sustainability	Institutional aspects have been enhanced and means put in place for the continued access to training and knowledge resources, though there remains a need to further enhance the number of staff with enhanced capacities in the organizations concerned.	L	Rating validated	L
Factors Affecting Performance	Calculated score	S	Rating validated	S
1. Preparation and readiness	While many aspects of preparation were included in the prodoc and addressed in the Inception phase of the project, the six months of the Inception phase proved not enough to address the human resource recruitment issues which constrained project implementation in the first year of the project's life.	MS	Rating validated	MS
2. Quality of project management and supervision	Project management and supervision changed in 2023 when the project shifted from being managed and supervised by the ROAP to the IE Division, which required a substantial amount of adaptation from staff and is largely seen as resulting in delays in project implementation. Adaptive management has been practiced in particular in the Inception Period and in the transition from the initial phase to the extension phase of the project, with in both periods implementation aspects of the project adapted to fit the context concerned. Outside of these periods, adaptive management has been constrained by the limitations of the project results framework in particular in the initial project period.	MS	Rating validated	MS
3. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	The project was informed by a stakeholder analysis with further consultations of stakeholders during project implementation, including through various roundtables in the initial phase of the project and more broadly through the SEA of Solutions, sharing learnings. While livelihood related aspects have been incorporated as part of the use of a human rights-based approach, this was limited to identified specific groups rather than used more broadly.	S	Rating validated	S
4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	The inclusion of a human rights-based approach has been strong throughout the project with a gender equality approach assumed to be part of this but not always sufficiently made explicit and targeted.	S	Rating validated	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
5. Environmental and social safeguards	Social, economic and environmental safeguards were identified in the Inception Report including standards, their aim and the project response concerned. The project consistently assessed the environmental as well as the socio-economic aspects of project interventions, particularly the effects of the use of EPR in the extension phase of the project on vulnerable groups, including the informal waste sector workers. No details of the project's environmental footprint were available.	S	Rating validated	S
6. Country ownership and driven-ness	In terms of the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project and the realization of outcome and intermediate stage level changes, the project was working primarily through COBSEA and the ministries represented in the intergovernmental agency. While this proved beneficial for output 2 on marine litter assessment, it meant some limitations in the other outputs and in the extension phase of the project as the government agencies that were represented in COBSEA were not necessarily the ones in charge of EPR related issues.	MS	Rating validated	MS
7. Communication and public awareness	Communication and public awareness were included as one of the project output areas and as thus was well covered by the project, with targets and results as shown above under the analysis of the evaluation criterion of effectiveness concerning output 3.	HS	Rating validated	HS
Overall Project Performance Rating	Calculated score	S		S

C. Lessons learned⁶⁸

Lesson Learned #1:	In a development intervention the use of a human rights-based approach can point to ways in which to prevent that groups that are already vulnerable and marginalized, get even further behind in the development process through changes concerned. In an increasingly crowded field of plastic pollution and marine litter, this proved a comparative advantage of UNEP as a UN agency and a way in which it could provide uniquely added value.
Context/comment:	In most development contexts there are winners, but there also could be losers, those groups of people that lose out on opportunities due to their position in society and/or their economic conditions or other aspects of marginalization. In the context of the project, this concerned in particular waste workers in the informal sector, but also coastal communities as well as women, girls and young people in these communities. Additional measures would be needed to ensure that developments in terms of management approaches to plastic waste pollution and marine litter do not further marginalize such groups but engage with them in the development process.
Lesson Learned #2:	Rather than working with individual enterprises, results in terms of market-based solutions could be more readily obtained through working with membership-based business organizations, which could create multiplier effects throughout their membership and related stakeholders in the plastic value chain.
Context/comment:	In addition to single companies, the SEA circular project, as part of Output 1 on Market based solutions, worked with the Indonesian Business Council for Sustainable development, the Food Industry Asia and the Federation of Thai Industries. Participation of the leadership of these organizations in roundtables, fora and dialogues as keynote speakers or as resource people in training programmes created a ripple effect among the members of these organizations and other stakeholders in the activities concerned.
Lesson Learned #3:	Regional Guidance on Harmonized National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes can have multiple results, informing national level policy making and action plans as well as catalyzing actions across the region and facilitating an integrated approach to the cross-boundary concerns of marine litter and plastic pollution.

⁶⁸ Lessons learned reflect the new knowledge or understanding gained by the experience of implementing a project that is applicable to, and useful in, other similar contexts. UNEP, Glossary of Results Definitions, Version 8, December 2023.

Context/comment:	Training on national level monitoring of marine litter in the region, making use of a harmonized approach resulted in an increased understanding of marine litter in the participating countries, which in turn could inform national level planning. On the other hand, the harmonized approach allowed for comparable results across the participating countries, which allowed for them to publish results in a regional study, something which they were less inclined to do at national level. This is all the more important, given the cross-boundary character of marine litter.
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Lesson Learned #4:	For a regional project it is useful to establish partner relationships through the relevant mother organization at a global or regional level before working with each of the partner organizations at the country level which can save time as well as enable the grounding of such country relationships in a regional approach and perspective.
Context/comment:	With the SEA circular project moving from the UNEP ROAP to the UNEP IE Division, it could make use more easily of some of the global partnerships that UNEP had established, which proved beneficial for the development of partnerships in the region and at country level. Given numerous opportunities, a strategic plan was needed to prioritize steps concerned in a realistic timeframe.

Lesson Learned #5:	Temporary Job Openings can enable a more rapid recruitment process once a project has started and prevent long recruitment processes that result in long term gaps in project staffing when staff have left their position after the start of the project.
Context/comment:	UNEP staff recruitment processes usually take a considerable time. Though temporary job openings cannot be used at the start of a project, they can be useful once some of the initially recruited staff leaves their post and a temporary job opening could temporarily fill the position until a more permanent staff has been recruited.

D. Recommendations

274. Below the recommendations are presented based on the findings and analysis of the review and the conclusions concerned. They are addressed to UNEP and its partners, focusing on ways in which the project results can be used to inform ongoing plastic pollution and marine litter programming. Recommendations have been informed by the viewpoints of respondents to key informant interviews and the mini survey, in which questions concerning recommendations were consistently included.

Recommendation #1:	For UNEP, Sida and partners to follow up on the momentum created in the region in terms of support to plastic pollution and marine litter, integrating learning obtained through the SEA circular project, making use of a value chain approach, in ongoing marine litter and plastic pollution projects, in all parts of the UNEP Plastics Initiative and beyond, and assessing the need for additional support in the region
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The SEA circular project has been implemented from August 2018 to December 2024 and has been able to support the creation of considerable momentum in the region in terms of assessing marine litter and addressing issues of plastic pollution at source. In its approach, the project has made use of a value chain approach, including all phases of the value chain from production to marketing, consumption and ultimately wasting of products. This has resulted in a substantial amount of learnings that needs to be included in other on-going as well as newly designed initiatives of UNEP and partners, in this way building on the momentum created.
Priority Level: ⁶⁹	Important recommendation
Type of Recommendation: ⁷⁰	UNEP and Partners
Responsibility:	UNEP Plastics Initiative, Sida and partners
Proposed implementation timeframe:	Throughout 2025

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

- Findings: 90-97; 105-108; 159-164; Conclusions: 257, 261-266

⁶⁹ Priority levels of recommendations in line with UNEP guidelines (UNEP, Template for presenting Recommendations and Lessons Learned within a Main Review Report, July 2021):

Critical recommendation (High level): Address significant and/or widespread deficiencies in governance, risk management, or internal control processes such that likelihood of achieving the programmed objectives is greatly reduced, or the provisions of relevant principles or policies are compromised.

Important recommendation (Medium level): Address reportable deficiencies or weaknesses in governance, risk management, or internal control processes such that likelihood of achieving the programmed objectives is reduced, or the provisions of relevant principles or policies are threatened.

Opportunity for improvement (Low level): Address distinctive challenges and comprise suggestions to improve performance that do not meet the criteria of either critical or important recommendations.

⁷⁰ Types of recommendations in line with UNEP guidelines:

Project: where the actions of those UNEP staff managing the evaluation can address the recommendation or the underlying problem independently.

Partners: Where the actions to be taken to resolve the problem require approval/leadership from UNEP partners (e.g., Executing Agencies; National Governments/Ministries; Research Organizations; Private Sector; Steering Committees; Academia; UN agencies). In such a case, the Project Manager/Task Manager would need to pass on the recommendation, effectively/substantively, to the Partners (evidence would be an email; PowerPoint; meeting notes, etc.).

Recommendation #2:	For UNEP, COBSEA and partners to support and enhance the use of the knowledge products developed through the SEA circular project, through improving accessibility including by: tailoring knowledge products for specific stakeholder needs including those of policy makers, translating documents in languages of the participating countries, repackaging the existing knowledge base for ease of access, and providing a meta-analysis of the knowledge base that provides an overview of the learnings and identifies remaining gaps
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The SEA circular project has produced a substantial amount of relevant knowledge products in relation to marine litter and plastic pollution in the region. While these products have been made available on the GPML node and the UNEP web resources, additional efforts will be needed to make these resources accessible to and used by the various stakeholders concerned. Also, once the INC process will be finalized, UNEP, COBSEA and partners will have more opportunities to propagate the results of the SEA circular project as UNEP will no longer be limited in this respect by its role as facilitator of the INC process.
Priority Level:	Important recommendation
Type of Recommendation:	UNEP with partner support when/where required
Responsibility:	UNEP Plastics Initiative together with COBSEA Secretariat
Proposed implementation timeframe:	The remainder of 2025

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

- Findings: 106-110; 128-129; 133-138; 148-150; Conclusions: 263-264

Recommendation #3:	For UNEP to enhance monitoring of its marine litter and plastic pollution-oriented projects and programming, focusing on the assessment of relevant output and outcome level changes, as well as intermediate level changes required to reach outcome level results, enhancing in this way results-based management and increasing the likelihood of contributing to outcome, intermediate state and impact level results
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project results framework, while including output and outcome level results and indicators, has been very activity oriented, with many activities specified in the framework. There was a lack of meta-data to sufficiently specify many of the indicators and an absence of targets on output level indicators in the initial project document. Though in the extension phase this improved at the output level, there remained significant gaps at the outcome level. This meant that monitoring has been primarily activity tracking and output oriented with limited attention to whether these activities and outputs contributed to the foreseen outcomes. This has limited the application of results-based and adaptive management.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement

Type of Recommendation	UNEP and partners
Responsibility:	UNEP Plastics Initiative
Proposed implementation timeframe:	For the remainder of the UNEP Plastics Initiative period

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

- Findings: 187-203; Conclusions: 267-269

Recommendation #4:	For UNEP to strengthen its support to sister UN agencies at the country level, through cooperation between the IE Division and ROAP, ensuring the inclusion of marine litter and plastic pollution aspects in the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and in the resulting Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks at country level
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	For UNEP, as a non-residential UN agency, work at the country level needs to run through ROAP and the UN country teams with opportunities for UNEP to be part of and to inform the CCA process and the development of the UNSDCF in selected countries. Such support can be an important way to make use of the learnings of the SEA circular project at the country level and would need to make use of the linkages between the UNEP Plastics Initiative and ROAP staff responsible for country level policy issues.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation	UNEP
Responsibility:	UNEP Plastics Initiative and selected staff of UNEP ROAP
Proposed implementation timeframe:	The remainder of 2025 and during the lifetime of the UNEP Plastics Initiative

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

- Findings: throughout; Conclusions: 272

Recommendation #5:	For UNEP, COBSEA and partners to consider enhancing sustainability of results of this and other marine litter and plastic pollution related projects, through attention to technical support to country level involvement in the INC process, the financial aspects of addressing plastic pollution and marine litter once the INC process is finalized and by working with universities in the region to establish marine litter and other forms of plastic pollution monitoring in their curricula
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Sustainability of results usually depends on three key factors, ownership of the issues by government and other stakeholders concerned; organizational and technical capacities developed to sustain results; and financial resources available and used to continue results. It is the INC process and a resulting internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, that would sustain political support.

	While during the negotiations on the International Plastics Treaty, it will be difficult for the project to address financing as part of its activities, due to the role of UNEP as secretariat to the INC. However, once the INC is concluded, there will be enhanced opportunities for UNEP to engage in this critical aspect of plastic pollution and marine litter programming and which aspect is part of the TOC of the UNEP Plastics initiative. In terms of development of a harmonized monitoring approach to marine litter, the project partnered with CSIRO through which training materials and a handbook were developed. A next step in this process, which could enhance sustainability of the results of the SEA circular project, concerns the opportunity to institutionalize marine litter training (and possibly other forms of plastic pollution training) in the curricula of universities in the region.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation:	UNEP and partners
Responsibility:	UNEP Plastics Initiative, COBSEA Secretariat and partners
Proposed implementation timeframe:	Once the INC process has been terminated regarding the financial aspects and for the remainder of the year for both other opportunities

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

- Findings: 204-220; Conclusions: 270

Recommendation #6:	For UNEP to consider enhancing the linkages between environmental benefits of reduced plastic pollution and marine litter and the results for people and communities, including their socio-economic, health and cultural implications, with a focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups, including both their present situation as well as their aspirations.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project in terms of the use of a HRBA has focused, in the extension phase of the project, on the inclusion of the informal waste sector in the discussion and negotiations around EPR. While this has been a useful and important approach, in its programming it would be beneficial for UNEP to apply a people-oriented perspective in terms of all stages of the plastics value chain and in terms of assessment as well as addressing of marine litter and plastic pollution related issues.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation	UNEP and partners
Responsibility:	UNEP Plastics Initiative and partners
Proposed implementation timeframe:	For the remainder of 2025 and beyond in terms of the UNEP Plastics Initiative

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

- Findings: 233–253; Conclusions: 260

Recommendation #7:	For UNEP to enhance aspects of project evaluation in particular in terms of Terminal Project Reviews managed by the project internally, including : • Starting the review process within the implementation period of the project, when partners have a higher level of interest in participation compared to after project termination • Retain the project manager for the time of the evaluation in order to facilitate the review process, including making available secondary resources and facilitating the organization of interviews with a variety of project stakeholders • Ensure the availability of a database of project related documents which are needed to inform the terminal review
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The present review was started after the main project activities were finalized by December 2024 and the project manager had been terminated and had moved on. This posed substantial issues for the implementation of the review, which lacked the support of the long time SEA circular project manager in terms of access to documentation as well as ability to engage project partners to participate in the review.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation	UNEP
Responsibility:	UNEP Divisions managing Terminal Project Evaluations and UNEP Evaluation Office (in terms of guidelines and their implementation)
Proposed implementation timeframe:	For the remainder of 2025 and beyond

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

- Section Review Methods: 43, Table 2

ANNEX I. DETAILS REGARDING STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

1. Coherence, collaboration, complementarity: To what extent, and in what ways, was the work of the project complementary or coherent with other UNEP work, either with the PRC-approved project, PCP or Sub-programme or elsewhere in UNEP's Programme of Work

The SEA circular project, with its start in late 2018, was one of the earlier projects with a focus on marine litter and plastic pollution in the Asia and Pacific region. At the start the project it was part of project with PIMS ID 02010 regarding 'Promotion and Delivery of Environmentally Sound Waste Management Technologies and Methods and in-Country Technical and Advisory Support'. This project had a complex geographical coverage, including Global, Regional, National, and Local parts in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean and West Asia. The approach of this project was waste management oriented with a particular focus on city level and private sector engagement.⁷¹ While the overarching project had a wide approach, SEA circular explicitly focused on non-investment interventions in light of the expertise and comparative advantage of UNEP and COBSEA, the two implementing agencies. The main pathways for the project included:

- reduction in unnecessary use of plastics – especially single-use plastic packaging, and
- the diversion of plastics from waste streams ("Less plastic wasted") through re-use and recycling

The project was not focused on investments toward solid waste management and wastewater treatment, though some of its activities in terms of assessments could inform such a focus by other agencies.

The less-than-optimal alignment of SEA circular with the 'mother' project can be understood in the context of UNEP, where every project needs to find a 'home'. Nevertheless, the project contributed to the overarching objective of 'Reduced spillage of plastic to waterways and to the coastal areas in southeast Asia', and 'Reduction in marine plastic litter', to which also waste management related interventions contributed. Moreover, the project appeared in line with part of the 'mother' project outcome of 'Policies and practices for waste prevention developed and implemented in project countries, using UNEP guidance'.

With the 'mother' project ending in 2023, the SEA circular project became part of the UNEP Plastics Initiative of the UNEP IE Division working on 'Accelerating a global circular plastic economy to reduce plastic pollution and its impacts'. This coincided with the extension phase of the project, in which its results framework could be adjusted to enhance the project's fit with the new 'mother' project. In this phase, SEA circular focused in particular as part of output 1 on EPR which was in line with the approach taken by the UNEP Plastics Initiative, moving upstream to address plastic product design related issues, in addition to reduce, recycle and reuse. The alignment

⁷¹ SEA circular contributed to Output E on Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South- East Asia with other outputs of the mother project waste management oriented. UN environment programme, Validated Terminal Review of the UNEP Project 'Promotion and Delivery of Environmentally Sound Waste Management Technologies and Methods and in-Country Technical and Advisory Support' (PIMS ID 02010) 2018-2023, July 2024.

of the SEA circular project to the UNEP Plastics Initiative remained somewhat artificial with the main parts of the SEA circular project being designed before the 'mother' project in which it needed to fit.

