Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF Project “Strengthening Endogenous Capacities of Least Developed Countries to Access Finance for Climate Change Adaptation” (Short title: UNILEAD)
GEF ID 10525
(2021-2025)

Evaluation Office of the United Nations Environment Programme

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The evaluation consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions, and recommendations will aid in the successful formulation of the subsequent phase of the UNILEAD 2.0 project. This will support the LDCs in addressing critical climate financing needs and promote the ongoing enhancement of similar initiatives across other countries and regions.

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Brief consultant biography

Ms. Iva Bernhardt is an independent principal evaluation expert and team leader, multilateralist, and diplomat with twenty-five years of international experience in development cooperation. She serves as the Head of Evaluation and International Relations at the Berin Intellectual Property Agency. Ms. Bernhardt has overseen and directed more than fifty comprehensive evaluations of complex projects, programmes, countries, thematic areas, strategic initiatives, peer reviews, and additional assessments for the United Nations System, Multilateral Development Banks, the European Union, bilateral cooperation agencies, and other international organizations. Her evaluations primarily focus on climate change and environmental issues; sustainable energy; industrial energy efficiency and resource management; integrated natural resource management; chemical waste management; youth employment; sustainable, competitive, innovative, and responsible enterprise development; and decent work. Furthermore, she possesses university experience as a scientific researcher and has held several managerial and internal auditor roles within the steel industry and the private sector. Ms. Bernhardt holds a Master's Degree in Business and Engineering (MBE) in Information Technologies, as well as a Dipl.-Ing. degree in Technical Environmental Protection. She has operated and resided in over seventy countries across Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Asia, working for international corporations, organizations, multilateral development banks, and donors, including ArcelorMittal, UNEP, ILO, UNESCO, WMO, UNIDO, GEF, the World Bank, IFC, AfDB, SECO, USAID, GIZ, NORAD, AFD, UKAid, KOICA, and the Bezos Earth Fund. Ms. Bernhardt is proficient in English, French, German, Macedonian, and Serbian, and has working knowledge of Spanish, Russian, and Portuguese.

About the Evaluation

Joint Evaluation: No

Report Language(s): English.

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ABSTRACT: This report evaluates the UNEP/GEF project "Strengthening Endogenous Capacities of Least Developed Countries to Access Finance for Climate Change Adaptation" (GEF ID 10525), implemented from December 2021 to June 2025. The project aimed to improve LDCs' ability to implement climate adaptation by fostering technical services for project development, policy mainstreaming, and climate finance across 13 LUCCC member universities in Africa and Asia. The evaluation assessed relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, gathering data through field visits in Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania, over seventy Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, and document reviews. The evidence was analysed against a reconstructed Theory of Change. The project received an overall Satisfactory rating. Key findings include: (i) UNILEAD validated an innovative university-embedded think tank model for climate finance, with three of four outcomes achieved or exceeded; (ii) 423 people were trained (target 300), 13 demand-led technical outputs were delivered (target 12), and co-financing exceeded plans by 17%; (iii) sustainability is rated Unlikely mainly due to unsigned government MoUs, unproven fee-for-services model, and lack of transition funding for the four think tanks. Main recommendations for UNEP include formalizing MoUs within six months, mobilizing at least USD 200,000 in seed funding, and designing UNILEAD 2.0 with a two-step model and sufficient budget. Implementing parties should embed GESI requirements from the start, apply milestone-based due diligence to partners, develop a climate finance project repository on WeAdapt, and create succession plans to mitigate key-person risks.

Source(s) of Funding by Country: Global Environment Facility / Least Developed Countries Fund (GEF-LDCF) — international (multilateral); UNEP Global Adaptation Network — international (UN); UNIDO — international (UN); START International — United States of America; LUCCC University members (in-kind co-finance) — Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gambia, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda.

Source(s) of Funding by Institution Type: GEF-LDCF (Multilateral Fund); UNEP Global Adaptation Network (UN Body); UNIDO (UN Body); START International (Foundation/NGO); LUCCC University members (Academic/Research Institutions, in-kind).

Foundation/NGO	Yes — START International
Private Sector	No
UN Body	Yes — UNEP (Implementing Agency); UNIDO (co-financing)
Multilateral Fund	Yes — Global Environment Facility / Least Developed Countries Fund (GEF-LDCF)
Environment Fund	Yes — UNEP Global Adaptation Network (GAN)

Key words: Climate finance; LDC capacity building; think tanks; adaptation; endogenous

Primary data collection period: November 2025 to March 2026

Field mission dates: 14 March 2026 to 3 April 2026

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Evaluation Terms of Reference available, with this report, in Wedocs, link

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

AF	Adaptation Fund
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CCAU	Climate Change Adaptation Unit
CchEMS	School of Environmental Science and Management at the Pokhara University in Nepal
CCCS	Centre for Climate Change Studies at the University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
CDH	Capacity Development Hub
CEAGRE	Centre for Agriculture Research and Natura Resources at the Eduardo Mondlane University of Mozambique
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CF	Climate Finance
CFAN	Climate Finance Action Network
CIF	Climate Investment Funds
COP	Conference of Parties
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DAE	Direct Access Entities
DRR	Disasters Risk Reduction
EA	Executive Agency (GEF)
EU	European Union
FY	Fiscal Year
GAN	Global Adaptation Network
GCCA	Global Climate Change Alliance
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
HIC	High Income Countries
HYPR	Half-Yearly Progress Report
IA	Implementation Agency (GEF)
ICCCAD	International Centre for Climate Change and Development
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund
LUCCC	Least Developed Countries Universities Consortium on Climate Change
MIC	Middle Income Countries
MoUs	Memorandum of Understanding
MSc	Master of Science
MSP	Mid-Size Project
MTR	Mid-term Review
MTS	Medium-Term Strategy

MUCCRI	Centre for Climate Change Research and Innovation at the Makerere University of Uganda
NAP	National Adaptation Plans
NAPAs	National Adaptation Programmes of Action
NAP-GSPs	National Adaptation Plans Global Support Programme
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NFP	National Focal Point
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PCCB	Paris Committee for Capacity Building
PEDRR	Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction
P&I Mapping	Protection and Indemnity
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PMU	Project Management Unit
PoC	Point of Contact
PoW	Programme of Work
ProDoc	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RF	Result Framework
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
TE	Terminal Evaluation
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToTs	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNI-LEAD	LDC University Leadership for Catalysing Climate-Adaptation Finance
YEA!	Youth and Education Alliance
WIM	Warsaw International Mechanism

Project identification table

Table 1: Project Identification Table

GEF Project ID/SMA ID	GEF ID: 10525 / SMA ID: 95143		
Type of GEF Project:	Child: N/A	**Global Coordinating Project:**	N/A
	GEF Programme[2] ID: N/A	**Medium-Size Project or Full-Size Project:**	Medium-Size Project
UNEP Management (Division/Branch/Unit):	Climate Change Division / Adaptation & Resilience Branch / Climate Change Adaptation Unit	**Executing Agency: (*indicate if internally executed*):**	START International
Sources of Funding (Co-finance):	UNEP Global Adaptation Network, UNIDO, START International, and LUCCC University members.		
Relevant SDG(s):	Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts		
MTS (at approval):	MTS 2018-2021		
POW Output(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved pre-2022)*	2021 POW expected accomplishment *(a) Countries increasingly advance their national adaptation plans, which integrate ecosystem-based adaptation.* 2021 POW outputs 1.1 Technical support provided to countries and by extension regions to develop tools, methods, scientific evidence, knowledge networks and promote South-South cooperation to advance near-term and long-term national adaptation plans that integrate ecosystem- based adaptation Output 2.5: Readiness of countries and institutions to access or mobilize climate finance strengthened through support to make projects bankable and replicable negotiations and reporting MTS 2022-2025 Outcomes: 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A	POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference 15 *(applicable for projects approved pre-2022):*	POW 2020-2021 Expected Accomplishment (b) Countries increasingly adopt and/or implement low greenhouse gas emission development strategies and invest in clean technologies *MTS 2022-2025 Direct outcomes: 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.8*
Sub-programme:	Climate Action	**Programme Coordination Project (if relevant):**	N/A
UNEP approval date:	November 2021	**GEF approval date:**	August 2021
GEF Operational Programme/Cycle # (e.g. GEF- 7):	GEF 7	**GEF Strategic Priority (e.g. BD4):**	CCA 3 -Foster enabling conditions for effective and integrated climate change adaptation
Focal Area(s):	Climate Change Adaptation		
***Expected* start date**: 3	Q4 2021	**Actual start date**: 4	December 2021
***Planned* completion date:**	Q4 2023	**Actual operational completion date:**	June 2025
***Planned* project budget at approval:**	GEF grant allocation: USD 1,980,000		
	Expected co-financing: USD 2,074,424 *Cash: USD 1,285,684* *In-kind: 788,740*		
	Total planned budget: USD 4,054,424		
Actual expenditures reported (cash only):	GEF grant expenditures reported as of **30 June 2025**: USD 1,033,845 GEF grant expenditures reported as of **31 December 2025**: USD 1,914,583 Cumulative unspent balance as of **31 December 2025**: USD 61,645		
	Actual co-financing as of **30 June 2025**: USD 2,426,795		
	Total actual expenditures reported as of 30 June 2025: USD3,460,640 **Total actual expenditures reported as of 31 December 2025: USD 4,344, 378**		
No. of formal project revisions:	Two (2)	**Date of last approved project revision:**	December 2024
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	7	**Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:**	July 24, 2025
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation:	UNEP requirement: N/A GEF requirement: N/A	**Mid-term Review/ Evaluation actual date:**	N/A
Terminal Evaluation *(planned date):*	December 2024	**Terminal Evaluation actual date:**	September 2025
Coverage - Countries:	Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gambia, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda	**Coverage - Regions:**	Africa, Asia and the Pacific
Dates of previous project phases:	N/A	**Status of future project phases:**	N/A