The UNEP Plastics Initiative is not a real implementation project but is a coordination platform hosting several other plastic pollution and marine litter related projects in order to avoid duplication and enhance complementarity. The project document of the UNEP Plastics Initiative includes 18 interventions, of which the SEA circular project is one, with a total value of 78 million USD and initiatives varying in funding size, ranging from 30,000 to 40 million USD.

The UNEP Plastics Initiative brings several initiatives together. Some of the other projects are managed through other UNEP divisions, including ecosystems, science, law and communication divisions. In addition to the SEA circular project, there are other regional projects part of the UNEP Plastics Initiative, including one other in the Asia Pacific region which, however, covers only few countries in South Asia and the Pacific. Moreover, the project includes the Mekong Delta project phase 2 and an Africa regional project with few countries covered.

With the development of Programme Coordination Projects (PCP) in UNEP in 2023, SEA circular became part of the Circularity in Sectors PCP, which was one of three PCPs of the Chemicals and pollution action subprogramme. SEA circular's extension phase was included in this PCP as a new project concept, part of the high impact sector Plastics.⁷² While it appears that the PCPs will not be continued after their present lifetime, i.e. December 2025, it is expected that the issues concerned will be taken up by different branches and units within the divisions of the organization.

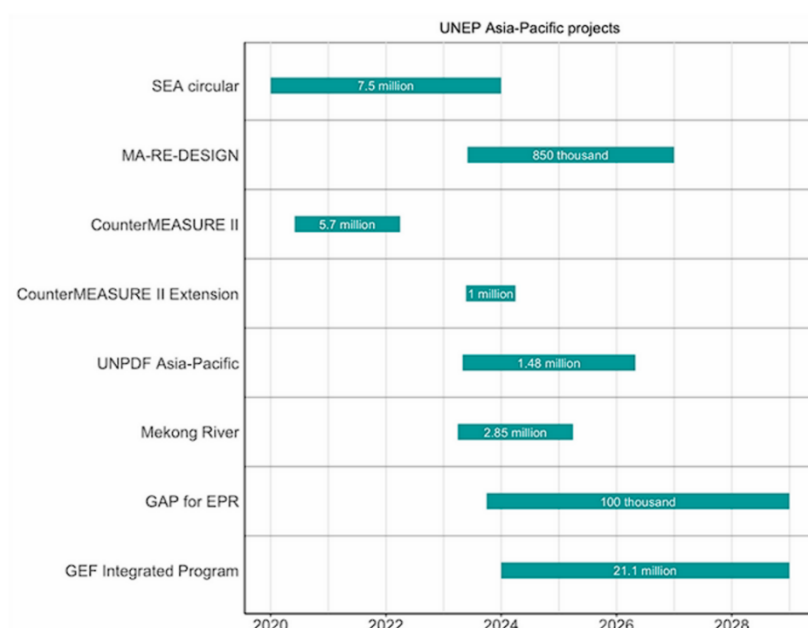
Though there were other projects on the same topic in the region, (see details in the Figure below), there was no real overlap in terms of activities. For example, GIZ and WWF worked in particular on global action on EPR as well as on country level issues while the SEA circular project focused on a regional approach to EPR making use of a rights-based perspective. Moreover, SEA circular supported the development of an EPR helpdesk as part of the division of issues across the organizations.

With its presence at country level in the SEA circular participating countries, WWF facilitated the conduct of the regional EPR study of SEA circular, supporting identification of contacts and the conduct of the fieldwork that was part of the study. WWF benefitted from the study as well as from the regional level coordination of the SEA circular project, including through the SEA of Solutions, with WWF not having a regional level presence. Thus, while working on the same topic, there was a level of mutual support in this respect across the agencies, making use of the comparative advantages of each organization. The same goes for other plastic related projects, including the Countermeasure project, led by the UNEP Ecosystems division and the MA-RE design project led by GIZ with a focus on Thailand.

For details on alignment with UNEP's Medium Term Strategy and Programme of Work see Section A: Strategic Relevance, par. 69 to 76 above.

⁷² Other high impact sectors concerned textiles, mining and metals and electronics. UNEP, "Circularity in Sectors" Coordination Project.

Figure: Timelines and budgets (US dollars) of plastic-related projects in the Asia-Pacific region



2. Added value: What added value did the work of the evaluand bring to UNEP's work in this thematic area and how is it visible, including in relation to poverty?

In the field of plastic pollution and marine litter there has been an increasing number of organizations and agencies getting involved in projects and programmes to address these issues. UNEP's role and added value in terms of the SEA circular project has focused on the comparative advantages of the organization. First of all, this concerned working with governments and related mechanisms at country, regional and global levels. The partnership with COBSEA as an intergovernmental mechanism was important in this respect even though this was more beneficial in some than in other outputs of the project. UNEP was seen by other stakeholders as an organization that has an understanding of the political landscape concerning plastic pollution and marine litter in relation to environmental and human development related issues.

At the regional level, the project played an important convening and coordinating role. This was underpinned by the good relationships of UNEP as an organization at the national and regional level with key development stakeholders, including national level government, other UN agencies, development banks, civil society organizations and academia. This was noticeable from the leading role that the project played in the organization of the SEA of Solutions as an annual event, attracting more and more relevant stakeholders to the discussions and learning exchanges.

While the project in its start included a focus on piloting of approaches at the country or sub-national level, over time the project moved its interventions more upstream, aiming to support plastic pollution and marine litter related policy making, with a primary focus on EPR legislation and planning. The project combined this move towards policy level change, with a focus on inclusion of informal sector waste workers in EPR schemes, as in the South East Asian contexts, these are the key workers in terms of waste collection in the region. Making use of a rights-based approach, a characteristic of UN agencies, the project supported the inclusion of this marginalized and left behind group, trying to avoid that they would be the ones to be negatively affected by this change and be further marginalized. The project aimed for

this group to be included in this change and possibly one of the beneficiaries, as they have been managing waste in the region. As part of a rights-based approach, the project made use of a gender equality perspective, as the work arrangements in waste management have gender aspects, with women and girls as well as children and youth often having to face more detrimental conditions.

An advantage of the project has been its use of a value chain approach, which has allowed the organization to look at the whole life cycle of plastic products, including aspects of the design of products, which can enhance options for reduce, recycle and reuse and thus reduce waste in the first place.

From a more technical perspective, it has been the project's ability to connect science and policy making that have been a comparative advantage and resulting in added value by the project. This has been exemplified by the role of the project in the development of the harmonized marine litter assessment approach, which has provided regionally comparable data on marine litter in the region, used to inform policy making and planning. The latter was facilitated through the project's partnering with COBSEA in which members of the Working Group on Marine Litter interacted with policy makers, both within the intergovernmental mechanism as within their own country specific government systems.

Finally, the project's inclusion of a consumer-based approach has been a strong aspect of the project, closely working with the UNEP Communication Division to organize advocacy campaigns, like the Beat Plastic Pollution campaign, and making use of social and other virtual media to reach citizens, including adolescents and youth, in the region. The project was able to reach substantial numbers of people through these communication initiatives, performing beyond expectations.

3. Effects of the COVID pandemic: What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how have any changes affected the project's performance?

The COVID-19 pandemic and the responses of governments, businesses, communities and individuals to reduce the risk of contracting the disease resulted amongst others in a surge in the volume of plastic waste, in particular single use plastics while the demand for recycled plastics dropped. Moreover, waste gathering and sorting by the informal sector dropped dramatically. Also, the tourism sector faced major challenges, making it more difficult to engage stakeholders in project activities while the sector had been one of the targets in the early days of the project.

The project adapted to the pandemic through changing the ways in which it operated, shifting to online meetings and training and applying working from home arrangements, cooperating closely with partners on the ground in target countries as well as postponing activities that could not be adapted or conducted virtually. While virtual meetings often enabled enhanced participation and led to cost savings, interaction with and active engagement of stakeholders and informal discussions to advance issues, in particular with government partners, proved more difficult in larger virtual meeting settings. Though in general, virtual means were considered and accepted as the 'new normal' by many project partners, many stakeholders seemed to be experiencing virtual meeting 'fatigue' after some time.

Adaptation of some of the project initiatives to the pandemic included conducting pollution hotspot assessments based on secondary data in Malaysia, applying a rapid assessment survey approach of waste leakage in selected cities in partnership with

UN-Habitat,⁷³ and developing hybrid training modules on marine litter monitoring. Field activities involved extra care towards safety and hygiene protocols, while delays in activities were experienced due to movement restrictions as part of government pandemic control measures.

With individuals of vulnerable groups often less likely to be able to participate in online meetings, the project sought increased involvement of civil society organizations that worked with or represented disadvantages and vulnerable groups, like waste pickers and other informal waste workers.

The crisis exacerbated risks to disadvantaged groups from increased (hazardous) pollution, loss of jobs and income, and limited access to social and health services, while it shifted priorities of governments and businesses to hygiene measures, with reduced emphasis on sustainable and inclusive practices, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable.

The pandemic had severe economic consequences in relation to the lockdowns that occurred throughout 2020 and 2021 during the various waves of resurgence of the virus in the countries in the region. This meant that private sector actors had less opportunity to work with the project as they were affected in terms of people's health as well as in economic terms by the pandemic, limiting their opportunities to cooperate.

Notwithstanding adaptations made, the pandemic was identified as one of the reasons for delay in the project reaching its results and as justification for a project extension beyond the initial timeframe in the Mid-term review. In the second half of 2022, i.e. during the end phase of the initial project period, the direct effects of the pandemic diminished, with increased vaccination rates for COVID-19 in the region and beyond, while the economic effects of the pandemic would linger on for a longer time.⁷⁴

In the early stages of the pandemic, there was an opportunity identified to make use of resources provided to address the crisis to "build back better" and seize opportunities for leapfrogging to sustainable production, consumption, and waste management, enhancing a 'green' recovery.

While several references were made to 'building back better', no adaptations were made to the results framework based on COVID. It was assumed that the effects of the pandemic could be dealt with in the existing project framework and its theory of change. Issues concerned were included in existing project activities, including round tables and the SEA of Solutions events. So, while the project did address issues in relation to the pandemic and its increased levels of plastic debris, in particular single use plastics, it did this within the existing project results framework and theory of change.

⁷³ Due to continued travel restrictions in 2020, the project was required to postpone on-site hotspot assessments of marine litter accumulation in cooperation with East China Normal University. However, to continue progress, the project partnered with UN-Habitat and GPML to develop a regional model and map of waste leakage and conduct city-level surveys and waste flow analyses (including from informal activities) applying the WaCT, to inform priority investments and project proposals to improve waste infrastructure and inform evidence-based regulations/policies. An interagency agreement with UN-Habitat was signed in Q4 of 2020 and activities were completed in 2021. SEA circular Annual Report 2020, Key informant interviews.

⁷⁴ The annual reports of 2023 and 2024 did no longer contain any references to COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Contribution to the host project, PCP / Sub-programme: To what extent has the project contributed to the host project, PCP and sub-programme of which it is a part

The premises of the project is that plastic pollution and marine litter cannot be addressed by waste management improvements alone but that other initiatives are required along the plastics value chain, including in terms of the design of products. Moreover, it has become clear that one cannot recycle one's way out of the plastic crisis. Therefore, a value chain approach is seen as a useful and effective perspective.

The UNEP Plastics Initiative is set to contribute to the following results:⁷⁵

Directly to: Chemicals and Pollution Action Sub-programme

- (i) Number of Governments that, with UNEP support, are developing or implementing policies, strategies, legislation or action plans that promote sound chemicals and waste management and/or the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and the existing framework on chemicals and waste
- (ii) Number of Governments developing or implementing policies, strategies and mechanisms to prevent or reduce waste and ensure environmentally sound waste treatment or disposal, including in the context of disaster or conflict-related environmental emergencies, with UNEP support
- (iii) Number of policy, regulatory, financial and technical measures developed with UNEP support to reduce pollution in air, water, soil and the ocean
- (iv) Reduction in releases of pollutants to the environment achieved with UNEP support

Indirectly to: Environmental Governance Sub-programme

- i) Number of countries supported by UNEP under the Montevideo Programme in developing and implementing environmental rule of law and related technical and institutional capacities to address internationally agreed environmental goals

Indirectly to: Finance and Economic Transformations Sub-programme

- i) Number of economic, finance, industry and trade policies, practices, partnerships and initiatives put in place or implemented to enable just transitions
- ii) Number of business alliances, principles, practices, standards or frameworks established or adopted with UNEP support to enhance environmental sustainability
- iii) Number of consumer information tools and measures, educational approaches and advocacy and awareness-raising events and products that inform decision making, choices and changes in behavior towards enhanced environmental sustainability, developed with UNEP support

Indirectly to: Digital Transformations Sub-programme

- i) Number of digital platforms deployed as a result of UNEP support for automatically monitoring global progress against climate, nature and chemicals and pollution targets to support transparency, predictive analytics and risk identification
- ii) Number of business alliances, partnerships and networks leveraging environmental data and digital transformation approaches to incentivize environmental sustainability and a circular economy within financial markets
- iii) Number of digital applications and engagement platforms created with UNEP support to support electronic governance and enhance public participation in environmental monitoring, consensus-building, decision-making and digital transformation linked to climate, nature and chemicals and pollution actions, including the reduction of

⁷⁵ UN Environment Programme, ONE UNEP Plastic Project on Accelerating a Global Circular Plastic Economy to Reduce Plastic Pollution and its Impacts, Project Document, May 2023.

environmental digital technology inequalities in impact chains, consumer behaviors and policymaking

However, the project document of the UNEP Plastics Initiative does not make clear which sub-project, like the SEA circular extension phase, is meant to contribute to which results.

5. Monitoring: How well was the Monitoring Plan of the evaluand contributing to that of the host PRC-approved project, PCP or sub-programme?

Project reporting has been donor oriented in terms of annual progress reports. This reporting used the indicators of the project results framework as well as qualitative data in relation to results identified in the framework. In the initial phase of the project, internal UNEP reporting contributed to the 'Promotion and Delivery of Environmentally Sound Waste Management Technologies and Methods and in-Country Technical and Advisory Support' project of the International Environmental Technology Centre in Osaka, Japan. In the extension phase, this shifted towards contribution to monitoring of the UNEP Plastics Initiative of the UNEP IE Division. Monitoring and reporting relations of the project with higher levels of the subprogramme were reportedly not very stringent.

6. Reporting: How are the activities and achievements of the evaluand reflected in the reporting of the host PRC-approved project, PCP or Subprogramme?

In line with the project document, the SEA circular project was to contribute to the following:

- PoW outcomes 3B, 3C
- PoW direct outcomes 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.8, 3.9, 3.11, 3.13
- PoW Indicator(s): P(i), P(ii), P(iii), P(iv)

The SEA circular project has reported in terms of the indicators at output and outcome level changes of the project results framework.

The project was able to contribute to POW indicators:⁷⁶

ii Number of governments developing or implementing policies, strategies and mechanisms to prevent or reduce waste and indicator

iii Number of policy, regulatory, financial and technical measures developed with UNEP support to reduce pollution in air, water, soil and the ocean.

This was not the case in terms of indicator iv on Reduction in releases of pollutants to the environment achieved with UNEP support, as such data were not available at country level with the data on marine litter from output 2 providing a baseline but without comparison over time so far. POW Indicator i focused on waste management and was thus less applicable to the SEA circular project.

7. Leverage gained: To what extent, and in what ways, did the work under the project enable UNEP to drive efficiency and effectiveness at any level above that of the

⁷⁶ UN Environment Programme, For People and Planet, Annex I: UNEP Programme of Work and Budget for 2022-2023 (which was extended to 2025).

evaluated itself, at the level of the outcomes, intermediate states and/or long-lasting impact of a PRC-approved project, at the level of the POW Direct Outcomes

The SEA circular project has given the issues of plastic pollution and marine litter increased attention, both within the COBSEA intergovernmental framework as in the governments of participating countries. This increased the capacities of the countries concerned, which enhanced their abilities to participate in the INC process that got started, including through the provision of a joint statement of the participating COBSEA countries at the start of the negotiations.

In its first phase, the project deepened its relations with UNEP's Law Division, as well as partnerships with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), leveraging a larger pool of expertise for capacity building and outreach on the use of a human rights-based approach.

In the extension phase of the project, the SEA circular became part of a larger whole of projects all providing inputs to reaching of the shared objectives of the UNEP Plastics Initiative. The term project is confusing in this respect as the UNEP Plastics Initiative concerns in practice a programme⁷⁷ with components that aim for shared objectives and in this way, leverage results at a level beyond each of the individual initiatives.

8. Governance: What has been the usefulness of the governance setup of the project?

For details on project governance see the main report, under the issue of Quality of Project Management and Supervision as part of the Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues, in particular par. 224-229.

⁷⁷ A programme is a group of synergistic projects contributing to a common outcome(s) and managed in a coordinated way to obtain benefits not available from managing the projects individually. UNEP, Glossary of Results Definitions, version 8, December 2023.

ANNEX II. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Table 5: Response to stakeholder comments received but not (fully) accepted by the reviewers, where appropriate

Page Ref	Stakeholder comment	Reviewer Response
76-80	Relevance to SIDA priorities The SEA circular project is highly relevant to the Strategy for Sweden's regional development cooperation with Asia and the Pacific Region in 2022-2026, particularly Sida's priorities on environmental protection and human rights. Although the strategy has no specific indicators, SEA circular (Phase 1) contributed to informing these priorities and vice versa.	Making use of the UNEP tool for performance assessment, the rating is at Satisfactory as one of the requirements was not reached in the original and extension design documents: Anticipated identified contribution(s) to donor/partners' reported results' indicator(s). This limitation was also indicated in the text of the draft and final reports.

ANNEX III. REVIEW FRAMEWORK/MATRIX

Review criteria	Review questions	Review sub-questions
1. Strategic Relevance	To what extent was the project suited to the priorities and policies of donors, UNEP, COBSEA, implementing countries, targeted beneficiaries, including participating organizations and other country level stakeholders	Alignment with needs of stakeholders at regional and country level Complementarity with existing interventions (at design and inception phase) Relevance to poverty related objectives
2. Quality of Project Design	What was the quality of the design of the project, including the design of the extension phase of the project	Aspects of project design as included in the UNEP format concerned
3. Nature of External Context	What was the nature of the external context in terms of its favourability to the implementation of the project	Aspects of External context as included in the UNEP format concerned
4. Effectiveness	To what extent have results been realized?	Output level results realized Outcome level results realized Likelihood of impact Results of a human rights-based and gender equality approach
5. Financial Management	What has been the quality of the financial management system in place and its implementation?	Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures Completeness of financial information Communication between financial and project management staff
6. Efficiency	To what extent have project activities been efficient in reaching of output level results?	Cost effectiveness of project implementation Timeliness of project implementation and efficient sequencing of activities Human resource management

7. Monitoring and reporting	What has been the quality of project monitoring and reporting?	Quality of monitoring design and budgeting Quality of monitoring of project implementation Quality of project reporting
8. Sustainability	To what extent are the results achieved by the project likely to be maintained without additional support?	Socio-political sustainability Financial sustainability Institutional sustainability
9. Factors and Processes Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues	i. Preparation and Readiness (part of assessment of Project Design Quality) ii. Quality of Project Management and Supervision iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity v. Environmental and Social Safeguards vi. Country Ownership and Driven-ness vii. Communication and Public Awareness	
Strategic issues	Strategic questions	
1. Coherence. Collaboration, complementarity	To what extent, and in what ways, was the work of the project complementary or coherent with other UNEP work, either with the PRC-approved project, PCP or Sub-programme or elsewhere in UNEP's Programme of Work	
2. Added value	What added value did the work of the evaluand bring to UNEP's work in this thematic area and how is it visible, including in relation to poverty?	
3. Effects of the COVID pandemic	What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how have any changes affected the project's performance?	
4. Contribution to the host project, PCP / Sub-programme	To what extent has the project contributed to the host project, PCP and sub-programme of which it is a part	
5. Leverage gained	To what extent, and in what ways, did the work under the project enable UNEP to drive efficiency and effectiveness at any level above that of the evaluand itself, at the level of the outcomes, intermediate states and/or long-lasting impact of a PRC-approved project, at the level of the POW Direct Outcomes	
6. Governance	What has been the usefulness of the governance setup of the project?	
7. Monitoring	How well was the Monitoring Plan of the evaluand contributing to that of the host PRC-approved project, PCP or sub-programme?	

8. Reporting	How are the activities and achievements of the evaluand reflected in the reporting of the host PRC-approved project, PCP or Subprogramme?
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ANNEX IV. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW

Table 6: People consulted during the Review

Organisation	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
Inception Phase				
UNEP	Janet Wildish	UNEP Evaluation Office	Project evaluation	Woman
UNEP	Djaheezah Subratty	UNEP IE Division	Member of project steering committee	Woman
UNEP	Feng Wang	UNEP IE Division	Supervisor of project manager	Man
UNEP	Kamala Ernest	UNEP Project manager	Project manager	Woman
UNEP	Nam	UNEP consultant	Data analyst	Man
UNEP	Natalie Harms	COBSEA Secretariat	Programme Lead Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter	Woman
Data gathering phase				
UNEP	Dhanushka Jayaweera	SEA circular project web manager	SEA circular and SEA of Solutions Web manager	Man
UNEP	Kamala Ernest	SEA circular Project manager	Project manager	Woman
UNEP	Dang Vu Hoai Nam	SEA circular project Data analyst	Project data analyst	Man
UNEP	Ahmed Khan	SEA circular project Financial Officer	Project financial officer	Man
UNEP	Feng Wang	UNEP Plastics Initiative manager	Supervisor project manager	Man
UNEP	Mahesh Pradhan	COBSEA Secretariat Coordinator	Supervision output 2 and parts of 4	Man
UNEP	Ran Xie,	SEA circular project Associate Programme Management Officer	Project associate programme management officer	Woman
UNEP	Marlene Nielsen	Deputy Regional Director ROAP	Member of project steering committee	Woman
UNEP	Natalie Harms	COBSEA Secretariat	Programme Lead Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter	Woman
UNEP	Claudia Giacobelli	Multi Stakeholder Engagement	Project support	Woman
UNEP	Kamal Salahin, Communications	SEA circular project, Communication specialist	Communications	Man

Organisation	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
UNEP	Ana Maria Kumarsamy	COBSEA Secretariat	Associate Programme Officer, Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter	Woman
UNEP	Mushtaq Memon	Regional Subprogramme Coordinator	Project technical support	Man
UNEP	Djaheezah Subratty	UNEP IE Division	Member of project steering committee	Woman
UNEP Consultant	Francesca Montevecchi	EPR Consultant	EPR Consultant	Woman
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand	Ms. Vararin Vongpanich	Biodiversity Research Specialist Department of Marine and Coastal Resources	Partner	Woman
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand	Mr. Phaothep	Department of Marine Coastal Resources, Thailand	Partner	Man
VASI, Vietnam	Mr. Ahn-Duc Luu	Deputy Head, Division of Science, Technology and International Cooperation (DSTIC)	Member of project steering committee	Man
VASI, Vietnam	Mr. Hung Tran	Division of Science, Technology and International Cooperation (DSTIC)	Partner	Man
Dalhousy University	Sara Seck	Schulich School of Law , Marine & Environmental Law Institute	Partner	Woman
Sida	Sarah Oberg Hoper	First Secretary, Programme specialist – Environment & Climate Change, Development Cooperation – Regional Asia and the Pacific, Embassy of Sweden in Thailand	Donor representative	Woman
UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub	Belinda Hlatshwayo	Business and Human Rights Project Manager, UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub	Partner	Woman
International Solid Waste Association	Aditi Ramola	Technical Director	Partner	Woman
CSIRO	Kathy Willis	Marine socioecologist	Partner	Woman
WWF Germany	Xin Chen (Vivian)	EPR Expert	Partner	Woman
World Economic Forum Global Plastics Action Partnership	Liviana Zorzi	Asia Regional Specialist, National Plastic Action Partnerships Global Plastic Action Partnership	Partner	Woman
Solid Waste Management Association of Thailand	Chindarat Taylor	Vice President Solid Waste Management Association of Thailand	Partner	Woman

ANNEX V. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Project planning and reporting documents

- United Nations Environment Programme, Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines. Available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/policies-and-strategies>.
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- UN Environment Programme, COBSEA, Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in Southeast Asia, Project Document, July 2018.
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), SEA circular Project Extension Proposal 2023-2024, Final, Submission to Sida, dated 28 November 2022.
- UN Environment Programme, UNEP Delivery Model, Policy for One UNEP Delivery for Better Collaboration and Country Support, 26 September 2022.
- UNEP Review Criteria Ratings Matrix of Management Led Terminal Reviews
- UN environment programme, Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia, SEA circular, Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South-East Asia, Inception Phase Report, Final report, resubmitted on 12 July 2019.
- UN environment programme, Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia, SEA circular, 2019 Annual Report, revised report, submitted 9 April 2020.
- UN environment programme, Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia, SEA circular, Annual Report 2020, February 2021.
- UN environment programme, Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia, SEA circular, Interim Annual Report 2021, December 2021.
- UN environment programme, Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia, SEA circular, Annual Progress Report 2022 (Plastik), 31 December 2022.
- UN environment programme, Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia, SEA circular, Annual Progress Report 2023.
- UN environment programme, Coordinating Body of the Seas of East Asia, SEA circular, Annual Progress Report 2024.
- UNEP, Terms of reference, Terminal Review of the UNEP project SEA circular – SEA circular (Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South-East Asia);
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), SEA circular Project Extension 2023-2024 Proposal (Final) Submission to SIDA, Date: 28 November 2022;

Project outputs – Overall

- SEA circular Results Framework 2023-2024 Updated 241130, Internal Spreadsheet
- SEA circular Expenditure breakdown by Year by Outputs, Internal Spreadsheet.
- SEA circular, SEA circular extension, GAP Analysis (Internal Document).
- Project Spreadsheet Quarterly Tracker MTR SEA circular 2022, internal document.
- UNEP, COBSEA, SEA circular, Turning the Plastic Pollution, Achievements of the SEA circular project.
- Dalhousie University, Business, Marine & Environmental Law Institute (MELAW) and Schulich School of Law, Business, Human Rights, and the Environment: Overcoming the Plastics Challenge: A Checklist for State Institutions and Government Officials; Business, Human Rights, and the Environment: Overcoming the Plastics Challenge: A Checklist for Civil Society; Human Rights, and the Environment, Overcoming the Plastics Challenge, A Checklist for Responsible Business Plastic Action.

Project outputs work package 1: Market-based solutions towards 'less plastic wasted'

- United Nations Environment Programme, Facilitating a Human Rights-Based Approach to Address Plastic Pollution: Extended Producer Responsibility and the Informal Waste Sector in ASEAN, 2024 (draft version).
- United Nations Environment Programme, International Solid Waste Association, Assessing the Contribution of Plastic Credit Schemes to Reducing Plastics Pollution and Improving Recycling, 2022, Nairobi.
- United Nations Environment Programme, Risks and opportunities of plastic credit financing instruments being introduced into the informal waste management sector, 2022, Nairobi.
- United Nations Environment Programme, COBSEA, WWF, SEA circular, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Law of the Philippines: A White Paper, November 2022.
- United Nations Environment Programme, COBSEA, WWF, SEA circular, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Law, Toolkits for the Philippines, Toolkit 1: The EPR system and Policy Landscape, November 2022.
- United Nations Environment Programme, COBSEA, WWF, SEA circular, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Law, Toolkits for the Philippines, Toolkit 2: The EPR system and Business Sector, November 2022.
- United Nations Environment Programme, COBSEA, WWF, SEA circular, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Law, Toolkits for the Philippines, Toolkit 3: The EPR system and Waste Management Sector, November 2022.
- United Nations Environment Programme, COBSEA, WWF, SEA circular, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Law, Toolkits for the Philippines, Toolkit 4: The EPR system Civil Society, and General Public, November 2022.

Project outputs work package 2: Scientific basis for decision-making on marine litter enhanced

- UN environment programme, COBSEA, UN Habitat, SEA circular Identifying plastic waste leakage hotspots and flows in South-East Asia, June 2022;
- UN environment programme, COBSEA, UN Habitat, SEA circular Waste Wise Cities Tool in Chonburi, Thailand, Waste Wise Cities, The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2021;

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- UN environment programme, COBSEA, UN Habitat, SEA circular Waste Wise Cities Tool in Kep, Cambodia, Waste Wise Cities, The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2021;
- UN environment programme, COBSEA, UN Habitat, SEA circular Waste Wise Cities Tool in Seremban, Malaysia, Waste Wise Cities, The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2021;
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- UN environment programme, COBSEA, UN Habitat, SEA circular Waste Wise Cities Tool in Tam Ky, Vietnam, Waste Wise Cities, The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2021.
- Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia & Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, Regional Guidance on Harmonized National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes. Monitoring Efforts and Recommendations for National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes, 2022, Bangkok: United Nations Environment Programme;
- COBSEA & CSIRO, Marine Litter Monitoring Methods Handbook. Part 1, 2022, Bangkok: United Nations Environment Programme.; COBSEA & CSIRO, Marine Litter Monitoring Methods Handbook, Part II, 2022, Bangkok: United Nations Environment Programme;
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- National University of Singapore, COBSEA, Status of research, legal and policy efforts on marine plastics in ASEAN + 3, A gap analysis at the interface of Science, law and policy.

Project outputs work package 3: Outreach on marine litter and plastic pollution

- SEA circular, SEA circular 2020 Communications Strategy. Annex to the SEA circular 2020 Workplan.
- United Nations Environment Programme, Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia, A human rights-based approach to preventing plastic pollution, Issue Brief 01, Bangkok, 2019.
- United Nations Environment Programme, Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia, Gender Equality and Preventing Plastic Pollution, Issue Brief 02, Bangkok, 2019.
- United Nations Environment Programme, Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia, and Dalhousie University, Marine & Environmental Law Institute, Plastics, human rights and business responsibilities, Issue Brief, August 2022.

- Website: <https://www.sea-circular.org/>
- Website: <https://www.sea-circular.org/sea-of-solutions/>

Project outputs work package 4: Regional networking for exchange, cooperation and integration

- UN environment programme, COBSEA, SEA circular SEA of Solutions 2019, Solutions with Science, Solutions through innovation and technology, and Local solutions to plastic pollution, Daily reports online.
- UN environment programme, COBSEA, SEA circular SEA of Solutions 2020, “Partnership week for marine plastic pollution prevention”, 24-26 November 2020, Report.
- UN environment programme, COBSEA, SEA circular SEA of Solutions 2021, “Accelerating solutions to reduce plastic waste”, 16-18 November 20.
- UN environment programme, COBSEA, SEA circular SEA of Solutions 2022, “A Spotlight on Solutions to end plastic pollution in South-East Asia”, 23-24 November 2022, Virtual Event, Outcomes Report.
- UN environment programme, COBSEA, SEA circular SEA of Solutions 2024, “Delivering Actions to End Plastic Pollution”, 18-20 September 2024, Outcome Report.
- UN environment programme, COBSEA, SEA circular, 2020 Work Plan, Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South-East Asia.

Previous reviews/evaluations

- UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Reducing Marine Litter by addressing the Management of the Plastic Value Chain in South-East Asia (SEA circular), Mid-Term Review Report, November 2021.
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- UN Environment Programme, For People and Planet, Annex I: UNEP Programme of Work and Budget for 2022-2023 (which was extended to 2025)

ANNEX VI. PROJECT BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

Table: Details on Project Annual Expenditures

	2018-2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
OUTPUT 1 : Market-based solutions towards "less plastic wasted"	138,989	490,489	229,401	98,955	135,855	170,530	1,264,219
Personnel: Staff and other personnel costs	12,940	(12,869.00)					71
Personnel: Consultants	15,000	26,970.00	30,000.00	200.00	65,000.00	65,543.00	202,713.00
Travel	2,780	0.00		4,527.00	6,695.00	18,436.00	32,438.00
Contractual Services	615	120.00	30.00		3,500.00		4,265.00
Grants & Contributions	106,154	476,268.00	199,371.00	94,228.00	60,660.00	85,050.00	1,021,731.00
Operational Costs	1,500	0.00				1,501.00	3,001.00
OUTPUT 2 - Strengthening the scientific basis for decision-making	64,838	260,723	282,323	73,607	25,139	132,038	838,668
Personnel: Staff and other personnel costs	12,940	(12,869.00)			30,227.00		30,298
Personnel: Consultants	31,500	13,970.00	9,000.00	12,120.00		139.00	66,729.00
Travel	2,510	0.00		8,937	(2,400.00)	23,462.00	32,509.00
Contractual Services	640	240.00	130.00	15,271.00	153.00	8,537.00	24,971.00
Grants & Contributions	16,154	257,708.00	273,163.00	32,279.00	(2,886.00)	99,900.00	676,318.00
Operational Costs	1,094	1,674.00	30.00	5,000.00	45.00		7,843
OUTPUT 3 - Outreach on marine litter and plastic pollution	121,072	150,465	78,034	113,421	94,754	182,972	740,718
Personnel: Staff and other personnel costs	12,940	(12,869.00)	55,877.00		24,109.00	23,219.00	103,276.00
Personnel: Consultants	14,469	46,970.00	6,000.00	73,842.00	64,207.00	118,019.00	323,507.00
Travel	10,842	0.00				7,289.00	18,131.00
Contractual Services	18,001	16,897.00	4,397.00	18,554.00			57,849.00
Grants & Contributions	59,904	99,199.00	9,998.00	21,025.00	6,438.00	30,000.00	226,564.00
Operational Costs	4,916	268.00	232.00			4,445.00	9,861.00
Equipment Vehicles and Furniture			1,530.00				1,530
OUTPUT 4 - Regional networking	81,819	257,186	132,851	53,962	37,670	285,414	848,902
Personnel: Staff and other personnel costs	12,940	42,573.00					55,513
Personnel: Consultants	33,000	79,231.00	59,550.00	15,820.00	22,990.00	43,210.00	253,801.00
Travel	8,324	118.00		17,318.00	12,559.00	78,287.00	116,606.00
Contractual Services	465	19,859.00	20,916.00	1,288.00	1,595.00	282.00	44,405.00
Grants & Contributions	16,154	110,025.00	24,899.00	18,484.00	(691.00)	124,928.00	293,799.00
Operational Costs	10,936	5,380.00	27,486.00	1,052.00	1,217.00	38,707.00	84,778.00
Project Coordination	222,999	351,282	536,689	662,368	360,513	523,733	2,657,584
Personnel: Staff and other personnel costs	334	295,923.00	427,452.00	591,064.00	339,078.00	494,367.00	2,148,218.00
Personnel: Consultants	152,500	14,126.00	(4,627.00)	16,236.00	155.00	6,953.00	185,343.00
Travel	35,037	254.00		21,231.00	1,418.00	1,369.00	59,309.00
Contractual Services	5,314	4,092.00	31,408.00	29,401.00	4,100.00	4,335.00	78,650.00
Grants & Contributions	0	0.00	50,224.00	(297.00)			49,927.00
Operational Costs	25,943	35,328.00	32,232.00	4,733.00	15,762.00	14,457.00	128,455.00
Supply & Material	1,047	117.00				2,252.00	3,416.00
Equipment & Furniture	2,824	1,442.00					4,266
Evaluation: MTR and TE	0	0	0	0	0	30,000	30,000
Personnel: Consultants	0	0.00	0	0	0	0	0
Sub-total	629,717	1,510,145	1,259,298	1,002,313	653,931	1,324,687	6,380,091
Project Support Cost (8%)	50,191	110,019	99,790	74,888	52,851	105,975	493,714
Grand Total	679,908	1,620,164	1,359,088	1,077,201	706,782	1,430,662	6,873,805
Budget Class Consolidation	2018-2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Personnel: Staff and other personnel costs	52,094	299,889	483,329	591,064	393,414	517,586	2,337,376
Personnel: Consultants	246,469	181,267	99,923	118,218	152,352	263,864	1,062,093
Travel	59,493	372	0	52,013	18,272	128,843	258,993
Contractual Services	25,035	41,208	56,881	64,514	9,348	13,154	210,140
Grants & Contributions	198,366	943,200	557,655	165,719	63,521	339,878	2,268,339
Operational Costs	44,389	42,650	59,980	10,785	17,024	59,110	233,938
Supply & Material	1,047	117	0	0	0	2,252	3,416
Equipment & Furniture	2,824	1,442	1,530	0	0	0	5,796
Project Support Cost (8%)	50,191	110,019	99,790	74,888	52,851	105,975	493,714
Total	679,908	1,620,164	1,359,088	1,077,201	706,782	1,430,662	6,873,805