Executive Summary

Project background

1. The LDC University Leadership for Catalysing Climate-Adaptation Finance (UNILEAD) project - formally titled "Strengthening endogenous capacities of least developed countries to access finance for climate change adaptation" (GEF ID 10525) - was implemented across thirteen Least Developed Country (LDC) universities in Africa and Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gambia, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda) between December 2021 and June 2025. The project received a GEF-LDCF grant of USD 1,980,000, with actual co-financing of USD 2,426,795, for a total expenditure of USD 4,344,378. The GEF implementing agency was UNEP, and the GEF executing agency was START International. The rationale was a fundamental inequity: LDCs bear a disproportionate share of climate change impacts while lacking the institutional capacity to access available adaptation finance. UNILEAD responded by creating four university-embedded climate finance think tanks - at Makerere University (Uganda), University Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar - UCAD (Senegal), Eduardo Mondlane University (Mozambique), and Pokhara University (Nepal) - building endogenous technical advisory capacity within LDC institutions themselves. The project objective was to strengthen the capacities of LDCs to achieve scaled-up, effective climate change adaptation by fostering sustained, endogenous technical services for project development, policy mainstreaming, and the creation of an enabling environment for climate change adaptation.

This evaluation

2. The Terminal Evaluation was conducted by an independent evaluator, Ms. Iva Bernhardt, between November 2025 and April 2026. It aimed to assess the project's performance in terms of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency, and to determine the sustainability of its outcomes. The evaluation measured performance against nine criteria and assigned a score from a six-point scale. Its two main objectives were accountability and learning. Data collection methods included field observations, in-depth interviews with more than seventy key informants, Focus Group Discussions, and document reviews. Three field missions took place in Uganda, Mozambique, and Tanzania. Data analysis was based on applying triangulated evidence against a reconstructed Theory of Change and its causal pathways.

Key findings and performance ratings

3. The UNILEAD demonstrated strong performance results in the areas of strategic relevance, financial management, monitoring and reporting, and factors affecting performance - all rated Highly Satisfactory (HS), and Satisfactory (S) performance in Effectiveness and Efficiency. The project validated an innovative, endogenous institutional model for LDC climate finance capacity building: four operational think tanks were established within Least Developed Countries Universities Consortium on Climate Change (LUCCC universities); 423 people were trained across thirteen countries (target: 300); 13 demand-led technical outputs directly responding to government needs were produced (target: 12); and actual co-financing exceeded the planned target by 17% (USD 2,426,795 against USD 2,074,424 planned). Th e achievement of outcomes was rated as Satisfactory (S). Outcome 1.1 aimed to enable LUCCC universities to effectively facilitate access to climate finance within their respective countries; it was fully achieved and exceeded the target. Outcome 1.2 aimed for select LDC universities to possess the institutional capacity to support adaptation policy and project formulation, and this was fully achieved, exceeding the target. Outcome 2.1, which aimed for think tanks at selected LDC universities to deliver technical services that satisfy government requirements, was fully attained and surpassed the target. Outcome 3.1 involved integrating the think tank model into the LUCCC expansion and scale-up plan, but this was only partially accomplished.

4. Areas that would have benefited from further attention include: (i) the timeline for project implementation, which at two years was insufficiently calibrated to the complexity of establishing think tanks and building network-wide capacity simultaneously - requiring an 18-month no-cost extension; (ii) the Capacity Development Hub (CDH) contracted to the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), which significantly underperformed and required contract rescission in 2024,

with START International absorbing its deliverables; (iii) sustainability, which is rated Unlikely overall - none of the four think tanks had signed government MoUs at project close, the fee-for-services revenue model remained unproven, and no transition financing was secured; and (iv) Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), which was integrated unevenly across the LUCCC network and lacked systematic monitoring for persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Table 2: Summary of project ratings

Criterion	Rating
Strategic Relevance	**HS**
Quality of Project Design	**S**
Nature of External Context	**MU**
Effectiveness	**S**
Financial Management	**HS**
Efficiency	**S**
Monitoring and Reporting	**HS**
Sustainability	**U**
Factors Affecting Performance	**HS**
Overall Project Performance Rating	**S**

Conclusions summary

5. Overall, UNILEAD performed at a Satisfactory (S) level - the second highest on the six-point scale. The main achievements were: (i) four fully operational climate finance think tanks established within LUCCC universities in Uganda (CFH/Makerere), Senegal (INTERFACE/UCAD), Mozambique (ADAPTACOMoz/UEM), and Nepal (NCI/Pokhara), each equipped with governance frameworks, staffing plans, and business and sustainability plans; (ii) 13 demand-led technical outputs delivered directly in response to government-identified priorities, including Uganda's National Climate Finance Tracking Tool, Senegal's multi-stakeholder NAP task forces in four sectors, Mozambique's subnational adaptation planning tools, and Nepal's GESI and climate rationale resource books; (iii) five multilingual (English, French, Portuguese) climate finance short courses and associated Training of Trainers, freely available at https://unilead.weadapt.org/; (iv) 11 of 13 LUCCC universities achieving sustained government engagement; and (v) co-financing exceeding the planned target by 17%, including a UNIDO contribution of USD 60,000 that enabled the fourth think tank in Mozambique to be established and expanded GESI training modules.

6. The strongest aspects were: strategic relevance (HS) - UNILEAD addressed a well-documented systemic gap with an innovative approach aligned with UNEP, GEF, the Paris Agreement, and SDG 13 priorities; financial management (HS) - 97% GEF expenditure rate with above-target co-financing; and factors influencing performance (HS) - exceptional LUCCC Point of Contact (PoC) ownership, adaptive management in solving the CDH crisis, and exemplary UNIDO inter-agency cooperation. Effectiveness was also rated as Satisfactory (S) because three out of four outcomes were fully achieved or exceeded; however, one outcome was partially achieved, and the likelihood of impact is moderate. Main weaknesses were most evident in sustainability (rated Unlikely) - caused by unsigned MoUs, an unproven fee-for-services revenue model, key-person risk, and lack of transition funding - and in efficiency (rated Satisfactory), which was impacted by the initial two-year timeline and the limited project budget for thirteen implementation countries being underestimated for the project's institutional development goals and by delays in identifying CDH underperformance.

Lessons Learned

7. **Lesson 1:** Capacity development materials have practical policy applications beyond training sessions. UNILEAD course content was used by Malawi and Liberia to create a national climate financing manual, showing that well-designed knowledge products can generate meaningful policy outcomes far beyond the initial training participants. This approach is applicable to any LDC capacity-building program where curricula are freely accessible.

8. **Lesson 2:** Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) must be fundamentally integrated into all project frameworks, monitoring systems, and technical output requirements from the start - not viewed as a thematic short course deliverable. A dedicated GESI course proved effective, but integration was inconsistent across the thirteen LUCCC countries, and monitoring for disability and vulnerability was completely absent. GESI-integrated proposals are also more competitive with climate finance donors.

9. **Lesson 3:** Regional LDC cooperation yields unexpected adaptation benefits. The Malawi-Mozambique Early Warning System collaboration developed naturally from LUCCC network meetings - an unplanned but real outcome showing that peer-learning networks often deliver cross-border results that formal project plans tend to overlook. Future projects should intentionally allocate resources for cross-country collaboration.

10. **Lesson 4:** In-person meetings are crucial for building trust and relationships during the formation of think tanks. Relying too much on virtual methods early on, especially during COVID-19, weakened the network's cohesion. Moving to in-person regional gatherings in 2023 greatly increased engagement and local ownership. Having a sufficient budget for face-to-face meetings is essential, not optional, for projects creating new institutions in LDCs.

11. **Lesson 5:** Creating a standalone fee-for-services model is unlikely in LUCCC-country contexts, especially shortly after establishment. Think tanks view it as part of a broader revenue strategy that includes grants, donations, and partnerships. Early and ongoing scepticism about its initial implementation was expressed by LUCCC partners.