ANNEX VII. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Table 9: Financial Management Table

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures:		HS:HU	Highly Satisfactory
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence ⁷⁸ to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		No	Timely approval of cash advances, regular analysis of expenditure, timely report submission, timely revisions when needed
2. Completeness of project financial information⁷⁹:			
Provision of key documents to the reviewer (based on the responses to A-H below)		HS:HU	Satisfactory
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	N/A	
B.	Revisions to the budget	Yes	Revisions included changes due to COVID and in ways of working, resulting in less travel costs incurred and repurposing some of the funding; Revision for project extension phase
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	No	
D.	Proof of fund transfers	No	
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	Detailed by output and other cost category for each of the years of project implementation
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (<i>where applicable</i>)	N/A	Generic UNEP audit conducted with no special reference to the SEA circular project
H.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	Yes	Details on underspending in USD and SKR
3. Communication between finance and project management staff		HS:HU	Satisfactory
Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.		HS:HU	HS
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.		HS:HU	HS
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.		HS:HU	S (limited due to the termination of the project manager beyond the end of December 2024)
Contact/communication between by Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports.		HS:HU	S (limited due to the termination of the project manager beyond the end of December 2024)
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the review process		HS:HU	S (limited due to the termination of the project manager beyond the end of December 2024)
Overall rating			Highly Satisfactory

⁷⁸ 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.

⁷⁹ See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference

ANNEX VIII. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH TOOLS

Insert any communication and outreach tools used to disseminate results (e.g. power point presentations, charts, graphs, videos, case studies, etc.) or provide links.

ANNEX IX. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER

Name: Frank Noij

Profession	Specialist in Complex Evaluation and Review
Nationality	Dutch
Country experience	• Africa: Cameroon, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Senegal, Tanzania, Tunisia • Americas: Argentina • Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, The Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam • Oceania: Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu
Education	• MSc, Social and Cultural Anthropology, Development Economics

Mr. Frank Noij is an independent evaluator

Short biography

Frank is an evaluator with 30 years of experience in the evaluation and review of international development programming, primarily in the Asia and Pacific region. His expertise includes the conduct of complex evaluations and reviews, development and implementation of evaluation quality assurance systems and country level support to capacity development on evaluation and its use in results-based management. His approach to evaluation is informed by his experience in project and programme design and management. He has worked with UNEP as well as multiple other UN Agencies on the evaluation of projects and programmes with a focus on sustainable development. Earlier, he served as Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor for CARE in its Asia Regional Management Unit and worked on international development projects and programmes for Wageningen Agricultural and Leiden Universities, the Netherlands.

Key specialties and capabilities cover:

- Complex evaluations and reviews
- Development and implementation of evaluation quality assurance systems
- Country level support to capacity development on evaluation and its use in results-based management

Independent reviews/evaluations for UNEP:

- Formative Review of UNEP's Delivery Model and Programme Approach (introduced in the 2022-2025 Medium Term Strategy). UNEP Evaluation Office.
- Mid-Term Review of the Medium-Term Plan Implementation, 2021-2025 of the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network East Asia (EANET), UNEP Regional Office Asia Pacific
- Mid-Term Review of the UNEP project "Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South-East Asia (SEA circular)", UN Environment Programme, Regional Office Asia and Pacific
- Independent Review of UN Environment Programme's Contribution to Poverty Reduction, on behalf of Sida, UNEP Evaluation Office
- Project Terminal Review of the UN Environment Programme, Institutional Measures and Technical Assistance to Address Air Pollution in Asia Pacific

ANNEX X. REVIEW TORS (WITHOUT ANNEXES)

Terminal Review of the UNEP project “SEA circular - SEA circular (Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South-East Asia)” and “Project ID Number”

Section 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

(This section describes what is to be reviewed. Key parameters are: project timeframe, funding envelope, results framework and geographic scope)

1. Project General Information

Table 1. Project summary

(This is a generic table to summarise a project. Integrate the information below with the standard 'project summary' table of the relevant donor e.g. Adaptation Fund, GCF, GEF).

UNEP PIMS ID/SMA ⁸⁰ ID:	SB-021354	Grant ID ⁸¹ (if applicable):	M1-32CPL-000404
UNEP Management (Division/Branch/Unit):	Industry and Economy Division / RMB		
Implementing Partners:	UNEP and COBSEA Secretariat		
Sources of Funding:	Country ⁸² (ies):	Institution ⁸³ Name/Type: Government of Sweden	
Relevant SDG(s):	12 (target 12.4 and 12.5), 14 (target 14.1) and 17 (target 17.16)		
MTS (all that apply):		UNEP approval date:	
POW Direct Outcome(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved from 2022): OR POW Output(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved pre-2022)	POW Direct Outcome: 3.3. Global plastic pollution is reduced, 3.6. Resource efficiency and circularity in key sectors are improved	MTS 2025 Outcome(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved from 2022): OR POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved pre-2022):	MTS 2025 Outcome: 1A, 3A, 3B, 2C, 3C
	POW Output: 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 521.1: Promotion and Delivery of Environmentally Sound Waste Management Technologies and Methods and in Country Technical and Advisory Support,		POW Expected Accomplishment: Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality EA (b) on Waste, EA (a) on SCP: Healthy and Productive Ecosystems EA (a)

⁸⁰ SMA refers to the ID provided by the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution (IPMR) system, which was introduced by UNEP in July 2023.

⁸¹ For example, ID references from EC, IKI, UNDA, Adaptation Fund, GCF.

⁸² Where applicable, list countries who have provided project funds and/or co-finance.

⁸³ Indicate where funding institutions are any/all of the following: Foundation/NGO; Private Sector; UN Body; Multilateral Fund; Environment Fund; Other.

	POW 2022 -2024 : ProDoc: ONE UNEP Plastic Project on Accelerating a Global Circular Plastic Economy to Reduce Plastic Pollution and Its Impacts		
Sub-programme:	Chemicals and Pollution	Programme Coordination Project:	Circularity in Sectors (Plastics)
Expected start date:	August 2018	Actual start date:	August 2018
Planned completion date:	31.12.2024	Actual operational completion date:	31.12.2024
Planned total project budget ⁸⁴ at approval:	Original Budget: USD 6,371,784 (SEK 55,000,000) Extension Phase: USD 2,346 ,142 (SEK 13,000,000)	Actual total expenditures reported as of [date]:	USD 5,443,480 (Cumulative Expenditure as of Dec 31 2023)
Planned Extra-budgetary Funds ⁸⁵ :	Cash: In-kind:	Secured Extra- budgetary Funds:	Cash: In-kind:
		Actual Extra-budgetary Funds expenditures reported as of [date]:	Cash:
First disbursement:	USD 799,269 (SEK 7,000,000)	Planned date of financial closure:	Estimated 1 year after operational completion.
No. of formal project revisions:	One	Date of last approved project revision:	30.12.2022
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	6	Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	16.12.2024
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (planned date):	2020	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	2021-2022
Terminal Evaluation (planned date):	Dec 2024 – June 2025	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	Dec 2024 – April 2025
Coverage – Implementing Country(ies):	Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines,	Coverage – Implementing Region(s):	Asia
Dates of previous project phases:	Inception Phase: Aug-2018- Jan 2019 Implementation Phase: Jan 2019 – Dec 2022 Extension phase:	Status of future project phases:	

⁸⁴ Total budget may include; Regular Budget, Environment Fund, Extra-Budgetary, including 'softly-earmarked' etc.

⁸⁵ Extra-budgetary funds may include co-finance (cash/in-kind)

	Jan 2023 – Dec 2024		
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2. Project Rationale⁸⁶

Everyone on the planet has a right to live in a clean environment. Heads of State and Ministers of the Environment from over 140 countries at the third United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-3) in December 2017 declared that “Any threat to our environment is a threat to our health, our society, our ecosystems, our economy, our security, our well-being and our very survival”.

One threat that is becoming increasingly severe is marine litter, having tremendous effects on the marine and coastal environment and people's wellbeing in Asia. While marine litter can be of any persistent and manufactured solid material in the marine and coastal environment, there is growing concern especially in relation to plastic litter. Being extremely persistent, it is now found in large volumes in the marine environment. The amount of plastic waste that enter the oceans every year is expected to reach 29 million metric tons by 2040. If current trends continue, the ocean may contain more plastics than fish (by weight) by 2050. About 80% of plastic waste entering the ocean comes from sources on land. This plastic leakage into the ocean is directly linked to plastic production and consumption as well as waste management. Global plastic production has increased from 2 million metric tonnes per year in 1950 to 380 million metric tonnes per year in 2015, and about 60% of this increase occurred in Asia. Asia is also responsible for much of plastic consumption, especially for packaging, while waste management capacity is unable to cope. Open dumping and burning of waste is still the prevalent disposal option in the region.

As result, Southeast Asia has become a major hotspot of plastic leakage, with about 60% of the world's plastic marine litter estimated to come from six countries: China, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, and Malaysia. Adverse impacts are far reaching. Marine mammal death due to plastic entanglement and ingestion are well documented around the world. In Indonesia, some 55% of fish species in markets show evidence of having ingested plastics, while in Japan, around two thirds of deep-sea fish species surveyed from 1964 to 2015 had ingested plastic. Marine plastic litter has been shown to significantly increase disease prevalence on coral reefs. Plastic fragments also are the carrier of hazardous substances such as dioxins, PCBs (Polychlorinated Biphenyls) and PBTs (Persistent, Bioaccumulative, and Toxic chemicals). Mismanagement of plastic waste, such as burning and open dumping, will emit toxic fumes and contaminate water supply. Uncollected plastic waste is known to block water drainage in Asian cities leading to severe flooding.

The social and economic impacts of marine litter can include loss of revenue from tourism, reduced fisheries, damage to fishing vessels, ships and recreational watercraft, as well as human health impacts through injury or ingestion of contaminants through the food chain. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum estimates that the cost of ocean plastics to the tourism, fishing and shipping industries is USD 1.3 billion in the region alone. For millions of people in Asia, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, healthy oceans mean jobs, food and protection. Marine plastic litter is therefore a severe threat to the environment, to economic development and to social wellbeing in the region. Furthermore, plastic leakage adversely impacts certain social groups more severely than others, for examples women and children in coastal communities and workers in waste management sectors, many of whom are migrant workers, affecting their rights to food, water and sanitation, health and adequate standard of living. This also further increases vulnerability to climate change and disasters, a reality of which many coastal communities in Asia are already experiencing the effects.

The project “**Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in South-East Asia (SEA circular)**” is a strategic partnership between UNEP and the Government of Sweden (Sida), implemented by the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and the COBSEA Secretariat started in 2018 with an initial end date of 31 December 2022 and a two-year extension until 31 December 2024.

The project aims to reduce the adverse impact of marine litter from plastic leakage by ensuring that less plastic is entering general solid waste streams where the coverage and effectiveness of the

⁸⁶ Grey =Info to be added

management systems is weak. The project aimed to achieve this specifically by: reducing most harmful and difficult to recycle plastic; increasing plastic re-use and recycle (especially bottle-to-bottle recycling), and creating region-wise awareness on plastic pollution and public support towards policies to change the plastic value chain management. The project uses an overarching Circular Economy and Source-to-Sea approach, ensuring interventions are designed and implemented with an understanding of land-sea interactions. This will include data collection and analyses on plastic leakage and marine litter at sub-national, national and regional levels, establishment of baselines, and information disclosure. The project was set up to be catalytic in bringing together stakeholders in the region that have worked rather apart: the plastic producers and packaging manufacturers, waste managers including plastic recyclers, managers of marine and coastal resources, and those who are most vulnerable along the plastic value chain. This project responds to UN Environment Assembly resolutions 1 /6, 2/11 and 3/7 on Marine litter and microplastics, and contributes directly to implementation of relevant provisions of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP-MALI), focusing on land-based sources of marine litter. In doing so it supports countries in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 14 Target 14.1; SDG 12, Target 12.4; and SDG 17, Target 17.17.

3. Project Results Framework

The project design follows the Results-Based approach. Its initial structure has three Outcomes and four Outputs. Given the shortcomings identified in the mid-term review, the Outcomes have been replaced by one unified Outcome in the project extension - **National actors adopt and implement policy measures, and consumers and private sector increase efforts to enhance the reduction in the most harmful and difficult to recycle plastics, as well as plastic reused and recycled in the Southeast Asia (SEA) region.** The project's Outputs are as follows:

- Output 1: Market-based solutions towards “less plastic wasted”

This Output aims to generate some exemplary “solutions” for making transformational changes in the way the plastic is managed in Southeast Asia. With application of Circular Economy approach, it aims to help stakeholders showcase their collective ability to manage the plastic value chain better and also contribute to generating more business incentives for plastic reduction and recycling. Two results are envisaged under this Output: 1a) Increase in plastic re-use and recycle and 1b) Reduction in single use plastic packaging.

- Output 2: Strengthening the scientific basis for decision-making

This Output aims to develop a better information foundation for addressing marine plastic litter. This will be done by building national and regional capacity, coherent methodologies, indicator frameworks and reporting processes/systems, in line 4 with global best practice, and generating a range of data and information products at national and regional level.

- Output 3: Outreach on marine litter and plastic pollution

This Output raises awareness on marine litter as well as needs of better plastic value chain management to promote behavioural change among consumers and in the industry, and create an enabling space for policy development. This will apply available existing tools, e.g., from the Clean Seas campaign, while drawing on findings and knowledge products under Output 1 and 2.

- Output 4: Regional networking

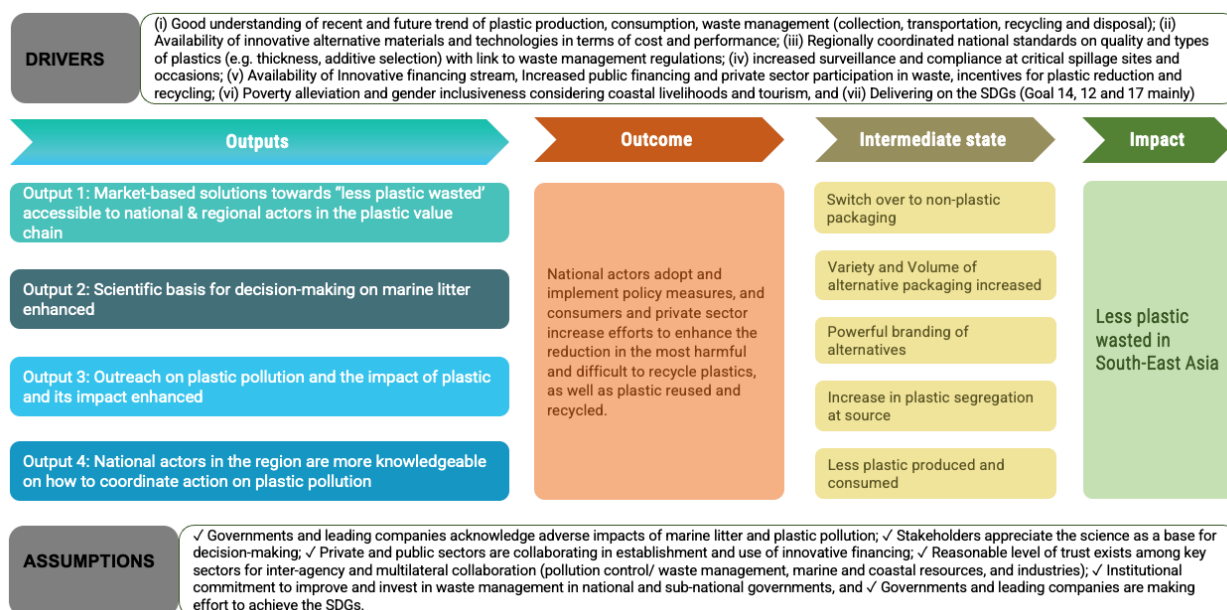
This output supports successful project delivery by establishing the necessary regional mechanisms for technical advice and exchange, facilitating enhanced dialogue and networking; and providing targeted capacity building and technical support, especially in relation to the regional policy dimension of marine litter reduction. Where relevant, this will entail seeking close engagement and collaboration with ASEAN as a regional intergovernmental mechanism for economic, political and socio-cultural integration.

Each of the four outputs will be achieved through dedicated results, reflected in the project's results framework. In light of the mid-term review, the results language has further been revised to reflect the

correct level needed to achieve the outputs. SEA circular has developed the following results framework including one outcome, four outputs, indicators, and extension results.

Outcome	Output	Output indicator	Outcome Indicator	Extension Result
National actors adopt and implement policy measures, and consumer and private sector increase efforts to enhance the reduction in the most harmful and difficult to recycle plastics, as well as plastic reused and recycled	Output 1: Market-based solutions towards "less plastic wasted" accessible to national and regional actors in the plastic value chain.	A regional Plastic Circularity guidance framework developed for the Southeast Asia region to inform the INC process	Outcome Indicator 2: Number of SEA countries have implemented policy measures to reduce plastic pollution and promote circularity in the plastic value chain, in accordance with relevant multilateral environmental agreements and international agreements Outcome	A regional Plastics Circularity guidance framework developed by bringing the learnings from the 6 countries in Southeast Asia that integrate a human rights-based approach for market-based solutions, which will support stakeholders in the plastic value chain to improve the rate of collecting, sorting, and recycling as part of the EPR scheme.
		A set of evidence-based recommendations developed for PROs to increase plastic waste collection and recycling through engagements with SMEs for Southeast	Outcome Indicator 3: Amount of plastic waste collection by PROs in Southeast Asia region increased through efforts aimed at collection and recycling	Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in 4 countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines and Viet Nam) are more knowledgeable on how to increase plastic waste collection and recycling through engagement with Producer Responsibility Organizations (PROs)
	Output 2: Scientific basis for decision-making on marine litter enhanced.	Number of training and capacity building activities for the implementation of national marine litter plans and national marine litter policies in 5 countries (Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam).	Outcome Indicator 1: Number of Southeast Asia countries have adopted or revised national marine litter policies, regulations or equivalent to prevent or reduce plastic pollution in line with COBSEA RAP MALI.	Implementation of the national marine litter plans and national marine litter policies of 5 countries (Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam) accelerated by training and capacity building for relevant stakeholders, informed by the regional guidance and knowledge products from SEA circular.
	Output 3: Outreach on plastic pollution and its impacts is enhanced.	Number of stakeholders accessing SEA circular resources and information, including through mechanisms of the GPML and UNCT in Southeast Asia region	Outcome Indicator 2: Number of SEA countries have implemented policy measures to reduce plastic pollution and promote circularity in the plastic value chain, in accordance with relevant multilateral environmental agreements and international agreements including the INC process to End Plastic Pollution	Best practices of plastics circularity inform national accelerated solutions and the International Negotiations Committee (INC) for an International Agreement to End Plastic Pollution through Southeast Asia regional dialogues and knowledge exchange platforms.
		Number of consumers reached through awareness raising campaigns.	Outcome Indicator 4: Increase in the percentage of consumers having indicated to stop buying products with non-recyclable packaging.	Consumer awareness of solutions to marine litter and plastic pollution is increased to inform decision
	Output 4: National actors in the region are more knowledgeable on how to coordinate action on plastic pollution.	A set of regional guidelines for the harmonization of standards and practices for managing the plastic value chain with reference to knowledge products of SEA	Outcome Indicator 2: Number of SEA countries have implemented policy measures to reduce plastic pollution and promote circularity in the plastic value chain, in accordance with relevant multilateral environmental agreements and international agreements including the INC process to End Plastic Pollution	Guidelines developed for managing the plastic value chain, building on SEA circular's solutions and recommendations for evidence-based national marine litter plans, policies, regulations, and harmonization of standards in Southeast Asia.
		Number of joint initiatives with other UN agencies to support respective countries to accelerate solutions to reduce plastic pollution		The implementation of UN Country Framework of at least 3 SEA countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Viet Nam) incorporates joint UN initiatives to support respective countries to accelerate solutions to end plastic waste.
		Number of stakeholders participating in Southeast Asia regional dialogues for knowledge exchange on best practices for plastics circularity.		The 5th SEA circular's SEA of Solutions on Circularity for Ending Plastic Pollution Forum showcases innovative solutions and strengthened strategic partnerships that have accelerated progress to end plastic pollution in Southeast Asian region.

The project's **Theory of Change** has been updated for the extension phase as follows:



4. Executing Arrangements

The UN Environment Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and COBSEA Secretariat each lead and are responsible for activities of the following four Outputs:

Output	Lead	Target countries
Output 1: Market-based solutions towards “less plastic wasted”	UNEP	Malaysia, Thailand
Output 2: Strengthening the scientific basis for decision-making	COBSEA	Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam
Output 3: Outreach on marine litter and plastic pollution	UNEP	Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam
Output 4: Regional networking	COBSEA	All nine COBSEA countries

5. Project Cost and Financing

The total project budget at design is as follows:

Activity	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Total Cost	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
1 Staff and other personnel costs				1,567,500	87,500	370,000	370,000	370,000	370,000
Project Coordinator – P3, 4 years	4	person year	160,000	640,000		160,000	160,000	160,000	160,000
Project Officer (Marine Litter Policy, output 2 and 4) - UNV, 4.5 years	4.5	person year	70,000	315,000	35,000	70,000	70,000	70,000	70,000
Project Officer (Plastic Value Chain, output 1 and 3) - UNV, 4.5 years	4.5	person year	70,000	315,000	35,000	70,000	70,000	70,000	70,000
Project Associate – G5, 4 years	4	person year	70,000	280,000		70,000	70,000	70,000	70,000
Outreach Officer (UNV) - 50%	0.5	person year	35,000	17,500	17,500				
2 Travel				590,900	111,900	132,600	98,800	98,800	148,800
Expert travel - Steering Committee, M&E, technical consultants	90	trip	2,000	180,000	50,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	70,000
Representative travel - regional technical and training workshops (6 workshop of 25 person; activities 2b and 4a)	150	trip	1,300	195,000	32,500	65,000	32,500	32,500	32,500
Representative travel- stakeholder consultation and training	90	trip	1,300	117,000	23,400	23,400	23,400	23,400	23,400
Staff travel - Project level	53	trip	1,300	68,900		18,200	16,900	16,900	16,900
Staff travel - Programme level	15	trip	2,000	30,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000
3 Consultants/ Experts				488,500	78,000	148,000	84,000	133,000	45,500
M&E planning and Communication strategy	6	person month	5,000	30,000	15,000	15,000			
Plastic value chain specialist (activities 1a and 1b)	24	person month	7,000	168,000	42,000	42,000	42,000	42,000	
Marine litter policy/planning specialist - ML planning and monitoring (activities 2b, 4a)	24	person month	7,000	168,000	21,000	42,000	42,000	42,000	21,000
National consultants - national ML planning and monitoring (activities 2b, 4a)	35	person month	3,500	122,500		49,000		49,000	24,500
4 Contractual Services				677,000	69,000	148,000	170,000	120,000	170,000
Conference services for the Inception planning and Project launch	2	event	20,000	40,000	40,000				
Conference services - Knowledge outreach (two/year)	8	event	20,000	160,000		40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000
Conference services - Stakeholders meetings (two/year)	8	event	20,000	160,000		40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000
Production of outreach material - one identity package including a logo and a flyer (activity 1)	1	product	10,000	10,000	10,000				
Production of outreach material - a website (activity 3d)	1	product	5,000	5,000	5,000				
Production of outreach material - 4 video clips (activity 3d)	4	product	40,000	160,000		40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000
Regional knowledge sharing: web platform development (activity 4d)	1	product	42,000	42,000	14,000	28,000			
External project evaluation	2	report	50,000	100,000			50,000		50,000
5 Grants & Contributions				2,405,000	40,000	715,000	795,000	420,000	435,000
Plastic value chain analysis (Plastic recycling, Alternative to plastic, Southeast Asia plastic management outlook; activity 1b.b and other activities under 1)	3	study	150,000	450,000		150,000	150,000	150,000	
Assessment of plastic leakage points in Southeast Asia (identification and detailed assessment of hotspots; activity 2a)	12	study	40,000	480,000		160,000	320,000		
Regional marine litter assessment (marine litter status, sources and impacts on marine and coastal areas; activity 2b)	1	report	200,000	200,000				100,000	100,000
Regional implementation of the Massive Open Online Course on Marine Litter (activity 3b)	3	course	20,000	60,000		20,000		20,000	20,000
Roundtable on policy and technology on alternative packaging and plastic recycling (activity 1a.d and 1b.c)	3	event	100,000	300,000		100,000	100,000		100,000
Regional knowledge sharing: regional node of GPML and web maintenance (activity 4d)	4	year	50,000	200,000		50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Train-the-Trainers workshop on Marine litter (activity 3b)	1	course	60,000	60,000		60,000			
Campaigns on plastic reduction (activity 3d)	10	grant	50,000	500,000		150,000	150,000	100,000	100,000
Plastic awareness survey (activity 3a)	2	report	40,000	80,000	40,000				40,000
Media tours (activity 3d)	3	grant	25,000	75,000		25,000	25,000		25,000
Direct Project Management Cost				170,900	23,363	40,634	35,634	35,634	35,634
Utilities, rent, etc.	210	person month	742	155,900	13,363	35,634	35,634	35,634	35,634
Office hardware	6	item	2,500	15,000	10,000	5,000			
Net Total				5,899,800	409,763	1,554,234	1,553,434	1,177,434	1,204,934
8% PSC				471,984	32,781	124,339	124,275	94,195	96,395
Grand total				6,371,784	442,544	1,678,573	1,677,709	1,271,629	1,301,329

The project budget by output is as follows (Original Phase):

	Approved Budget (5 Years)
OUTPUT 1 : Market-based solutions towards "less plastic wasted"	1,227,000
Personnel: Staff and other personnel costs	0
Personnel: Consultants	117,000
Travel	50,000
Contractual Services	70,000
Grants & Contributions	990,000
Operational Costs	0
OUTPUT 2 - Strengthening the scientific basis for decision-making	1,013,200
Personnel: Staff and other personnel costs	304,200
Personnel: Consultants	101,500
Travel	97,500
Contractual Services	0
Grants & Contributions	510,000
Operational Costs	0
OUTPUT 3 - Outreach on marine litter and plastic pollution	747,750

Personnel: Staff and other personnel costs	0
Personnel: Consultants	0
Travel	0
Contractual Services	295,000
Grants & Contributions	452,750
Operational Costs	0
OUTPUT 4 - Regional networking	854,300
Personnel: Staff and other personnel costs	256,800
Personnel: Consultants	130,000
Travel	197,500
Contractual Services	110,000
Grants & Contributions	160,000
Operational Costs	0
Project Coordination	1,957,550
Personnel: Staff and other personnel costs	1,061,200
Personnel: Consultants	237,000
Travel	353,900
Contractual Services	140,000
Operational Costs	165,450
Grants & Contributions	0
Supply & Material	0
Equipment & Furniture	0
Evaluation: MTR and TE	100,000
Contractual Services	100,000
Personnel: Consultants	
Sub-total	5,899,800
Project Support Cost (8%)	471,984
Grand Total	6,371,784

Budget for 2 year Extension Phase by output is as follows

Outputs and Budget Class	Total Approved Budget 2023-2024
OUTPUT 1 – Market-based solutions towards “less plastic wasted”	
Personnel: Staff and other personnel costs	
Personnel: Consultants	80,000
Travel	18,000
Contractual Services	-

Transfer and Grants	238,000
Operational Costs and Equipment	-
Sub total Output 1	336,000
OUTPUT 2 - Strengthening the scientific basis for decision-making	
Personnel: Staff and other personnel costs	-
Personnel: Consultants	-
Travel	-
Contractual Services	-
Transfer and Grants	120,000
Operational Costs and Equipment	-
Sub total Output 2	120,000
OUTPUT 3 - Outreach on marine litter and plastic pollution	
Personnel: Staff and other personnel costs	-
Personnel: Consultants	125,000
Travel	10,000
Contractual Services	3,960
Transfer and Grants	117,040
Operational Costs and Equipment	-
Sub total Output 3	256,000

OUTPUT 4 – Regional networking	
Personnel: Staff and other personnel costs	-
Personnel: Consultants	98,500
Travel	55,600
Contractual Services	10,000
Transfer and Grants	128,400
Operational Costs and Equipment	-
Sub total Output 4	292,500
Project Coordination	
Personnel: Staff and other personnel costs	952,854
Personnel: Consultants – Project monitoring & evaluation	90,000
Travel	15,000
Contractual Services	-
Transfer and Grants	-
Operational Costs and Equipment	110,000
Sub total Project Coordination	1,167,854
TOTAL Outputs 1-4 and Coordination	2,172,354
PSC @ 8%	173,788
GRAND TOTAL (USD)	2,346,142

	Total (USD)	Year 2018	Year 2019	Year 2020	Year 2021	Year 2022
OUTPUT 1	1,574,075	103,316	435,309	442,484	329,984	262,984
Staff and other personnel costs	391,875	21,875	92,500	92,500	92,500	92,500
Travel	98,975	19,850	16,900	16,575	16,575	29,075
Consultants/ Experts	175,500	45,750	45,750	42,000	42,000	-
Contractual Services	115,000	10,000	20,000	32,500	20,000	32,500
Grants & Contributions	750,000	-	250,000	250,000	150,000	100,000
Direct Project Management Cost	42,725	5,841	10,159	8,909	8,909	8,909
OUTPUT 2	1,578,825	71,816	381,309	523,984	283,484	318,234
Staff and other personnel costs	391,875	21,875	92,500	92,500	92,500	92,500
Travel	196,475	19,850	49,400	49,075	16,575	61,575
Consultants/ Experts	152,750	14,250	49,250	21,000	45,500	22,750
Contractual Services	115,000	10,000	20,000	32,500	20,000	32,500
Grants & Contributions	680,000	-	160,000	320,000	100,000	100,000
Direct Project Management Cost	42,725	5,841	10,159	8,909	8,909	8,909
OUTPUT 3	1,606,075	116,316	438,309	365,484	297,984	387,984
Staff and other personnel costs	391,875	21,875	92,500	92,500	92,500	92,500
Travel	98,975	19,850	16,900	16,575	16,575	29,075
Consultants/ Experts	7,500	3,750	3,750	-	-	-
Contractual Services	290,000	25,000	60,000	72,500	60,000	72,500
Grants & Contributions	775,000	40,000	255,000	175,000	120,000	185,000
Direct Project Management Cost	42,725	5,841	10,159	8,909	8,909	8,909
OUTPUT 4	1,140,825	118,316	299,309	221,484	265,984	235,734
Staff and other personnel costs	391,875	21,875	92,500	92,500	92,500	92,500
Travel	196,475	52,350	49,400	16,575	49,075	29,075
Consultants/ Experts	152,750	14,250	49,250	21,000	45,500	22,750
Contractual Services	157,000	24,000	48,000	32,500	20,000	32,500
Grants & Contributions	200,000	-	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Direct Project Management Cost	42,725	5,841	10,159	8,909	8,909	8,909
Sub-total	5,899,800	409,763	1,554,234	1,553,434	1,177,434	1,204,934
Project Support Cost (8%)	471,984	32,781	124,339	124,275	94,195	96,395
Total	6,371,784	442,544	1,678,573	1,677,709	1,271,629	1,301,329

6. Implementation Issues

The project's Mid-Term Review (MRT) report, November 2021 includes seven recommendations and areas to develop further as follows:

- **Recommendation 1:** Bring the learnings and experiences of SEA circular together in a Solutions Report, including case studies and pilot reports as well as relevant learnings from supporting countries (China, Republic of Korea and Singapore) and make use of this report to advocate for and guide support at country level to initiate, replicate and scale up initiatives.
- **Recommendation 2:** In country level support, engage with the office of the Resident Coordinator and with country offices of sister UN agencies (including UNDP, UNIDO and UN-Habitat) in order to inform their work with the experiences and lessons learned from the project and to assess opportunities for cooperation in terms of country level support to marine plastic litter issues, in line with the UN Reform process and together with other government, private sector, civil society and academic stakeholders.
- **Recommendation 3:** For SIDA to consider a no-cost extension of the present project period to enable the project to make up for delays experienced in particular due to the COVID-19 pandemic and human resource issues and to plan for support to marine plastic litter in the region beyond 2022, in cooperation with sister UN agencies in line with the UN reform process.
- **Recommendation 4:** Enhance linkages of the project with a human rights-based approach, the principle of leaving no one behind and poverty reduction through the inclusion of a focus on

accountability and transparency and on the balance between rights and responsibilities at all levels.