12. **Lesson 6:** Ensuring the sustainability of think tanks requires a two-step sequencing approach: first, broad capacity building across the entire network; second, competitive formalization of the most prepared, government-endorsed universities. Attempting to do both at the same time within a two-year span was too ambitious. This sequence minimizes institutional risk and ensures that sustainability planning is based on proven performance.

13. **Lesson 7:** Formalizing government-university relationships through MoUs is a governance necessity, not just a bureaucratic formality. All four think tanks ended the project without signed MoUs. MoUs turn demonstrated engagement into a lasting service mandate, a credible revenue stream, and a signal to development partners of institutional legitimacy that is worth investing in. The MoU process must be actively managed by UNEP.

14. **Lesson 8:** Adequate and sustained funding—approximately USD 50,000 per year per think tank—is the most crucial factor for post-project operational continuity. Without transition funding to bridge the gap between project completion and financial independence, the risk of dormancy remains high regardless of institutional quality. This baseline operational budget should be incorporated into exit strategies from the beginning of any similar project.

Recommendations

15. **Recommendation 1** (High - Short-term): UNEP should actively facilitate the signing of a tripartite MoU among the four think tanks, host universities, and relevant government ministries (Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Environment, GCF/GEF National Focal Points) within six months of project completion, using a standardized MoU template that outlines the think tanks' service mandates and government engagement responsibilities. Responsibility: UNEP Regional Offices, LUCCC Point of Contacts.

16. **Recommendation 2** (High - Medium-term): UNEP, GEF, and bilateral donors (SECO, NORAD, GIZ, AFD) should jointly mobilize at least USD 200,000 in dedicated transition seed funding (about USD 50,000 per think tank annually for two years), structured as conditional, performance-based grants linked to specific milestones: active government engagement, annual technical output, and updated business plan implementation. Responsibility: UNEP; GEF; National Government Ministries.

17. **Recommendation 3** (High - Long-term): UNEP should design UNILEAD 2.0 using a two-phase sequencing model: Phase 1 (Years 1-2) focused on broad capacity building across the entire LUCCC

network; Phase 2 (Years 3-4) concentrated on competitive selection and formalization of new think tanks among the best-prepared, government-endorsed universities. Allocate at least 20% of the project budget to in-person regional gatherings. Responsibility: UNEP/GEF at CEO Endorsement stage.

18. **Recommendation 4** (High - Short-term): UNEP should create a structured Government Engagement Plan—including assigned contacts, set meeting schedules, and signed engagement letters—as a deliverable within the first three months of any future project phase. Think Tank Coordinators should present annually to relevant inter-ministerial committees to ensure senior government officials are regularly informed about the think tank's mandate, activities, and outputs. Involve the Local and Regional Government authorities in the project activities. Responsibility: Think Tank Coordinators; LUCCC Points of Contact (POCs); UNEP.

19. **Recommendation 5** (Medium-High - Medium-term): UNEP should create and maintain a structured, searchable repository of approved climate finance projects on the WeAdapt platform (https://unilead.weadapt.org/). This repository should be organized by region, fund mechanism (GCF, GEF, AF, CIF, L&D Fund), sector, and project size, and include downloadable templates for concept notes and proposals. Consider using CFAN's existing repository and Ethiopia's CRG Facility resources as input sources. Responsibility: CFAN; UNEP Knowledge Management.

20. **Recommendation 6** (High - Short-term): UNEP should fully embed GESI requirements into all project templates, output criteria, and M&E frameworks from the start of each project. During the project conception phase of complex multi-regional projects (such as UNI-LEAD), efforts should be made to understand opportunities and barriers to GESI implementation across diverse national contexts so that GESI requirements are realistic and achievable rather than being one size fits all. Make GESI review mandatory for all think tank outputs; develop a disaggregated monitoring system that includes gender, disability, age, and vulnerability; and assign GESI-competent reviewers to the PSC. Update short course materials to include disability inclusion and intersectionality. Responsibility: UNEP; Climate Analytics.

21. **Recommendation 7** (Medium - Long-term): UNEP should create Regional UNILEAD Think Tanks for francophone and lusophone countries, and consider establishing anglophone think tanks for the LDCs in Africa and Asia in a potential Phase 2. To enhance solutions to language barrier and resource use, Senegal (UCAD/INTERFACE) and Mozambique (UEM/ADAPTACOMoz) should serve as regional think tank hubs for Africa. Following Uganda's (Makerere/CFH) model, establishing Anglophone think tanks in Anglophone countries is recommended. Inspired by Nepal's (Pokhara/NCI) think tank, creating a regional one for Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh is advised, with future expansion to other Asian LDCs. Responsibility: UNEP / LUCCC Network / UCAD/INTERFACE; UEM/ADAPTACOMoz; Makerere/CFH; Pokhara/NCI

22. **Recommendation 8** (Medium - Short-term): UNEP and the LDC Group should actively share UNILEAD results through UNFCCC channels, GEF knowledge platforms, and LDC Group advocacy efforts. This includes presenting at the next UNFCCC COP LDC Group side event, submitting a knowledge brief to the GEF Knowledge Management Platform, and creating a two-page replication brief for bilateral donors working in the four think-tank countries. The opening of the LDC Group on Climate Change at the Permanent Secretariat Office in Bonn could create opportunities for more effective engagement with the LDC Group, going forward. Additionally, register the WeAdapt platform with the NAP Global Network as an endorsed training resource. Responsibility: UNEP; LDC Group Secretariat.

23. **Recommendation 9:** LUCCC members and LDC Group Secretariat should develop digital versions of the training, including the five concise courses on climate financing, to enhance accessibility and incentivize faculty and government engagement in the formulation of climate finance programme proposals. Delivering the short courses digitally should enable recipients to complete all five consecutively. LUCCC members should collaborate with the government and universities to reduce costs and package the courses as short-term training to secure funding for climate adaptation finance programmes. Responsibility: LUCCC members; LDC Group Secretariat.

1 THE PROJECT

1.1 Intervention context

25. The UNILEAD project — formally titled "Strengthening endogenous capacities of least developed countries to access finance for climate change adaptation" — was designed to address a fundamental inequity: while Least Developed Countries (LDCs) have contributed the least to anthropogenic climate change, they stand to absorb a disproportionate share of its impacts while lacking the resources and capacities to respond. Despite progress in establishing international climate finance mechanisms — including the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Green Climate Fund (GCF), Adaptation Fund (AF), Climate Investment Funds (CIF), the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), and the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) — significant obstacles continue to hinder climate change adaptation in LDCs, affecting finance delivery and project implementation. Major barriers include mobilizing finance, fund flows, and project suitability, which collectively reduce the resources available from public, international, and private sectors.

26. In response, UNILEAD was launched in December 2021 as a two-year project (subsequently extended to June 2025) targeting 13 LDC universities across Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gambia, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda, as shown in **Figure 1**. The project marked a shift from previous capacity development efforts by placing its main activities within LDC institutions themselves. It established a lasting institutional structure by creating climate finance think tanks at existing higher education and research institutions, building on proven pedagogical and capacity-building methods used by other donor-supported programmes. UNILEAD was innovative because it envisioned a long-term, sustainable institutional strategy to address core capacity gaps identified in LDC universities, enabling them to serve as endogenous service providers for their host governments and other stakeholders on climate change adaptation.

Figure 1: Implementation countries of the UNILEAD project, and intervention sites visited during the evaluation field missions in Uganda, Mozambique, and Tanzania [1]

27. The overall project objective was to strengthen the capacities of LDCs to achieve scaled-up, effective climate change adaptation by fostering sustained, endogenous technical services for project development, policy mainstreaming, and the creation of an enabling environment for climate change adaptation. While not specifically focused on climate change adaptation, this project and similar initiatives anticipated significant success in supporting sustained improvements in institutions,

[1] *Source: Presentation of the LDC University Leadership for Catalysing Climate-Adaptation Finance (UNI-LEAD) project, p.3*

research capacity, knowledge co-production, and partnerships between universities and governments. It aimed to create enabling conditions for universities to serve as service providers to governments and other stakeholders in developing countries.