- **Recommendation 5:** Enhance the project monitoring and evaluation system and gear it towards assessment and documentation of results achieved so far and the ability for the project to perform results- based management, in addition to the use of workplan based activity monitoring, while at country level linking with the UN Info system
- **Recommendation 6:** Enhance the focus on networking and coordination amongst marine plastic litter stakeholders at country and regional levels, providing on-going means for networking across stakeholders in between SEA of Solutions events, making use of support to existing platforms, in order to enhance coordination and cooperation amongst partners contributing to the same objectives and support the establishment of a community of practice on marine plastic litter in the South East Asia region across the project output areas
- **Recommendation 7:** Follow up on the gaps identified through the science-based research inventory and facilitate the connection between science and policy through getting policy level demands for research to relevant research agencies and consortia.

As per MTR recommendation #3, Sida approved a two-year extension of the original project period to enable the project to make up for delays experienced in particular due to the COVID-19 pandemic and human resource issues and to plan for support to marine plastic litter in the region beyond 2022, in cooperation with sister UN agencies in line with the UN reform process. **The total budget for 2023-2024 is USD 2,346,142.**

The COVID-19 pandemic caused constraints to the project implementation and delivery model including:

- Despite early adoption of virtual approach to meetings, the pandemic reduced the impact and influence and transfer of knowledge including at the Sea of Solutions networking event which were originally designed to be face-to-face interactions.
- Outreach activities and building synergies with partners were also significantly reduced.
- Due to delayed commencement of activities and virtual engagements, the project's major products due in its final year e.g the integrated project human rights and gender equality aspects as part of implementations of market-based solutions, through enablement of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) in Indonesia and the Philippines in 2021 with the same planned for Viet Nam and Cambodia in 2022, would require more time and sensitizations on measuring the impacts of this interventions in countries.

Apart from COVID-19 constraints, recruitments of new and vacated SEA circular positions delayed the implementation of some output deliverables until a full team were onboard between May to November 2021, resulting in delays in completing scheduled output deliverables in 2021.

Section 2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

(Apart from section 9, where you could insert up to 5 strategic questions that are in addition to the review criteria, this section is standard and does not need to be revised for each project)

7. Objective of the Review

In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy⁸⁷ and the UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual⁸⁸, the Terminal Review (TR) is undertaken at operational completion of the project to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The Review has

⁸⁷ <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/41114>

⁸⁸ <https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/42752>

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, COBSEA and donor, Sida. Therefore, the Review will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation, especially for future phases of the project, where applicable.

8. Key Review principles

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

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

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

Communicating Review Results. A key aim of the Review is to encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff and key project stakeholders. The consultant should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the review process and in the communication of review findings and key lessons. Clear and concise writing is required on all review deliverables. Draft and final versions of the main review report will be shared with key stakeholders by the UNEP Project Manager⁸⁹. There may, however, be several intended audiences, each with different interests and needs regarding the report. The consultant will plan with the UNEP Project Manager which audiences to target and the easiest and clearest way to communicate the key review findings and lessons to them. This may include some or all of the following: a webinar, conference calls with relevant stakeholders, the preparation of a review brief or interactive presentation.

9. Key Strategic Questions

In addition to the review criteria outlined in Section 10 below, the Review will address the **strategic questions**⁹⁰ listed below. These are questions of interest to UNEP and to which the project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution:

- (a) CONTRIBUTION TO THE HOST PROJECT, PCP or SUBPROGRAMME:

⁸⁹ For GEF funded projects, UNEP Project Manager refers to the Task Manager.

⁹⁰ The strategic questions should not duplicate questions that will be addressed under the standard review criteria described in section 10.

- As appropriate, give the specific result(s) that the evaluand delivers against in the host PRC-approved project, PCP or Subprogramme. Please note if the expenditure of the evaluand was ring-fenced in any way (e.g. for use in one country etc)
 - MONITORING: How well is the Monitoring Plan of the evaluand contributing to that of the host PRC-approved project, PCP or Subprogramme?
 - REPORTING: How are the activities and achievements of the evaluand reflected in the reporting of the host PRC-approved project, PCP or Subprogramme?
- (b) THE LEVERAGE GAINED: to what extent, and in what ways, did this work under the evaluand enable UNEP to drive efficiency and effectiveness at any level above that of the evaluand itself:
- At the level of the outcomes, intermediate states and/or long-lasting impact of a PRC-approved project
 - At the level of the POW Direct Outcomes.
- (c) ADDED VALUE: What added value did the work of the evaluand bring to UNEP's work in this thematic area and how is it visible?
- (d) COHERENCE, COLLABORATION AND COMPLEMENTARITY: To what extent, and in what ways, was the work of this evaluand complementary or coherent with other UNEP work, either with the PRC-approved project, PCP or Subprogramme already mentioned, or elsewhere in UNEP's Programme of Work.
- (e) (Where relevant) What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?

The consultant should complete the table in Annex 5 of these TOR and append it to the Final Review report.

10. Review Criteria

All review criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. Sections A-I below, outline the scope of the review criteria. The set of review criteria are grouped in nine categories: (A) Strategic Relevance; (B) Quality of Project Design; (C) Nature of External Context; (D) Effectiveness, which comprises assessments of the availability of outputs, achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact; (E) Financial Management; (F) Efficiency; (G) Monitoring and Reporting; (H) Sustainability; and (I) Factors Affecting Project Performance.

Where UNEP funding partners have areas of specific interest, these are noted, below.

Specific request from Sida: to evaluate the poverty reduction relevance, and if the program could have been designed in an other way to be more poverty relevant

A suite of various tools, templates and guidelines that can help Review Consultant(s) to follow a thorough review process that meets all of UNEP's needs is available via the UNEP Project Manager.

A. Strategic Relevance

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

i. Alignment to the UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy⁹¹ (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities

The Review should assess the project's alignment with the MTS and POW under which the project was approved and include, in its narrative, reflections on the scale and scope of any contributions made to the planned results reflected in the relevant MTS and POW. UNEP strategic priorities include the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building⁹² (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC). The BSP relates to the capacity of governments to: comply with international agreements and obligations at the national level; promote, facilitate and finance environmentally sound technologies and to strengthen frameworks for developing coherent international environmental policies. S-SC is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between developing countries.

ii. Alignment to Donor/Partner Strategic Priorities

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

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

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

iv. Complementarity with Relevant Existing Interventions/Coherence⁹³

An assessment will be made of how well the project, either at design stage or during the project inception or mobilization⁹⁴, took account of ongoing and planned initiatives (under the same sub-programme, other UNEP sub-programmes, or being implemented by other agencies within the same country, sector or institution) that address similar needs of the same target groups. The Review will consider if the project team, in collaboration with Regional Offices and Sub-Programme Coordinators, made efforts to ensure their own intervention was complementary to other interventions, optimized any synergies and avoided duplication of effort. Examples may include work within Cooperation Frameworks or One UN programming. Linkages with other interventions should be described and instances where UNEP's comparative advantage has been particularly well applied should be highlighted.

Adaptation Fund	To encourage utilization, each review should optimize <u>relevance</u> by ensuring (i) that the primary intended users of the evaluation and their intended uses are clearly identified and engaged at the beginning of the evaluation process; (ii) that "intended users" include funding, implementing, and beneficiary stakeholders; and (iii) that evaluators ensure these intended users contribute to decisions about the evaluation process.
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⁹¹ UNEP's Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as *POW Outcomes and POW Direct Outcomes*, of the Sub-programmes. <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents>

⁹² <http://www.unep.fr/ozonaction/about/bsp.htm>

⁹³ This sub-category is consistent with the new criterion of 'Coherence' introduced by the OECD-DAC in 2019.

⁹⁴ 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.

Green Climate Fund	<u>Coherence</u> in climate finance delivery with other multilateral entities.
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B. Quality of Project Design

The quality of project design is assessed using an agreed template during the review inception phase. Ratings are attributed to identified criteria and an overall Project Design Quality rating is established. The complete Project Design Quality template should be annexed in the Review Inception Report. Later, the overall Project Design Quality rating⁹⁵ should be entered in the final review ratings table (as item B) in the Main Review Report and a summary of the project's strengths and weaknesses at design stage should be included within the body of the Main Review Report.

C. Nature of External Context

At review inception stage a rating is established for the project's external operating context (considering the prevalence of conflict, natural disasters and political upheaval⁹⁶). This rating is entered in the final review ratings table as item C. Where a project has been rated as facing either an *Unfavourable* or *Highly Unfavourable* external operating context, and/or a negative external event has occurred during project implementation, the ratings for Effectiveness, Efficiency and/or Sustainability may be increased at the discretion of the Review Consultant and UNEP Project Manager together. A justification for such an increase must be given.

D. Effectiveness

i. Availability of Outputs⁹⁷

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

ii. Achievement of Project Outcomes⁹⁸

The achievement of project outcomes is assessed as performance against the project outcomes as defined in the reconstructed⁹⁹ Theory of Change. These are outcomes that are intended to be achieved

⁹⁵ In some instances, based on data collected during the review process, the assessment of the project's design quality may change from Inception Report to Main Review Report.

⁹⁶ 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. From March 2020 this should include the effects of COVID-19.

⁹⁷ Outputs are the availability (for intended beneficiaries/users) of new products and services and/or gains in knowledge, abilities and awareness of individuals or within institutions (UNEP, 2023)

⁹⁸ Outcomes are the change at institutional level, or changes in behaviors, attitudes or conditions achieved from the use (i.e., uptake, adoption, application) of outputs by intended beneficiaries (UNEP, 2023) (UNEP, 2023)

⁹⁹ UNEP staff are currently required to submit a Theory of Change with all submitted project designs. The level of 'reconstruction' needed during an review will depend on the quality of this initial TOC, the time that has lapsed between project design and implementation (which may be related to securing and disbursing funds) and the level of any formal changes made to the project design. In the case of projects pre-dating 2016 the intervention logic is often represented in a logical framework and a TOC will need to be constructed in the inception stage of the review.

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

iii. Likelihood of Impact

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

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

The Review will consider the extent to which the project has played a catalytic role¹⁰⁰ or has promoted scaling up and/or replication as part of its Theory of Change (either explicitly as in a project with a demonstration component or implicitly as expressed in the drivers required to move to outcome levels) and as factors that are likely to contribute to greater or long-lasting impact.

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

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the extent to which the evaluand is reaching Strategic Results Framework indicator targets.
Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the extent to which the intervention demonstrates that Climate Change Adaptation can be increased or replicated at a broader scale, as well as in other contexts.
Green Climate Fund	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the project's <u>Innovativeness</u> in result areas – the extent to which interventions may lead to paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways.

¹⁰⁰ The terms catalytic effect, scaling up and replication are inter-related and generally refer to extending the coverage or magnitude of the effects of a project. Catalytic effect is associated with triggering additional actions that are not directly funded by the project – these effects can be both concrete or less tangible, can be intentionally caused by the project or implied in the design and reflected in the TOC drivers, or can be unintentional and can rely on funding from another source or have no financial requirements. Scaling up and Replication require more intentionality for projects, or individual components and approaches, to be reproduced in other similar contexts. Scaling up suggests a substantive increase in the number of new beneficiaries reached/involved and may require adapted delivery mechanisms while Replication suggests the repetition of an approach or component at a similar scale but among different beneficiaries. Even with highly technical work, where scaling up or replication involves working with a new community, some consideration of the new context should take place and adjustments made as necessary.

Global Environment Facility	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the extent to which the evaluand is reaching Core Indicator targets (from GEF-6 onwards).
Global Environment Facility	The Review will determine, under Effectiveness, the project's <u>additionality</u> by comparing the benefits of GEF support to a scenario without GEF support. It will identify specific areas where GEF support has contributed additional results and what these additional results were. It will provide quantitative and qualitative evidence to support the findings.

E. Financial Management

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

Global Environment Facility	The Review will determine, under Financial Management, i) time from CEO endorsement (FSP) / CEO approval (MSP) to first disbursement; ii) disbursement balance; iii) whether the project has secured co-financing higher than 35% and iv) time between CEO Endorsement and (likely) end of Terminal Review.
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F. Efficiency

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

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

The Review will give special attention to efforts made by the project teams during project implementation to make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities¹⁰¹ with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency.

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

G. Monitoring and Reporting

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

¹⁰¹ Complementarity with other interventions during project design, inception or mobilization is considered under Strategic Relevance above.

i. Monitoring Design and Budgeting

Each project should be supported by a sound monitoring plan that is designed to track progress against SMART¹⁰² results towards the provision of the project's outputs and achievement of project outcomes, including at a level disaggregated by gender, marginalisation or vulnerability, including those living with disabilities. In particular, the Review will assess the relevance and appropriateness of the project indicators as well as the methods used for tracking progress against them as part of conscious results-based management. The Review will assess the quality of the design of the monitoring plan as well as the funds allocated for its implementation. The adequacy of resources for Mid-Term and Terminal Evaluation/Review should be discussed, where applicable.

ii. Monitoring of Project Implementation

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

iii. Project Reporting

UNEP has a centralised project information management system¹⁰³ in which project managers upload six-monthly progress reports against agreed project milestones. This information will be provided to the Review Consultant(s) by the UNEP Project Manager. Some projects have additional requirements to report regularly to funding partners, which will be supplied by the project team. The Review will assess the extent to which both UNEP and donor reporting commitments have been fulfilled. Consideration will be given as to whether reporting has been carried out with respect to the effects of the initiative on disaggregated groups.

Global Environment Facility	For internally executed projects the Review Consultant should review the quality of regular reports and confirm they have been submitted on a timely basis.
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¹⁰² SMART refers to results that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented. Indicators help to make results measurable.

¹⁰³ Prior to 2022 it was the Project Information Management System (PIMS) and from 2022 UNEP has the Integrated Planning Monitoring and Reporting (IPMR) solution.

H. Sustainability (for Adaptation Fund, read Human and Ecological Sustainability and Security)

Sustainability¹⁰⁴ is understood as the probability of the benefits derived from the achievement of project outcomes being maintained and developed after the close of the intervention. The Review will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the endurance of achieved project outcomes (i.e. 'assumptions' and 'drivers'). Some factors of sustainability may be embedded in the project design and implementation approaches while others may be contextual circumstances or conditions that evolve over the life of the intervention. Where applicable an assessment of bio-physical factors that may affect the sustainability of direct project outcomes may also be included.

i. Socio-political Sustainability

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

ii. Financial Sustainability

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

iii. Institutional Sustainability

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

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider, under <u>Human and ecological sustainability and security</u> – the extent to which the intervention is likely to generate continued positive or negative, intended and unintended impacts beyond its lifetime, taking into consideration, social, institutional, economic, and environmental systems. Is the intervention sensitive to conflict and fragility, i.e., to what extent does it consider the political context and the sharing of natural resources? Is it contributing towards targeted communities' livelihoods and to the health or well-being of the ecosystems on which they depend?
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I. Factors Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

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

¹⁰⁴ As used here, 'sustainability' means the long-lasting maintenance of outcomes and consequent impacts, whether environmental or not. This is distinct from the concept of sustainability in the terms 'environmental sustainability' or 'sustainable development', which imply 'not living beyond our means' or 'not diminishing global environmental benefits' (GEF STAP Paper, 2019, Achieving More Enduring Outcomes from GEF Investment)

i. Preparation and Readiness

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

ii. Quality of Project Management and Supervision

In some cases 'project management and supervision' may refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others it may refer to the project management performance of an implementing partner and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UNEP. The performance of parties playing different roles should be discussed and a rating provided for both types of supervision (UNEP/Implementing Agency; Partner/Executing Agency) and the overall rating for this sub-category established as a simple average of the two.

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

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider the extent to which the evaluand was <u>adapted in response to lessons and reflections during implementation</u> ; and the extent to which the intervention supported the use, development, or diffusion of innovative practices, tools, or technologies to improve or accelerate Climate Change Adaptation.
Global Environment Facility	For internally executed projects the Review Consultant should review whether the segregation of responsibilities met the GEF requirements ¹⁰⁵ (the GEF Agency must separate its project implementation and execution duties and establish each of the following: (a) A satisfactory institutional arrangement for the separation of implementation and executing functions in different departments of the GEF Agency; and (b) Clear lines of responsibility, reporting and accountability within the GEF Agency between the project implementation and execution functions.

iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation

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

iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality (for Adaptation Fund, read 'Equity'; for GCF, read 'Gender Equity')

The Review will ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

¹⁰⁵ GEF Minimum Fiduciary Standards: Separation of Implementation and Execution Functions in GEF Partner Agencies (2019).

Within this human rights context the Review will assess to what extent the intervention adheres to UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment¹⁰⁶.

The report should present the extent to which the intervention, following an adequate gender analysis at design stage, has implemented the identified actions and/or applied adaptive management to ensure that Gender Equality and Human Rights are adequately taken into account. In particular the Review will consider to what extent project design, implementation and monitoring have taken into consideration: (i) possible inequalities (especially those related to gender) in access to, and the control over, natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups (especially women, youth and children and those living with disabilities) to environmental degradation or disasters; and (iii) the role of disadvantaged groups (especially women, youth and children and those living with disabilities) in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation.

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider the extent to which the project's design and implementation includes input of the designated authority (DA) and vulnerable groups such as women, youth, persons with disability, Indigenous Peoples, minorities, and other potentially marginalized groups or locations. It also encompasses the degree to which the intervention reduced or perpetuated inequalities, and how equitably benefits were accrued to vulnerable groups.
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Note that the project's effect on equality (i.e. promoting human rights, gender equality and inclusion of those living with disabilities and/or belonging to marginalised/vulnerable groups) should be included within the TOC as a general driver or assumption where there is no dedicated result within the results framework. If an explicit commitment on this topic is made within the project document then the driver/assumption should also be specific to the described intentions.

v. Environmental and Social Safeguards

UNEP projects address environmental and social safeguards primarily through the process of environmental and social screening at the project approval stage, risk assessment and management (avoidance, or mitigation of potential environmental and social risks and impacts associated with project and programme activities. The Review will confirm whether UNEP requirements¹⁰⁷ were met to: *review* risk ratings on a regular basis; *monitor* project implementation for possible safeguard issues; *respond* (where relevant) to safeguard issues through risk avoidance, minimization, mitigation or offsetting and *report* on the implementation of safeguard management measures taken. UNEP requirements for proposed projects to be screened for any safeguarding issues; for sound environmental and social risk assessments to be conducted and initial risk ratings to be assigned, are reviewed above under Quality of Project Design).

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

vi. Country Ownership and Driven-ness

The Review will assess the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project. While there is some overlap between Country Ownership and Institutional Sustainability, this criterion focuses primarily on the forward momentum of the intended projects results, i.e. either: a) moving forwards from outputs to project outcomes or b) moving forward from project outcomes

¹⁰⁶ The Evaluation Office notes that Gender Equality was first introduced in the UNEP Project Review Committee Checklist in 2010 and, therefore, provides a criterion rating on gender for projects approved from 2010 onwards. Equally, it is noted that policy documents, operational guidelines and other capacity building efforts have only been developed since then and have evolved over time. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7655/-Gender_equality_and_the_environment_Policy_and_strategy-2015Gender_equality_and_the_environment_policy_and_strategy.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

¹⁰⁷ For the review of project concepts and proposals, the Safeguard Risk Identification Form (SRIF) was introduced in 2019 and replaced the Environmental, Social and Economic Review note (ESERN), which had been in place since 2016. In GEF projects safeguards have been considered in project designs since 2011.

towards intermediate states. The Review will consider the involvement not only of those directly involved in project execution and those participating in technical or leadership groups, but also those official representatives whose cooperation is needed for change to be embedded in their respective institutions and offices (e.g. representatives from multiple sectors or relevant ministries beyond Ministry of Environment). This factor is concerned with the level of ownership generated by the project over outputs and outcomes and that is necessary for long term impact to be realised. Ownership should extend to all gender and marginalised groups.

vii. Communication and Public Awareness

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

Section 3. REVIEW APPROACH, METHODS AND DELIVERABLES

(This section has both standard text and parts that are specific to the project, to be filled in)

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

The findings of the Review will be based on the following: [This section should be edited for each Review]

a. A **desk review** of:

Relevant background documentation, inter alia *[add items]*:

[Project Prodoc](#)

[PRC approved Prodoc from 2018 to 2022 - 521.1](#)

[PRC approved Prodoc 2023 – 2024 – One Plastic Initiative](#)

[An Assessment of SEA circular's results framework](#) for revisions done in the project extension phase

Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval);
Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project (Project Document Supplement), the logical framework and its budget;

Annual Workplans [link](#)

Budget revisions

Project reports such as six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence and any other monitoring materials etc.;

Project deliverables (e.g. publications, assessments etc) *[list]*:

Project Website: <https://www.sea-circular.org/> and Knowledge Hub: <https://www.sea-circular.org/publications/>

SEA of Solutions - <https://www.sea-circular.org/sea-of-solutions/>

Project Impact Report (final draft)

Project Impact Video (draft version)

SEA circular results framework monitoring and tracking

PCP for High Impact Sector

One Plastic Initiative Prodoc

PoW – Chemicals and Pollution Action

Mid-Term Review or Mid-Term Evaluation of the project;

Mid term Evaluation Report and Management Response

Evaluations/Reviews of similar projects.

Terminal Review and Validation Report of 521.1

(a) **Interviews** (individual or in group) with:
UNEP Project Manager¹⁰⁸ :

Project management team; **Feng Wang, Kamala Ernest, Nam, Ran Xie, Francesca, Lea Las Pinas, Kamal Salehin, Mahesh for COBSEA Secretariat,**

UNEP Fund Management Officer (FMO);- Ahmed Khan

Sub-Programme Coordinator – Global and Regional Sub-programme Coordinator for Chemicals and Pollution Actions

Project partners, including list of implementing partners attached separately. Key partners worked with after Mid-term review are WWF Germany, UNDP Cambodia, EBI, AIT, Perpetual, CSIRO, Dalhousie, VNU

Relevant resource persons – PSC members, COBSEA WGML focal points in the 6-beneficiary country.

Representatives from civil society and specialist groups (such as women's, farmers and trade associations etc) - MAREA, selected list of PROs, Informal Sector, Youth Group, Government representatives– use participants list from the EPR Regional Training on 17th September 2024, GPAP – Liviana and Pedro

a. **Surveys**

b. **Field visits – not applicable**

b. **Other data collection tools**

11. Review Deliverables and Review Procedures

See Annex 1 of these TOR for a list of tools and guidance available, see Annex 2 for a list of review criteria and sub-categories to be assessed. The Review Consultant will prepare:

Inception Report: (see Annex 3 of these TOR) containing an assessment of project design quality, a draft reconstructed Theory of Change of the project, project stakeholder analysis, review framework and a tentative review schedule.

Preliminary Findings Note: typically in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, the sharing of preliminary findings is intended to support the participation of the project team, act as a means to ensure all information sources have been accessed and provide an opportunity to verify emerging findings.

Draft and Final Review Report: (See Annex 4 of these TOR) containing an Executive Summary that can act as a stand-alone document; detailed analysis of the review findings organised

¹⁰⁸ For GEF funded projects, UNEP Project Manager refers to the Task Manager.

by review criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.

A **Review Brief** (a 2-page overview of the evaluand and review findings) for wider dissemination through the UNEP website may be required. This will be discussed with the UNEP Project Manager no later than during the finalization of the Inception Report.

Review of the Draft Review Report. The Review Consultant will submit a draft report to the UNEP Project Manager and revise the draft in response to their comments and suggestions. The UNEP Project Manager will then forward the revised draft report to other project stakeholders, for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions as well as providing feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Any comments or responses to draft reports will be sent to the UNEP Project Manager for consolidation. The UNEP Project Manager will provide all comments to the Review Consultant for consideration in preparing the final report, along with guidance on areas of contradiction or issues requiring an institutional response.

The UNEP Evaluation Office provides templates and tools to support the review process and provides a formal assessment of the quality of the final Terminal Review report, which is provided within this report's annexed material. In addition, the Evaluation Office formally validates the report by ensuring that the performance judgments made are consistent with evidence presented in the Review report and in-line with the performance standards set out for independent evaluations. As such the project performance ratings presented in the Review report may be adjusted by the Evaluation Office.

At the end of the review process, the UNEP Project Manager will prepare a **Recommendations Implementation Plan** in the format of a table, to be completed and updated at regular intervals, and circulate the **Lessons Learned**.

12. The Review Consultant

The Review Consultant will work under the overall responsibility of the UNEP Project Manager, Feng Wang in consultation with the Fund Management Officer - Ahmed Khan the Head of SCP Unit/Focal Area/Branch Djaheezah Subratty and the Sub-programme Coordinators of the Chemicals and Pollution Action UNEP at global level and regional levels.

The Review Consultant will liaise with the UNEP Project Manager on any procedural and methodological matters related to the Review. It is, however, the consultants' individual responsibility (where applicable) to arrange for their visas and immunizations as well as to plan meetings with stakeholders, organize online surveys, obtain documentary evidence and any other logistical matters related to the assignment. The UNEP Project Manager and project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings etc.) allowing the consultants to conduct the Review as efficiently and independently as possible.

The Review Consultant will be hired over a period of 4 months 30 December 2024 to 30 April 2025 and should have the following: An advanced university degree in environment/social/natural science, environmental policy, law, political sciences and equivalent academic qualifications, or equivalent work experience. A first-level university degree in combination with qualifying experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree. At least 10 years (post-graduate) work experience with international development assistance experience in relevant fields; Extensive evaluation/technical experience is required, preferably including evaluating large, regional or global programmes and using a Theory of Change approach; A good/broad understanding of thematic areas such as environment, green economy, resource efficiency and natural resource management is desired; Process management skills such as facilitation skills and ability to negotiate with a wide range of stakeholders; Working knowledge of the UN system and specifically the work of UNEP is an added advantage; Experience and knowledge of Asia and the Pacific context is desired

English and French are the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat. For this consultancy, fluency in oral and written English is a requirement and proficiency other UN Language(s) is an advantage. Working knowledge of the UN system and specifically the work of UNEP is an added advantage. The work will be home-based with possible field visits.

The Review Consultant will be responsible, in close consultation with the UNEP Project Manager, for overall quality of the review and timely delivery of its outputs, described above in Section 11 Review Deliverables, above. The Review Consultant will ensure that all review criteria and questions are adequately covered.

13. Schedule of the Review

The table below presents the tentative schedule.

Table 3. Tentative schedule for the Review

Milestone	Tentative Dates
Inception Report	15.12.24 to 06.01.25
Review Mission	10.01.25 to 10.02.25
E-based interviews, surveys etc.	
PowerPoint/presentation on preliminary findings and recommendations	10.03.25
Draft Review Report to UNEP Project Manager	10.03.25
Draft Review Report shared with wider group of stakeholders	15.03.25 to 30.03.25
Final Main Review Report	10.04.25
Final Main Review Report submitted to the UNEP Evaluation Office for validation and quality assessment	10.04.25
Final Main Review Report shared with all respondents	15.04.25

14. Contractual Arrangements

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

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

Schedule of Payment:

Deliverable	Percentage Payment
Approved Inception Report (<i>as per Guidance Note</i>)	27%
Approved Draft Main Review Report (<i>as per Guidance Note</i>)	40%
Approved Final Main Review Report (<i>as per Report Template</i>)	33%

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

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

In case the consultant is not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these guidelines, and in line with the expected quality standards by the UNEP Project Manager, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Head of Branch/Unit until the consultants have improved the deliverables to meet UNEP's quality standards.

If the consultant fails to submit a satisfactory final product to the UNEP Project Manager in a timely manner, i.e. before the end date of their contract, UNEP reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize the report, and to reduce the consultant's fees by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by the project team to bring the report up to standard or completion.

ANNEX XI. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Project Title and Reference No.: Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in Southeast Asia (SEA circular) (SMA ID 130677)

Contact Person (TM/PM): Feng Wang (feng.wang@un.org)

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
#1: For UNEP, Sida and partners to follow up on the momentum created in the region in terms of support to plastic pollution and marine litter, integrating learning obtained through the SEA circular project, making use of a value chain approach, in ongoing marine litter and plastic pollution projects, in all parts of the UNEP Plastics Initiative and beyond, and assessing the need for additional support in the region.	Yes	Further support will be provided to countries through other ongoing projects under the UNEP Plastics Initiative in developing and implementing policies and market-based solutions, especially focusing on upstream and mid-stream solutions. The SEA of Solutions 2025 will be held in December 2025 to continue the momentum and UNEP's leadership in addressing plastic pollution in the region. Concepts and proposals will be developed to continue providing support to countries in the region, based on the outcome of the INC negotiation. .	Ongoing 2025 2026	Industry and Economy Division, UNEP ROAP, Sida

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
#2: For UNEP, COBSEA and partners to support and enhance the use of the knowledge products developed through the SEA circular project, through improving accessibility including by: tailoring knowledge products for specific stakeholder needs including those of policy makers, translating documents in languages of the participating countries, repackaging the existing knowledge base for ease of access, and providing a meta-analysis of the knowledge base that provides an overview of the learnings and identifies remaining gaps.	Partially	The UNEP Plastics Initiative will maintain the access to knowledge products of SEA circular through the knowledge hub of the Global Plastics Hub and use these products to inform ongoing and upcoming regional projects in Asia and the Pacific. Non-English speaking countries can translate these products into their national languages for their perusal. Relevant knowledge products will be tailored to the needs of specific stakeholders as part of other projects or initiatives. Remaining gaps in knowledge will be identified in consultation with participating countries and related stakeholders in the context of other projects under the UNEP Plastics Initiative (no need for conducting a meta-analysis).	Ongoing Ongoing 2025-2026	Industry and Economy Division, UNEP ROAP, COBSEA
#3: For UNEP to enhance monitoring of its marine litter and plastic pollution-oriented projects and programming, focusing on the assessment of relevant output and	Yes	A mapping will be conducted for outcome and output indicators of ongoing projects against the theory of change of the UNEP Plastics Initiative to assess how each	2026	Industry and Economy Division

	PLANS			
RECOMMENDATIONS	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
outcome level changes, as well as intermediate level changes required to reach outcome level results, enhancing in this way results-based management and increasing the likelihood of contributing to outcome, intermediate state and impact level results.		project is contributing to the impact and outcomes of the Initiative. Monitoring and tracking tools will be developed as living documents for all projects under the Initiative and to streamline monitoring efforts and plans. Marine litter and plastic pollution-related projects led by other teams at UNEP will be monitored closely through regular coordination meetings and reporting exercises including IPMR reporting.	2026 Ongoing	
#4: For UNEP to strengthen its support to sister UN agencies at the country level, through cooperation between the IE Division and ROAP, ensuring the inclusion of marine litter and plastic pollution aspects in the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and in the resulting Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks at country level.	Yes	Plastic pollution will be integrated and mainstreamed into the CCAs and UNSDCF's of Southeast Asian countries by engaging with UNEP's UNCT focal points, UNRCs and UNCTs. Support will be provided to UNRCs and UNCTs through supporting stakeholder consultation workshops, developing synthesis reports and baseline analysis, and providing written inputs to CCAs and UNSDCF's.	2027	UNEP IED and ROAP

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
#5: For UNEP, COBSEA and partners to consider enhancing sustainability of results of this and other marine litter and plastic pollution related projects, through attention to technical support to country level involvement in the INC process, the financial aspects of addressing plastic pollution and marine litter once the INC process is finalized and by working with universities in the region to establish marine litter and other forms of plastic pollution monitoring in their curricula.	Partially	This work will align with the timeline of the INC negotiation for a global treaty to reduce plastic pollution, which is still ongoing until August 2025. Support will be provided to countries based on their needs and requests to increase the knowledge of technical topics in the context of INC negotiations and to support the ratification and implementation of the international legally binding agreement to end plastic pollution once the INC process is finalized. Engagement with universities and relevant ministries in the region will be continued through other projects under the UNEP Plastics Initiative to integrate plastic pollution and marine litter monitoring into curricula, depending on the needs.	Ongoing 2026	UNEP ROAP, COBSEA
#6: For UNEP to consider enhancing the linkages between environmental benefits of reduced plastic pollution and marine litter and the results for people and communities, including their socio-economic, health and	Yes	Conducting economic valuations of reduced marine litter and plastic pollution, assessing the job opportunities and skills for different solutions to reduce plastic pollution (such as producing alternative products, building reuse and refill systems, and improving recycling), and increasing the health and well-being of the informal sector. Human	2025-2028	Industry and Economy Division, UNEP ROAP

	PLANS			
RECOMMENDATIONS	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
cultural implications, with a focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups, including both their present situation as well as their aspirations.		right-based approach is being considered in new projects under the UNEP Plastics Initiative.		
#7: For UNEP to enhance aspects of project evaluation in particular in terms of Terminal Project Reviews managed by the project internally, including : • Starting the review process within the implementation period of the project, when partners have a higher level of interest in participation compared to after project termination. • Retain the project manager for the time of the evaluation in order to facilitate the review process, including making available secondary resources and facilitating the organization of interviews with	Yes	The future terminal review processes of projects under the UNEP Plastics Initiative will be initiated within the project implementation period. The UNEP Plastics Initiative team will ensure that technical and coordination capacities are in place to effectively facilitate terminal reviews. A knowledge depository will be maintained to keep project-related documents needed for terminal reviews. Project personnel involved in the implementation will be engaged in the review processes to the extent possible to share institutional knowledge of the project.	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing	Industry and Economy Division, UNEP ROAP

	PLANS			
RECOMMENDATIONS	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
a variety of project stakeholders. • Ensure the availability of a database of project related documents which are needed to inform the terminal review.				

The following is a summary of lessons learned from some of the project's experiences and based upon explicit findings of the review. They briefly describe the context from which the lessons are derived, and the potential for wider application:

Lesson Learned #1:	In a development intervention the use of a human rights-based approach can point to ways in which to prevent that groups that are already vulnerable and marginalized, get even further behind in the development process through changes concerned. In an increasingly crowded field of plastic pollution and marine litter, this proved a comparative advantage of UNEP as a UN agency and a way in which it could provide uniquely added value.
Context/comment:	In most development contexts there are winners, but there also could be losers, those groups of people that lose out on opportunities due to their position in society and/or their economic conditions or other aspects of marginalization. In the context of the project, this concerned in particular waste workers in the informal sector, but also coastal communities as well as women, girls and young people in these communities. Additional measures would be needed to ensure that developments in terms of management approaches to plastic waste pollution and marine litter do not further marginalize such groups but engage with them in the development process.