1.2 Institutional context

28. UNILEAD constitutes a Medium-Sized Project (MSP) executed by the UNEP Climate Change Division, Adaptation & Resilience Branch, Climate Change Adaptation Unit. The project received approval from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) on 30 August 2021, with actual implementation commencing in December 2021. The executing agency was START International **(Figure 2)**. Originally, the project was scheduled for completion in December 2023; however, it was granted an 18-month no-cost extension, establishing the effective operational completion date as June 2025. No mid-term review was conducted.[2] The total secured budget amounts to USD 4,054,424, comprising a GEF Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) grant of USD 1,980,000 and co-financing totalling USD 2,074,424 from Least Developed Countries Universities Consortium on Climate Change (LUCCC University) members, the UNEP Global Adaptation Network, and START International. This project contributes to Expected Result 1a of the UNEP Programme of Work (2022–2023), which aims for "Countries to advance their National Adaptation Plans, integrating ecosystem-based adaptation," and aligns with the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy (2022–2025). During the GEF-7 cycle, UNILEAD supported GEF Strategic Objective CCA 3: “Foster enabling conditions for effective and integrated climate change adaptation.” No prior evaluation has been conducted for this project. Two formal project revisions (one no-cost extension and a budget revision) have been approved, with the most recent in December 2024, and seven Project Steering Committee meetings were convened between April 2022 and July 2025.

29. The Terminal Evaluation was commissioned by the UNEP Evaluation Office in line with UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Evaluation Manual (2022). The evaluation aims to assess project performance (relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency) and to determine outcomes and impacts, including their sustainability. The primary target audiences include UNEP, START International, the 13 LUCCC University Points of Contact, climate finance Think Tanks, National Focal Points in participating LDCs, UNIDO, Climate Analytics, and the International Centre on Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD).

1.3 Results Framework

30. The overall project objective was to strengthen the capacities of LDCs to achieve scaled-up and effective climate change adaptation by fostering sustained, endogenous technical services for project development, policy mainstreaming, and creating an enabling environment for adaptation to climate change. The project’s results framework, as revised following a baseline study in 2022–2023, is structured around three interlinked components delivering four outcomes and thirteen outputs. Component 1 (Collaborative mechanism for sustained endogenous capacity) sought to build human and institutional capabilities of LDC universities to provide fee-based technical services. Component 2 (Technical capacity building for LDC governments) provided small grants to think tanks to produce technical service products for host governments. Component 3 (Scaling up) developed enabling conditions for the think tank model to be embedded within the LUCCC structure after project completion.

31. The four project outcomes are: Outcome 1.1 — LUCCC universities effectively facilitate access to climate finance in their respective countries; Outcome 1.2 — Select LDC universities have institutional capacity to support adaptation policy and project formulation; Outcome 2.1 — Think tanks at select LDC universities provide technical services that meet government demands; and Outcome 3.1 — Think tank model incorporated into LUCCC expansion and scale-up plan. A total of 13 outputs support these outcomes. The summary results hierarchy is presented in **Table 3** below.

[2] *The GEF policy states that for MSPs with GEF funds below US$ 2 million, a Mid-Term Review is recommended, but not compulsory.*

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

	Results Statement
Project objective	Strengthen the capacities of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to achieve scaled-up and effective climate change adaptation by fostering sustained, endogenous technical services for project development, policy mainstreaming, and creating an enabling environment for adaptation to climate change.
Impact	Capacities of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to achieve scaled up and effective adaptation by fostering endogenous technical services for project development, policy mainstreaming, and creation of an enabling environment for adaptation to climate change are strengthened and sustained
Intermediate states	**Intermediate State 1:** Climate change adaptation projects and measures are mainstreamed into national and sectoral policy and development strategies **Intermediate State 2:** Non-state stakeholders from private sector and civil society organizations, particularly women and other marginalized groups are actively engaged in climate change adaptation project implementation
Project components	**Component 1.** Collaborative mechanism for sustained endogenous capacity on climate change adaptation finance **Component 2.** Technical capacity building for LDC governments **Component 3.** Scaling up
Project outcome(s)	**Outcome 1.1.** LUCCC universities effectively facilitate access to climate finance in their respective countries **Outcome 1.2.** Select LDC universities have institutional capacity to support adaptation policy and project formulation **Outcome 2.1.** Think tanks at select LDC universities provide technical services that meet government demands **Outcome 3.1.** Think tank model incorporated into LUCCC expansion and scale up plan
Outputs	**Output 1.1.1.** LUCCC universities formulate engagement plans with host LDC governments to provide specific technical services to government agencies. **Output 1.1.2.** LUCCC capacity development hub established. **Output 1.1.3.** At least 5 short course programs inclusive of GESI/CC developed for use by LUCCC institutions for technical service delivery host governments. **Output 1.1.4.** Knowledge and information resource management system set up at the capacity development hub with procedures for updating and disseminating resources repository contents. **Output 1.2.1.** At least 3 thinktank institutions formalized through MoU or similar mechanism at 3 LUCCC universities. **Output 1.2.2.** Thinktanks formally operational through development of organizational charters, staffing plans and steering committees (no less than 3). At least 1 multidisciplinary technical working clusters established at each thinktank (no less than 3 thinktanks). **Output 1.2.3.** Technical working clusters and support system established to provide technical goods and services. **Output 1.2.4.** Business and sustainability plans formulated for each thinktank (at least 3). **Output 2.1.1.** Small grants program set up with proposal guidelines, procedures, and evaluation criteria to support demand-led policy research and technical services. **Output 2.1.2.** At least 12 demand-led and policy relevant technical outputs prepared across university thinktanks in a minimum of 3 countries. **Output 3.1.1.** Two meetings (1 per year of project implementation) conducted to: (a) share knowledge and learning about the thinktank experience; (b) strengthen the overall LUCCC thinktank network; and (c) increase regional and global awareness of the thinktanks and their capabilities. **Output 3.1.2.** LUCCC thinktank network upscaling and sustainability strategy developed. **Output 3.1.3.** At least 2 knowledge products developed to synthesize and disseminate lessons learned and best practices from thinktank network.

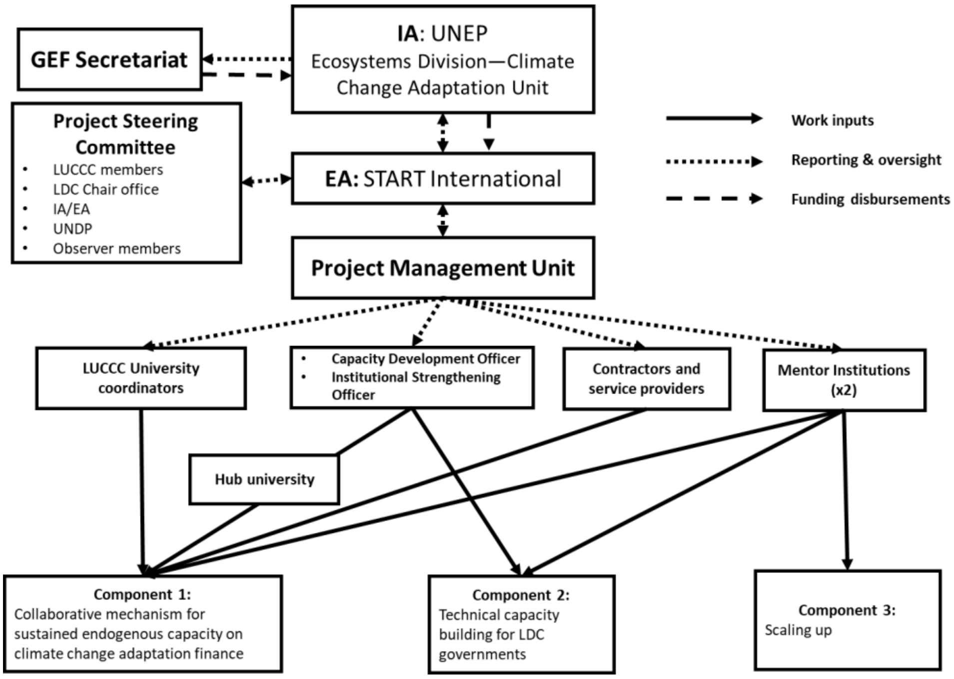
(Source: Reconstructed ToC from the Inception Report for the UNILEAD Terminal Evaluation p. 22)

1.4 Project Implementation Structure and Partners

32. As visible in **Figure 2,** UNEP served as the GEF Implementation Agency (IA), responsible for overall project supervision, monitoring and reporting oversight, reviewing and approving work plans and budget revisions, and maintaining outreach to development partners. START International was the Executing Agency (EA), responsible for day-to-day project management, quarterly expenditure reporting, annual Project Implementation Reports (PIRs), procurement compliance, stakeholder communication, and the operation of the Project Management Unit (PMU). The PMU served as the secretariat of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and managed daily operations, including work plans, quarterly and annual reports, and the M&E, gender action, and stakeholder engagement plans.

33. Climate Analytics served as the mentor institution, designing capacity-building programmes, training manuals, and the five short courses together with START International's capacity development officer. National-level implementation took place at 13 LUCCC member universities, each of which designated a department and a focal Point-of-Contact (PoC) to coordinate project activities and engage their respective governments. The PSC provided strategic oversight, chaired by the LDC Group Chair, with ten rotating LUCCC university representatives. Key partners also included UNIDO, ICCCAD (Bangladesh), and Chipo Mubaya (an independent contractor). The project organogram is presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 2:Organigram of the project with key project stakeholders[3]

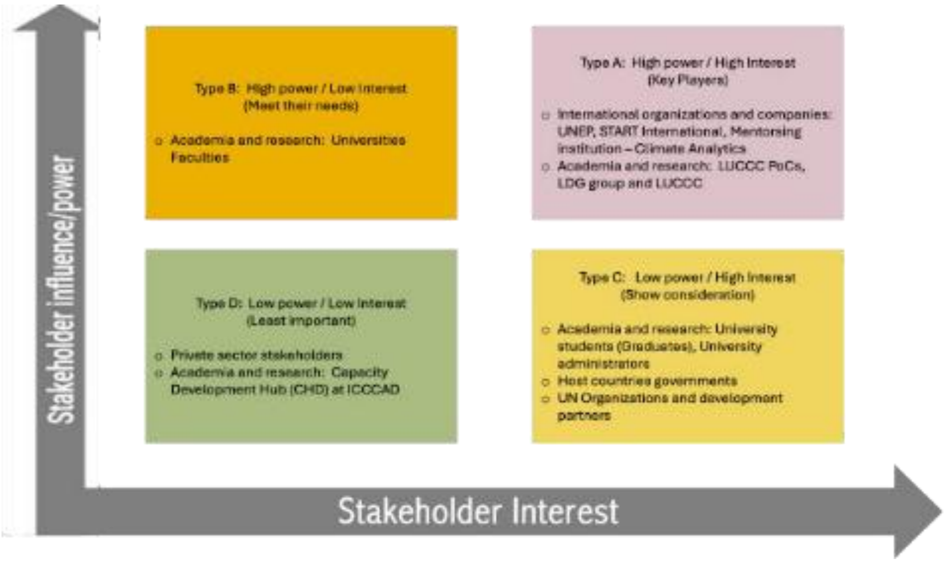


1.5 Stakeholders

34. This section examines the influence and interest levels of each stakeholder group concerning the project's outcomes. It also outlines their role in project design, potential responsibilities during implementation, and expected behavioural changes throughout the project's lifecycle. Each stakeholder group's influence and interest levels regarding the project's outcomes and outputs. It also provides information on their participation in project design, potential roles and responsibilities during project implementation, and the expected changes in their behaviour throughout the project implementation. There are four types of stakeholders according to UNEP terminology, as depicted in Figure 3:

[3] *Source: Project Document – CEO Endorsement from 30 August 2021, p. 75*

Figure 3: Stakeholders classification as a function of interest and influence



35. The project engaged a broad range of stakeholders classified according to their interest and influence. As presented in **Table 4** below, key players (Type A / high power, high interest) included UNEP, START International, Climate Analytics (mentor institution), and LUCCC university Points of Contact — all central to project design, implementation, and sustainability. The LDC Group and LUCCC served as both implementation partners and strategic stewards, providing oversight through the PSC. University faculty and host-country governments have moved from category B (high power, lower direct interest) to category A (high power, high interest) stakeholders. The host-country governments were the primary market for think tank services and essential to long-term viability, as they typically fund LUCCC universities. The university faculty provided the technical expertise required to operationalise think tanks and engage governments on climate change adaptation.

36. A comparison between the stakeholders' analysis at CEO Endorsement (see Figure 2 above) and the one at terminal evaluation (see Table 5 below) shows that graduate students who emerged from Type C to Type B stakeholders were beneficiaries who collaborated with think tanks, gaining professional development, practical research experience, and improved employment prospects. University administrators moved from Type C to Type A by establishing institutional frameworks for think tanks and facilitating connections with government and international partners. Development partners shifted from Type C to Type A stakeholders, as they were crucial both as indirect clients for think tank services and as potential sources of transition funding and expansion support. The private sector (Type D) was a peripheral but relevant stakeholder, representing a potential future market for think tank technical services and a prospective employer for trained graduates. The Capacity Development Hub at ICCCAD (Type B) had a limited role in the final implementation after its contract was rescinded in 2024, with START International taking over development of the web platform and repository. Special attention was given to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) throughout stakeholder engagement, with procedures developed to encourage participation of female graduate students and other marginalized groups.

Table 4: Key Project Stakeholders

International Organizations: UN Agencies including UNEP and UNIDO;
Ministries and National Focal Points and Accredited Entity for the Climate Funds Institutions: Ministries responsible for the subjects of environment, finance, economic development and regional planning from the participating countries
Academia and research institutes: LDC University LUCCC coordinators, LUCC Points of Contacts (PoCs), LDC Group and LUCCC, University Faculties, University Students (Graduates), University Administrators, Capacity Development Hub established at ICCCAD, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (UEM), Makerere University of Uganda, University of Cheikh Anta Diop of Senegal, Pokhara University of Nepal, University of Dar Es Salaam of Tanzania, University of Rwanda, Royal University of Bhutan, University Joseph Ki-Zerbo in Burkina Faso, University of The Gambia, Addis Ababa University of Ethiopia, University of Liberia, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources of Malawi, and University of Bangladesh.
International and National NGOs: START International, Climate Analytics, Climate Finance Action Network

Table 5: Stakeholders Analysis

Stakeholders	Power they hold over the project results/ implementation and the level of interest	Participation in the project design	Potential roles and responsibilities in project implementation	Changes in their behaviour expected through implementation of the project
Type A: ***High power / high interest = Key player***				
International Organizations • United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) • United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) • UN country teams, resident coordinators and offices • Development partners	They are the key players for the achievement of results and their consolidation, they represent the sustainability of the project, having a high power of influence, implementation and decision-making	UNEP was the GEF Implementing agency (IA) responsible for the project and its oversight.	UNEP played an important role in identifying potential linkages to other initiatives as the project was implemented, in raising the profile of the project, the LUCCC, and the think tanks, and in identifying "clients" for the think tanks. UNEP played a wide range of roles, like reviewing project workplans, budgets, and reports, assisted in resolving any disputes, established linkages with other initiatives, and publicized project results, successes, and lessons learned. The UN country teams was a valuable resource for supporting project implementation and coordinating other assistance with the GEF project. They possess in-depth knowledge of each country's context and the broader landscape of development partner activities in the host countries. Development partners were crucial stakeholders for the project's success. They provide a significant portion of the funding that governments use to secure the technical services offered by think tanks, primarily through technical assistance projects that fund consulting services. Consequently, the project must maintain regular communication with development partners to raise awareness and identify upcoming projects they plan to implement, which could present opportunities for the think tanks.	UNEP has regularly participated in PSC meetings, held regular contact with the Executing Agency START International, published official project documents and official reports, and maintained regular outreach to other development partners, international NGOs, multilateral development banks, etc. UN country teams have provided further support to the project. Therewith they have emerged from Type C to Type A stakeholder. In Mozambique, the UN country team has established the collaboration with UNIDO. UNIDO has provided co-financing for the Think Tank in Mozambique of USD 60,000. Development partners have emerged from Type C to Type A stakeholders. They support the think tank network by expanding service offerings, enhancing coordination within the LUCCC network, providing transition funding to cover university expenses during the think tanks' growth period, or supporting the creation of new think tanks. These partners will serve in an advisory capacity and act as indirect clients for the services provided by the think tanks.

Stakeholders	Power they hold over the project results/ implementation and the level of interest	Participation in the project design	Potential roles and responsibilities in project implementation	Changes in their behaviour expected through implementation of the project
CSOs and NGOs • START International • Climate Analytics • Climate Finance Action Network	They are the key players for the achievement of results and their consolidation, they represent the sustainability of the project, having a high power of influence, implementation and decision-making	This was the project Executing agency (EA). START has managed the day-to-day project implementation. Climate analytics was the chosen mentoring institutions during the project implementation.	START has identified synergies with its other existing programs that are related to university strengthening, and incorporated materials from previous projects into the current project. when applicable. START has continuously liaised with other organizations to identify potential areas of collaboration, as well as opportunities to expand the network of think tanks and potentially bring additional universities into some of the project activities where this was possible and feasible without increasing project costs. In detail, apart from the daily project management and monitoring all project activities, START International has coordinated with and mentored university the Points of Contacts (PoCs), and actively managed risks and handed course corrections. START has regularly participated in PSC meetings, held regular contact with the Implementing Agency UNEP, published official project documents and official reports, and maintained Regular written and verbal communication with university points of contact. At project design, it was planned to have two mentor institutions, but because of budgetary constraints, only Climate Analytics was chosen. The role of Climate Analytics was to design the capacity building programmes, training manual, and the short courses. Climate Finance Action Network has joined the project to support with their knowledge the development of the short courses 1 to 5.	START has solved the challenge experienced during implementation of significant underperformance of the Capacity Development Hub (CDH) that was supposed to be established at the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) in Bangladesh. UNEP and START decided to rescind the contract with the CDH in 2024, with START developing the web platform and repository, which was supposed to be a major deliverable of the CDH. The short courses 1 to 5 were developed by Climate Analytics, together with Climate Finance Action Network together with the capacity development officer and dedicated personnel from START International.