Lesson Learned #2:	Rather than working with individual enterprises, results in terms of market-based solutions could be more readily obtained through working with membership-based business organizations, which could create multiplier effects throughout their membership and related stakeholders in the plastic value chain.
Context/comment:	In addition to single companies, the SEA circular project, as part of Output 1 on Market based solutions, worked with the Indonesian Business Council for Sustainable development, the Food Industry Asia and the Federation of Thai Industries. Participation of the leadership of these organizations in roundtables, fora and dialogues as keynote speakers or as resource people in training programmes created a ripple effect among the members of these organizations and other stakeholders in the activities concerned.
Lesson Learned #3:	Regional Guidance on Harmonized National Marine Litter Monitoring Programmes can have multiple results, informing national level policy making and action plans as well as catalyzing actions across the region and facilitating an integrated approach to the cross-boundary concerns of marine litter and plastic pollution.
Context/comment:	Training on national level monitoring of marine litter in the region, making use of a harmonized approach resulted in an increased understanding of marine litter in the participating countries, which in turn could inform national level planning. On the other hand, the harmonized approach allowed for comparable results across the participating countries, which allowed them to publish results in a regional study, which they were less inclined to do at national level. This is even more important, given the cross-boundary character of marine litter.
Lesson Learned #4:	For a regional project it is useful to establish partner relationships through the relevant mother organization at a global or regional level before working with each of the partner organizations at the country level which can save time as well as enable the grounding of such country relationships in a regional approach and perspective.
Context/comment:	With the SEA circular project moving from the UNEP ROAP to the UNEP IE Division, it could take advantage of some of the global partnerships that UNEP had established, which proved beneficial for the development of partnerships in the region and at country level. Given numerous opportunities, a strategic plan was needed to prioritize steps concerned in a realistic timeframe.

Lesson Learned #5:	Temporary Job Openings can enable a more rapid recruitment process once a project has started and prevent long recruitment processes that result in long term gaps in project staffing when staff have left their position after the start of the project.
Context/comment:	UNEP staff recruitment processes usually take considerable time. Though temporary job openings cannot be used at the start of a project, they can be useful once some of the initially recruited staff leaves their post, and a temporary job opening could temporarily fill the position until a more permanent staff has been recruited.

ANNEX XII. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE REVIEW REPORT

Review Title: Reducing marine litter by addressing the management of the plastic value chain in Southeast Asia (SEA circular) (SMA ID 130677)

Consultant: Frank Noij

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).

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Review Report Rating
Report Quality Criteria		
Quality of the Executive Summary <u>Purpose:</u> acts as a stand alone and accurate <u>summary</u> of the main review product, especially for senior management. To include: • concise overview of the review object • clear summary of the review objectives and scope • overall review rating of the project and key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) against exceptional criteria • reference to where the review ratings table can be found within the report • summary response to key strategic review questions • summary of the main findings of the exercise/synthesis of main conclusions • summary of lessons learned and recommendations.	Final report (coverage/omissions): A summary response to key strategic review questions is provided, however, the actual questions should have also been included in this section. Even though briefly mentioned, the Executive Summary should have better explained that the evaluand 'SEA circular' was implemented under two different UNEP projects over the period 2018-2024, i.e., • PIMS ID 02010 (2018-2022) managed by the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, and • SMA ID 130677 (2023-2024) managed by the UNEP Industry and Economy Division. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The Executive Summary presents an adequate summary of the main findings based on the assessment of the review criteria.	5
Quality of the 'Introduction' Section <u>Purpose:</u> introduces/<u>situates</u> the evaluand in its institutional context, establishes its main parameters (time, value, results, geography) and the purpose of the review itself. To include: • institutional context of the project (sub-programme, Division, Branch etc) • date of PRC approval, project duration and start/end dates • number of project phases (where appropriate) • results frameworks to which it contributes (e.g. POW Direct Outcome) • coverage of the review (regions/countries where implemented) • implementing and funding partners	Final report (coverage/omissions): All required elements are adequately addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report presents a concise introduction and description of the evaluand.	5.5

• total secured budget • whether the project has been reviewed/evaluated in the past (e.g. mid-term, external agency etc.) • concise statement of the purpose of the review and the key intended audience for the findings.		
Quality of the 'Review Methods' Section <u>Purpose:</u> provides reader with clear and comprehensive description of review methods, demonstrates the <u>credibility</u> of the findings and performance ratings. To include: • description of review data collection methods and information sources • justification for methods used (e.g. qualitative/ quantitative; electronic/face-to-face) • number and type of respondents (<i>see table template</i>) • selection criteria used to identify respondents, case studies or sites/countries visited • strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and consultation • methods to include the voices/experiences of different and potentially excluded groups (e.g. vulnerable, gender, marginalised etc) • details of how data were verified (e.g. triangulation, review by stakeholders etc.) • methods used to analyse data (scoring, coding, thematic analysis etc) • review limitations (e.g. low/ imbalanced response rates across different groups; gaps in documentation; language barriers etc) • ethics and human rights issues should be highlighted including: how anonymity and confidentiality were protected. Is there an ethics statement? E.g. <i>'Throughout the 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.'</i>	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are adequately addressed. A table summarizing the respondents interviewed during the data collection phase is also included. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section presents a comprehensive description of the review methods. Limitations are also explained.	5.5
Quality of the 'Project' Section <u>Purpose:</u> describes and <u>verifies</u> key dimensions of the evaluand relevant to assessing its performance. To include: • <i>Context:</i> overview of the main issue that the project is trying to address, its root causes and consequences on the environment and human well-being (i.e.	Final report (coverage/omissions): References to the figures/data provided in the <i>Context</i> sub-section should have been provided. In addition to Table 5, a detailed stakeholder analysis table explaining the level of participation, roles and responsibilities, and changes in	5

synopsis of the problem and situational analyses) • <i>Results framework</i>: summary of the project's results hierarchy as stated in the ProDoc (or as officially revised) • <i>Stakeholders</i>: description of groups of targeted stakeholders organised according to relevant common characteristics • <i>Project implementation structure and partners</i>: description of the implementation structure with diagram and a list of key project partners • <i>Changes in design during implementation</i>: any key events that affected the project's scope or parameters should be described in brief in chronological order • <i>Project financing</i>: completed tables of: (a) budget at design and expenditure by components (b) planned and actual sources of funding/co-financing	behaviour of each stakeholder group should have been provided. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Overall, the report presents a comprehensive analysis of the key dimensions of the evaluand.	
Quality of the Theory of Change <u>Purpose</u>: to set out the TOC at Review in diagrammatic and narrative forms to support consistent project performance; to articulate the causal pathways with drivers and assumptions and justify any reconstruction necessary to assess the project's performance. To include: • description of how the <i>TOC at Review</i>¹⁰⁹ was designed (who was involved etc) • confirmation/reconstruction of results in accordance with UNEP definitions • articulation of causal pathways • identification of drivers and assumptions • identification of key actors in the change process • summary of the reconstruction/results re-formulation in tabular form. <i>The two results hierarchies (original/formal revision and reconstructed) should be presented as a two-column table to show clearly that, although wording and placement may have changed, the results 'goal posts' have not been 'moved'. This table may have initially been presented in the Inception Report and should appear somewhere in the Main Review report.</i>	Final report (coverage/omissions): Table 6 presents the original formulation of the result statements as per the approved ProDoc and the reformulated versions as a result of the 2022 project extension/revision. However, the aim of this table is to present the reformulated versions of the results (i.e., outputs, outcomes, intermediate states and impact) at Review. The Evaluation Office notes that, at Review, no changes were made to the results statements and ToC. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Para. 68 states: "<i>In the case of the project, however, the ToC versions do not identify the intricate links and relationships amongst the various change levels. Rather, they merely show that all aspects of one result level link with all the aspects of the next level</i>". Therefore, one would have expected the reviewer to reconstruct the ToC at Review. The section should have better articulated the causal pathways explaining also the roles of different stakeholders in the change process. At UNEP, project impacts are intended as long-lasting results bringing benefits to the environment and human well-being. The project impact lacks these	3

¹⁰⁹ During the Inception Phase of the review process a *TOC at Review Inception* is created based on the information contained in the approved project documents (these may include either logical framework or a TOC or narrative descriptions), formal revisions and annual reports etc. During the review process this TOC is revised based on changes made during project intervention and becomes the *TOC at Review*.

	dimensions and, therefore, should have been reformulated at Review.	
Quality of Key Findings within the Report <u>Presentation of evidence:</u> nature of evidence should be clear (interview, document, survey, observation, online resources etc) and evidence should be explicitly triangulated unless noted as having a single source. <u>Consistency within the report:</u> all parts of the report should form consistent support for findings and performance ratings, which should be in line with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix. <u>Findings Statements (where applicable):</u> The frame of reference for a finding should be an individual review criterion or a strategic question from the TOR. A finding should go beyond description and uses analysis to provide insights that aid learning specific to the evaluand. In some cases a findings statement may articulate a key element that has determined the performance rating of a criterion. Findings will frequently provide insight into 'how' and/or 'why' questions.	Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Evidence presented by the reviewer is clear. Finding statements specific for each review criterion were not identified.	5
Quality of 'Strategic Relevance' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present evidence and analysis of project strategic relevance with respect to UNEP, partner and geographic policies and strategies at the time of project approval. To include: Assessment of the evaluand's relevance vis-à-vis: • Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities • Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities • Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities • Complementarity with Existing Interventions: complementarity of the project at design (or during inception/mobilisation¹¹⁰), with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups.	Final report (coverage/omissions): All required elements are well addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section presents a detailed analysis of the project's alignment and strategic relevance with respect to UNEP, donors Regional and Global priorities, and complementarity with existing interventions.	6
Quality of the 'Quality of Project Design' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the project design, on the basis that the detailed assessment was presented in the Inception Report.	Final report (coverage/omissions): The section only presents the summary table with ratings of the design elements assessed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): An analysis of the project design's strengths and weaknesses should have been provided, although it is assumed	3

¹¹⁰ 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.

	that, as per Evaluation Office guidance and templates, a full analysis was included in the MLTR Inception Report.	
Quality of the 'Nature of the External Context' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to describe and recognise, when appropriate, key <u>external</u> features of the project's implementing context that limited the project's performance (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, political upheaval¹¹¹), and how they affected performance. While additional details of the implementing context may be informative, this section should clearly record whether or not a major and unexpected disrupting event took place during the project's life in the implementing sites.	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are briefly addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report provides a brief overview of the factors that affected the project implementation.	4
Quality of 'Effectiveness' Section (i) Availability of Outputs: <u>Purpose:</u> to present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the outputs made available to the intended beneficiaries. To include: - a convincing, evidence-supported and clear presentation of the outputs made available by the project compared to its approved plans and budget - assessment of the nature and scale of outputs versus the project indicators and targets - assessment of the timeliness, quality and utility of outputs to intended beneficiaries - identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Final report (coverage/omissions): All elements are well addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The reviewer provided a detailed evidence-based assessment of the level of achievement of the four project outputs. A summary table summarising the degree of achievement of each output is also included in the analysis.	6
ii) Achievement of Project Outcomes: <u>Purpose:</u> to present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the uptake, adoption and/or implementation of outputs by the intended beneficiaries. This may include behaviour changes at an individual or collective level. To include: - a convincing and evidence-supported analysis of the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries - assessment of the nature, depth and scale of outcomes versus the project indicators and targets	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are well addressed. It would have been useful including in this section the three original outcome statements and the one that replaced the three which was introduced at Project Revision (2022). Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section presents an evidence-based analysis of the achievement of the project outcome.	5

¹¹¹ 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.

• discussion of the contribution, credible association and/or attribution of outcome level changes to the work of the project itself • any constraints to attributing effects to the projects' work • identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).		
(iii) Likelihood of Impact: <u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to likelihood of impact, including an assessment of the extent to which drivers and assumptions necessary for change to happen, were seen to be holding. To include: • an explanation of how causal pathways emerged and change processes can be shown • an explanation of the roles played by key actors and change agents • explicit discussion of how drivers and assumptions played out • identification of any unintended negative effects of the project, especially on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Final report (coverage/omissions): The section should have included an explanation of the causal pathways leading to the project impact. Also, an analysis of any unintended effects of the project should have been provided. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The Evaluation Office notes that the project impact 'less plastic wasted in Southeast Asia' represents a result at the intermediate state level, hence should have been reformulated at Review to adequately represent a long-lasting result bringing benefits to the environment and human well-being.	4.5
Quality of 'Financial Management' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under financial management and include a completed 'financial management' table (may be annexed). Consider how well the report addresses the following: • <i>adherence</i> to UNEP's financial policies and procedures • <i>completeness</i> of financial information, including the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used • <i>communication</i> between financial and project management staff	Final report (coverage/omissions): Required elements are addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section presents a brief analysis of the three dimensions under financial management. The total secured budget was USD 8,717,926, of which, USD 6,371,784 secured at approval and USD 2,346,142 at project revision 1 in 2022. However, according to tables 16, 17 and 18, the total project expenditure was USD 6,873,805. This is also indicated in the project identification table, project financing section (page 24) and Annex VI. Therefore, it appears that the project underspent almost USD 2M. To note, para. 178 states that "To assess the expenditure versus the budget, the exchange rate issues between the SEK and the USD need to be taken into consideration". Considering the significant difference between the secured budget and the expenditure, the report should have provided more details on this aspect.	4

Quality of 'Efficiency' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under efficiency (i.e. the primary categories of cost-effectiveness and timeliness). To include: - time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe - discussion of making use, during project implementation, of/building on pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. - implications of any delays and no cost extensions - the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are adequately addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report presents an integrated analysis of the dimensions assessed under efficiency.	5
Quality of 'Monitoring and Reporting' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the evaluand's monitoring and reporting. Consider how well the report addresses the following: - quality of the monitoring design and budgeting (<i>including SMART results with measurable indicators, resources for MTE/R etc.</i>) - quality of monitoring of project implementation (<i>including use of monitoring data for adaptive management</i>) - quality of project reporting (e.g. <i>PIMS and donor reports</i>) \	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are adequately addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report presents a complete assessment of the three dimensions under Monitoring and Reporting.	5
Quality of 'Sustainability' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under sustainability (i.e. the endurance of benefits achieved at outcome level). Consider how well the report addresses the following: - socio-political sustainability - financial sustainability - institutional sustainability	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements adequately addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section presents an integrated analysis of the three dimensions under Sustainability.	5
Quality of Factors Affecting Performance Section <u>Purpose:</u> These factors are not always discussed in stand-alone sections and may be integrated in the other performance criteria as appropriate. However, if not addressed substantively in this section, a cross reference must be given to where the topic is addressed and that entry must be sufficient to justify the performance rating for these factors. Consider how well the review report, either in this section or in cross-referenced sections, covers the following cross-cutting themes: preparation and readiness	Final report (coverage/omissions): All elements well addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report presents a comprehensive assessment of the factors affecting performance as a stand-alone section.	5

• quality of project management and supervision¹¹² • stakeholder participation and co-operation • responsiveness to human rights and gender equality • environmental and social safeguards • country ownership and driven-ness • communication and public awareness		
Quality of the Conclusions Section (i) Conclusions Narrative: <u>Purpose:</u> to present summative statements reflecting on prominent aspects of the <u>performance of the evaluand as a whole</u>, they should be derived from the synthesized analysis of evidence gathered during the review process. To include: • compelling narrative providing an integrated summary of the strengths and weakness in overall performance (achievements and limitations) of the project • clear and succinct response to the key strategic questions • human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention should be discussed explicitly (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on)	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are well addressed. Human rights and gender dimensions are also discussed. Responses to the key strategic questions should have been included in this section. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The section presents an integrated summary of the project's achievements, challenges, strengths and weaknesses	5
ii) Utility of the Lessons: <u>Purpose:</u> to present both positive and negative lessons that have potential for wider application and use (replication and generalization) Consider how well the lessons achieve the following: • are rooted in real project experiences (i.e. derived from explicit review findings or from problems encountered and mistakes made that should be avoided in the future) • briefly describe the context from which they are derived and those contexts in which they may be useful • do not duplicate recommendations	Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The Review includes five lessons learned, which are rooted in project experiences and challenges encountered during the implementation.	5
(iii) Utility and Actionability of the Recommendations: <u>Purpose:</u> to present proposals for specific action to be taken by identified people/position-holders to	Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report includes seven recommendations. A recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights or gender dimension is missing.	5

¹¹² In some cases 'project management and supervision' will refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it will refer to the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping provided by UNEP. This includes providing the answers to the questions on Core Indicator Targets, stakeholder engagement, gender responsiveness, safeguards and knowledge management, required for the GEF portal.

resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results. Consider how well the lessons achieve the following: - are feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when - include at least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions - represent a measurable performance target in order that the UNEP Unit/Branch can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations. NOTES: (i) In cases where the recommendation is addressed to a third party, compliance can only be monitored and assessed where a contractual/legal agreement remains in place. Without such an agreement, the recommendation should be formulated to say that UNEP project staff should pass on the recommendation to the relevant third party in an effective or substantive manner. The effective transmission by UNEP of the recommendation will then be monitored for compliance. (ii) Where a new project phase is already under discussion or in preparation with the same third party, a recommendation can be made to address the issue in the next phase.		
Quality of Report Structure and Presentation (i) Structure and completeness of the report: To what extent does the report follow the UNEP Evaluation Office structure and formatting guidelines? Are all requested Annexes included and complete?	Final report (coverage/omissions): Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report is complete and follows the Evaluation Office guidelines. All the required Annexes are included in the report.	6
(ii) Writing and formatting: Consider whether the report is well written (clear English language and grammar) with language that is adequate in quality and tone for an official document? Do visual aids, such as maps and graphs convey key information?	Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report is clear and well written. The tone is professional and adequate for an official document. Graphs and tables convey key information.	6
OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING		4.95

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.