Stakeholders	Power they hold over the project results/ implementation and the level of interest	Participation in the project design	Potential roles and responsibilities in project implementation	Changes in their behaviour expected through implementation of the project
Academia and Research Organization Stakeholders • LDC University LUCCC coordinators • LUCC Points of Contacts (PoCs) • LDC Group and LUCCC • University Faculties and Think Tanks at the Universities • University Administrators	They are the key players for the achievement of results and their consolidation, they represent the sustainability of the project, having a high power of influence, implementation and science-based decision-making During project implementation, the University Faculties and Think Tanks at the Universities changed from Type B to Type A stakeholders.	They were involved in the project design through consultations and took advantage of previous regional collaborative projects	Each participating university has designated LUCCC Points of Contacts (PoCs), typically faculty members, responsible for representing their institution in the LUCCC. These coordinators were deeply involved in the project's design and acted as the main contacts during implementation. They were essential to the project's success, as all were experts in climate change adaptation. The project provided these coordinators with an opportunity to enhance their skills in bridging the gap between data and information creation in academic settings and their application in government agencies. Additionally, LUCCC coordinators have ensured that the project's benefits persist even after its completion. The project was implemented in partnership with LUCCC, a part of the LDC Group, and was designed in collaboration with them, incorporating their key inputs and guidance. It aligned with the priorities and directions of the LDC Group. The LDC Chair of the LDC Group provided strategic oversight by chairing the PSC. LUCCC served as the project's implementation partner, providing strategic oversight, with ten representatives from LUCCC universities participating in the PSC (five LUCCC members that were rotated to a new set of five LUCCC members at approximate half-way point of the project). Each of the 15 LUCCC universities has designated country contacts who serve as primary points of contact and play a critical role in executing the project. To support these roles, the project budget allocated funds to each university. LUCCC PoCs were actively participating in project activities, like planning and executing learning and scaling activities, including: planning and attending the midterm network meeting; planning and attending the learning and sustainability meeting; identifying partners for the thinktank network through outreach and consultations. They had regular communication	The PoCs from all thirteen countries varied in power and influence, depending on their involvement in the project, and on factors, like if there was a Think Tank or if a country was an LDC Chair during the time of project implementation. During implementation, LUCCC PoCs provided feedback on progress, helped design capacity development materials, and represented their universities in knowledge sharing. Their deep knowledge of local contexts enhanced university ownership in LDCs and ensured activities remained relevant. They participated in planning and executing project activities by overseeing various tasks throughout the project and providing support to others. The executing agency (START) held bilateral and group consultations with coordinators to gather input on the implementation of activities. An open communication channel existed between PoCs and the PMU. Regular check-in calls monitored progress, discussed issues, and gathered inputs for capacity development activities. LUCCC PoCs contributed written and verbal feedback to the work plans and reports. Additionally, PoCs contributed to lessons learned, information products, best practice materials, short-course training, regional meetings, and university-government engagement roadmaps. Academia used extensively the opportunities provided by the project to develop knowledge and expertise, academic programmes and research projects while training a new generation of specialized staff in climate financing, including the graduate students. In fact, the expertise on climate financing has been developed throughout the 13 project implementation countries. Upon completion, the established think tank network was integrated into the overall LUCCC network structure. This project was the first to be implemented with close coordination and partnership between the LDC Group and LUCCC, reflecting the LDC Group's

Stakeholders	Power they hold over the project results/ implementation and the level of interest	Participation in the project design	Potential roles and responsibilities in project implementation	Changes in their behaviour expected through implementation of the project
			with the executing agency (START). START consulted with the LDC Group Chair on matters related to PSC decisions. The LDC Chair was also invited to the monthly PMU meetings but rarely attended. The LDC Chair participated in PSC meetings, and provided inputs into matters before the PSC. The LDC group's participation in the project was limited to the LDC Chair being designated as the PSC chair, and providing advisement to the PSC on key decisions made by that body. Engagement with university faculty was carried out primarily by the LUCCC university points of contact that facilitated the project's activities at each participating institution. The executing agency has also leveraged their experience from previous initiatives to conduct outreach to university factor to raise awareness and interest in the project. University administrators linked to the four think-tank universities played an important role in ensuring successful establishment of the think-tanks, which was one of the key goals of the project. They have some control over budgets, staffing, and administrative procedures. Additionally, university leaders facilitated connections between think tanks, government agencies, private sector stakeholders, and international partners. The project matters to these stakeholders because it enables universities to fulfil their mandates to host governments and encourages increased external support. The project has collaborated with university administrators to establish the institutional frameworks necessary to support these think tanks and ensure they receive adequate funding and in-kind resources for long- term sustainability.	focus on playing a larger role in designing and implementing climate change projects in LDCs. As such, the development and execution of this project served as an important learning experience for both the LDC Group and LUCCC. University faculty were among the primary beneficiaries of this project and the key to its implementation and sustainability. University faculty possess technical skills and sectoral expertise that could improve government services and identify climate change adaptation entry points. Some university faculty members and their departments had relationships with government agencies and nongovernment organizations, which were leveraged to improve coordination for adaptation planning and project development. Faculty conduct research, teach courses, and advise students, making them vital for integrating climate change into education and developing knowledgeable professionals. They also played a key role in conducting decision- relevant research for climate change adaptation. This project has succeed to contribute for the university leaders and administrators to champion the expansion of technical services related to climate change adaptation at LUCCC universities and to support the creation of thinktanks.
Government Stakeholders • Ministries with the following portfolios participate in decision	They are the key players for the achievement of results and their consolidation, they represent the sustainability of the project,	They were involved in the project design through consultations and	Host country governments played a crucial role in this project for at least two key reasons. First, they serve as the primary market for the technical services offered by think tanks and LUCCC	The roles of the Government Stakeholders changed from Type B to Type A during project implementation. The primary role of host country governments was to serve as the main clients for the technical services

Stakeholders	Power they hold over the project results/ implementation and the level of interest	Participation in the project design	Potential roles and responsibilities in project implementation	Changes in their behaviour expected through implementation of the project
making for the subjects: Environment, Finance, Economic Development and Regional Planning from the participating country • Regional and local governance structures • Interministerial Committees/Intersectoral Working Groups	having a high power of influence, implementation and decision-making	took advantage of previous regional collaborative projects	universities, making effective coordination and communication vital. The needs identified by governments ensure the relevance of the work by think tanks and the project itself. Second, since governments typically fund most LUCCC universities, their support is essential for the long-term viability of these think tanks. The specific government agencies involved differ across countries, and it is beyond the scope of this plan to specify all agencies in 13 countries. However, in every country, the stakeholder group includes the national agency responsible for climate change and relevant sector agencies identified through each country's climate adaptation planning process, like the NAP process.	provided by think tanks. The government were the clients of the intense training performed by the Think Tanks, and the LUCCC Universities. In this context, government agencies collaborated with think tanks by offering input on their technical and capacity development needs and guiding the future growth of LUCCC universities and the entire LUCCC network. Enhanced coordination between the government and universities, facilitated by this project, enabled the development of research programs aligned with government priorities, especially for better planning and project development related to climate change adaptation. These consultations also enabled LUCCC universities to tailor their capacity-building and professional development efforts to meet government needs better.
Type B: ***High power/ low interest over the project =Meet their needs***				
Research Organization Stakeholders • Capacity Development Hub (CBD) established at ICCCAD	They are supposed to have high power and high interest, but they ended up being as high power and low interest	They were not involved in the project writing through consultations and took advantage of previous regional collaborative projects	The Capacity Development Hub (CDH) was supposed to be established at the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) in Bangladesh.	Due to numerous reasons the CDH was never established and never used as a knowledge management, repository and newsletters productions and meetings between the LUCCC. START has solved the challenge experienced during implementation of significant underperformance of. UNEP and START decided to rescind the contract with the CDH in 2024, with START developing the web platform and repository, which was supposed to be a major deliverable of the CDH.

1.6 Changes in Design during Implementation

37. UNILEAD was originally approved as a two-year project (December 2021 – December 2023). Following recognition of the ambitious scope relative to the project's timeline and budget, the Project Steering Committee (PSC) approved an eighteen-month no-cost extension, shifting the effective operational completion date to June 2025. Two formal project revisions (one no-cost extension and a budget revision) were processed, the most recent approved in December 2024. The Project Results Framework (LogFrame) was revised and improved following a baseline study conducted in 2022, incorporating the three components, four outcomes, and all thirteen project outputs, which were formally adopted by the PSC in 2023.

38. A significant mid-implementation change concerned the Capacity Development Hub (CDH), which had been planned to be established at the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) in Bangladesh. Due to significant challenges, UNEP and START International decided to rescind the contract with ICCCAD in 2024, with START International subsequently taking responsibility for developing the web platform and knowledge repository that had been a major planned deliverable of the CDH. This restructuring had budget and delivery implications for Outputs 1.1.2 and 1.1.4. Additionally, during project design, two mentor institutions were envisioned; however, due to budgetary constraints, only Climate Analytics was ultimately contracted for this role. A second significant mid-implementation change concerned reducing the number of think tanks from 5 to 3 (a 4th think-tank was supported through co-financing with UNIDO). This reduction in the number of think-tanks freed up budget resources so that a modest financial support could be provided across the LUCCC points of contact (giving them more of an incentive to engage in the project) and it enabled resources to be allocated for in-person meetings, which substantially increased LUCCC cross-network learning and engagement. Both of these elements were critical for providing a sense of cohesion and buy-in across the 13 participating LUCCC countries.

1.7 Project Financing

39. UNILEAD is a Medium-Sized Project (MSP) financed through a GEF LDCF grant of USD 1,980,000. Co-financing of USD 2,074,424 was provided as follows: LUCCC University members contributed USD 687,844 in-kind (recurrent expenditures) and USD 731,560 in grants (investment mobilised); the UNEP Global Adaptation Network contributed USD 100,000 in grants; and START International contributed USD 454,124 in grants and USD 100,896 in-kind, for a total planned project cost of USD 4,054,424. As of 30 June 2025, reported GEF grant expenditures were USD 1,033,845, with actual co-financing of USD 2,426,795, for total actual expenditures of USD 3,460,640. The co-financing breakdown by type and source is presented in **Table 6** below.

Table 6: Project co-finance

Co-financing (Type/Source)	UNEP own Financing – UNEP Global Adaptation Network (US$1,000)		LUCCC University Members (US$1,000)		START International (US$1,000)		Total (US$1,000)		Total Disbursed (US$1,000)
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	
– Grants	100	100	687.84	687.84	454.12	454.12			
– Loans									
– Credits									
– Equity investments									
– In-kind support			731.56	731.56	100.9	100.9			
– Other (*) (Donors, NGOs, Private Sector)									
Totals	**100**	**100**	**1,429.4**	**1,419.4**	**555.02**	**555.02**	**2,084.420**	**2,084.420**	**2,426.795**

2 EVALUATION METHODS

2.1 UNEP's Evaluation Approach

40. In line with UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual (PPMM), the evaluation was undertaken at operational completion of the project to assess performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned.

41. The evaluator has provided an analysis of the attainment of the project's main objective, the three project components, four project outcomes, and thirteen project outputs.

42. The target audience for this evaluation includes GEF, UNEP, START International, LUCCC Points of Contact (PoC) within the 13 LUCCC University partners, climate finance Think Tanks, and NFPs in the participating LDCs, UNIDO, Climate Analytics, Climate Finance Action Network, and the International Centre on Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD).

43. Through the assessment, the evaluation should enable these stakeholders to: (a) Verify prospects for development impact and sustainability, providing an analysis of the attainment of global environmental objectives, project objectives, delivery of project outputs, and achievement of outcomes/impacts based on indicators; and (b) Enhance project coherence, effectiveness, and sustainability by proposing recommendations and lessons learned to improve ongoing and future activities after the project implementation.

44. A key objective of this evaluation is to determine, based on the project results, whether support for UNILEAD 2.0 (second phase) is justified, taking into account the financial scope, project duration, and the specific nature of the proposed project.

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

46. Most evaluation criteria are rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU). The ratings against each criterion are 'weighted' to derive the Overall Project Performance Rating. The greatest weight is placed on achieving outcomes, followed by sustainability dimensions.

47. The UNEP Evaluation Office has developed detailed descriptions of the main elements required to be demonstrated at each level (i.e. Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory) for the rating of each evaluation criterion. The evaluator has considered all evidence gathered during the evaluation in relation to this matrix to generate performance ratings for the evaluation criteria.

48. In addition to the nine evaluation criteria outlined above, the evaluation addresses several strategic questions set out in the Terms of Reference. These questions were posed by the UNEP Evaluation Office in collaboration with members of the Project Team. For GEF-funded projects, evaluation findings are to be uploaded to the GEF Portal. To facilitate this process, evaluation findings related to the five topics of interest to the GEF are summarized in **Annex IX.** The intended actions and

results regarding these five topics are described in the GEF CEO Endorsement and Approval documents. The five topics are: i) performance against GEF's Core Indicator Targets; ii) engagement of stakeholders; iii) gender-responsive measures and gender result areas; iv) implementation of management measures taken against the Safeguards Plan; and v) challenges and outcomes related to the project's completed Knowledge Management Approach.

49. This evaluation adopted a participatory approach, consulting with project team members, partners and beneficiaries at several stages throughout the process. Central to the evaluation was the analysis (and reconstruction) of the project's Theory of Change. Consultations were held during the evaluation's inception phase to develop a nuanced understanding of how the project intended to drive change and which contributing conditions ('assumptions' and 'drivers') would need to be in place to support that change. The (reconstructed) Theory of Change, supported by a graphic representation and a narrative discussion of the causal pathways, was further discussed with respondents during the data collection phase and refined as appropriate. The final iteration of the Theory of Change is presented in this final evaluation report and has been used throughout the evaluation process.

2.2 Data Collection

2.2.1 Primary data sources

50. Primary data collection for this evaluation was conducted through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with a broad range of stakeholders, including UNEP project management staff, START International's Project Management Unit, LUCCC university Points of Contact in all 13 target countries, host country government representatives, think tank staff and beneficiaries, Climate Analytics, Climate Finance Action, Network, and development partners. Interviews were conducted electronically (via video conferencing) and in person during field missions to selected countries. Respondents were identified based on their roles in project design, implementation, or beneficiary status. Selection criteria sought to ensure balanced representation across geographic regions (Africa, Asia, and the Pacific), institutional types, and gender. Strategies to maximize participation included advance communication, flexible scheduling, and follow-up outreach to non-respondents. Divergent views were documented and triangulated against documentary evidence and other interview accounts. The complete list of individuals consulted in key informant interviews or focus group discussions is provided in **Annex III**.

51. As indicated in Table 7, the total number of individuals consulted during key informant interviews or focus-group discussions, whether conducted virtually or during field evaluation missions, was 75. Of these individuals, 35 were female and 40 were male.

Table 7: Evaluation respondents and field visits

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Stakeholders - Individuals</th><th>A. Total number involved (M/F)</th><th>B. Number contacted (M/F)</th><th>Sample size (% B/A)[4]</th><th>C. Total number responded Total (M/F)</th><th>Response rate (% C/B)[5]</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Project Team</td><td rowspan="2">Project Team (with management responsibilities e.g. Project Management Unit)</td><td>Implementing agency UNEP</td><td>6 (6F)</td><td>6 (6F)</td><td>100</td><td>6 (6F)</td><td>100</td></tr>
<tr><td>Executing agency START International</td><td>3 (2F, 1M)</td><td>3 (2F, 1M)</td><td>100</td><td>3 (2F, 1M)</td><td>100</td></tr>
</table>

[4] *Percentage of people involved in the project who were contacted.*
[5] *Percentage of people contacted who responded.*

Stakeholders - Individuals		A. Total number involved (M/F)	B. Number contacted (M/F)	Sample size (% B/A)[4]	C. Total number responded Total (M/F)	Response rate (% C/B)[5]
Beneficiaries	**Direct Beneficiaries:** (e.g. training participants, etc.)	423 (166F, 257M)	37 (14F, 23M)	8.8	37 (14F, 23M)	100
Beneficiaries	**Indirect Beneficiaries:** (e.g. civil society representatives, group members, etc.)	37 (14F, 23M)	37 (14F, 23M)	100	37 (14F, 23M)	100
Stakeholders - Entities		**A. Total number involved**	**B. Number contacted**	**Sample size (% B/A)[6]**	**C. Total number responded**	**Response rate (% C/B)[7]**
Partners	**Project implementing/ executing partners** (receiving project funds)	36 (12F, 24M)	36 (12F, 24M)	100	29 (11F, 18M)	81
Partners	**Project collaborating/ contributing partners**[8] (not receiving project fund)	37 (14F, 23M)	37 (14F, 23M)	100	37 (14F, 23M)	100
Field Visits	**Region / country / locality**[9]	**A. Total number sites**	**B. Number sites visited**		**Sample Size (%B/A)**[10]	
	Africa	**10**	3		33.3	
	Asia and the Pacific	**3**	0		0	

2.2.2 Strategies for inclusivity

52. To maximize response rates, the evaluation took a participatory approach by engaging project team members, partners, and beneficiaries at multiple stages. Consultations occurred during the inception phase, throughout field missions in three participating countries, and during the presentation of preliminary findings. To ensure diverse perspectives were included, the evaluation engaged a full range of stakeholders — including implementing and executing agencies, LUCCC university Points of Contact across all 13 countries, host-country government representatives, university faculty, graduate students (especially women and marginalized groups), and development partners. Strategies used included bilateral and group interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and open communication channels. Special efforts were made to include female participants, in line with the project's GESI commitments. Field missions were carried out to Kampala, Uganda (Makerere University), Maputo, Mozambique (Universidade Eduardo Mondlane), and Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania (University of Dar Es Salaam) — two of the four think tank sites and one non think-tank site — chosen to represent both Anglophone and Lusophone Africa and to evaluate the training and capacity-building efforts of government officials, academics, and graduate students working on climate change adaptation projects and their financing.

2.2.3 Secondary data sources

53. Secondary data sources include all project documentation provided by the project team and gathered during the evaluation. Key documents reviewed include the Project Document (ProDoc/CEO Endorsement, August 2021), the revised Project Results Framework (LogFrame, 2023), 3 Project Implementation Reports (PIRs), One Final Reporting Report, Half-Yearly Progress Reports, PSC meeting minutes (seven meetings from April 2022 to July 2025), the 2022 baseline study, the Gender Action Plan, the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, and all project revision documentation. Additional sources include output deliverables from think tanks (climate change adaptation project proposals, technical reports), the five short-course curricula developed by Climate Analytics and START International, and content from the LUCCC Capacity Development Hub web platform.

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[6] *Percentage of entities involved in the project who were contacted.*
[7] *Percentage of entities contacted who responded.*
[8] *Contributing partners may be providing resources as either cash or in-kind inputs (e.g. staff time, office space etc.).*
[9] *In case of a global project, the unit of analysis is 'region'. In case of a regional or multi-country project, the unit of analysis is 'country'. In case of a single country project, the unit of analysis is 'locality', which could refer to a city, town, village, etc.*
[10] *Percentage of total number project sites in each region, country or locality that were visited.*

54. Monitoring data, including indicator tracking tables and expenditure reports submitted to the GEF, were also reviewed. The GEF CEO Endorsement and Approval documents, UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (2022–2025), Programme of Work (2022–2023), and the UNEP Evaluation Manual (2022) were used to contextualise findings. Documents collected directly from partners during field missions and interviews provided important primary source corroboration of monitoring claims. The complete list of documents reviewed is presented in **Annex IV**.

2.3 Data Analysis

55. The evaluation used a mixed-methods analytical approach. Quantitative methods analysed financial reports, indicator tracking data, and expenditures against targets. Qualitative methods triangulated primary and secondary data, offering a detailed review of project actions at each intervention level — institutional and operational. The perspectives and perceptions of beneficiaries, partners, and stakeholders were explored to gain a deeper understanding of project results. The main qualitative analytical method was attribution and/or contribution analysis, aligning evidence with the causal pathways in the reconstructed Theory of Change (ToC), including the status of assumptions and drivers. When strict attribution was not possible, contribution analysis was used. Tools included process tracing and structured stakeholder interviews. Triangulation was used across four dimensions to ensure validity: (i) methodological triangulation combining qualitative (interviews, FGDs) and quantitative (indicator data) methods; (ii) data source triangulation comparing responses from different stakeholder groups (community members, implementing agencies, donors); (iii) temporal triangulation comparing findings across project phases (inception, implementation, end-line); and (iv) spatial triangulation using evidence from all four think tanks and other implementation sites. Confidence levels (high, medium, low) were assigned to each finding based on the strength of the triangulated evidence. Lessons learned and recommendations were developed from the validated causal pathways and tested assumptions, linked to areas of strong or weak performance in the ToC.

2.4 Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

56. The geographic scope of the project — spanning 13 countries across Africa and Asia — limited the feasibility of comprehensive field visits to all implementation sites. Field missions were therefore restricted to two think-tank locations (Uganda and Mozambique) and one non-think-tank location (Tanzania), which were selected as representative cases based on geographic coverage, implementation model, and co-financing context. This limitation was partially mitigated through structured remote interviews and FGDs with Points of Contact and stakeholders in the remaining 10 countries. The implementation period extended significantly beyond the originally planned duration (December 2021 to June 2025 versus the planned December 2023), requiring careful triangulation of monitoring data across phases to reconstruct a coherent picture of project performance. There were some documentation gaps, especially in the early stages of the think tanks' setup, the contract rescission process for ICCCAD, and the inconsistent use of gender-disaggregated data in all outputs. These issues were addressed through stakeholder interviews and reviews of available PIRs. Potential language barriers were overcome by evaluator who is proficient in English and French, with working knowledge of Portuguese. All data were cross-verified through triangulation, and the findings were shared with stakeholders for review and feedback before finalization, helping to reduce potential evaluator bias.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

57. Throughout this evaluation process and while compiling the Terminal Evaluation Report, efforts have been made to represent the views of both mainstream and marginalized groups. Data were collected with respect for ethics and human rights issues. All pictures were taken, and other information was gathered with prior informed consent from individuals; all discussions remained anonymous, and all information was collected in accordance with the UN 'Standards of Conduct'.

3 THEORY OF CHANGE AT EVALUATION

58. The Theory of Change (ToC) for this evaluation was reconstructed at inception phase through a desk review of the original Project Document (ProDoc/CEO Endorsement, August 2021), the revised Project Results Framework (LogFrame) adopted following the 2022 baseline study, and PSC records. The ToC diagram in the original ProDoc was never formally updated to reflect the 2023 LogFrame revision. The reconstructed ToC at inception therefore introduced the most significant change: the addition of an explicit impact statement — "Capacities of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to achieve scaled-up and effective adaptation by fostering endogenous technical services for project development, policy mainstreaming, and creation of an enabling environment for adaptation to climate change are strengthened and sustained" — which had been implicit in the original ProDoc but never formally articulated at the impact level. Two intermediate states were also introduced to make explicit the enabling conditions beyond the project's outcomes that are required for the intended impact to be realised: (1) climate change adaptation projects and measures are mainstreamed into national and sectoral policy and development strategies; and (2) non-state stakeholders from the private sector and civil society organisations, particularly women and marginalised groups, are actively engaged in climate change adaptation project implementation.

59. Minor reformulations were made to the project objective and to Outcome 1.1 and Output 1.1.3 to clarify abbreviations and language. The project objective was refined to "Capacities of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to achieve scaled-up and effective adaptation by fostering sustained endogenous technical services for project development, policy mainstreaming, and creation of an enabling environment for adaptation to climate change are strengthened" — preserving the original intent while adding the sustainability element present in the original ToC. All wording changes were minimal and did not alter the original intention or meaning of the results. The reconstructed ToC served as the central framework throughout the evaluation for understanding how the interventions were intended to contribute to observed outcomes, both quantitatively and qualitatively, through an analysis of causal pathways. The three-column justification table below shows the original ProDoc formulations, the 2023-revised LogFrame formulations, and the reformulated statements at TE inception, along with justifications for each change.

60. The Theory of Change at evaluation was reconstructed during the inception phase through a desk review of the original ProDoc (CEO Endorsement, August 2021), the revised Project Results Framework (LogFrame, 2023), and PSC meeting records. The reconstruction was carried out by the evaluator, in consultation with the UNEP evaluation manager, and START International, to align the ToC with UNEP's definitions of results levels and to incorporate the baseline study revisions. The ToC, as originally presented in the ProDoc, lacked a formal impact statement and intermediate states; these have been added to the reconstructed version. The GESI commitments contained in the project document are reflected as a driver within the reconstructed ToC.

61. The UNILEAD project's reconstructed Theory of Change at evaluation follows three main causal pathways, each corresponding to a project component. The first causal pathway (Component 1) proceeds from project inputs — funding, technical assistance, and partnership with LUCCC — through the delivery of capacity-building activities (training modules, short courses, engagement roadmaps, institutional frameworks) to generate the outputs that build human and institutional capital in LDC universities. These outputs are expected to activate Outcomes 1.1 and 1.2: universities effectively facilitating access to climate finance and having the institutional capacity to support adaptation policy. The key driver supporting this pathway is the sustained political will of LDC universities to commit to the think tank model, and the key assumption is that host governments have the interest and financial means to engage with the services offered.

62. The second causal pathway (Component 2) proceeds from small grants to think tanks to the production of at least 20 demand-led technical outputs across a minimum of 5 countries, generating Outcome 2.1: think tanks providing technical services that meet government demands. The key assumption is that the think tanks are sufficiently operationalised (from Component 1) to absorb and deliver the grants effectively, and that there is genuine government demand for the outputs. The third causal pathway (Component 3) proceeds from scaling and sustainability activities — network meetings,

upscaling strategy development, and knowledge products — to generate Outcome 3.1: the think tank model being incorporated into the LUCCC expansion and scale-up plan. Together, the three outcome pathways are expected to produce the two intermediate states — mainstreaming of adaptation into national policies, and engagement of non-state actors — and ultimately realise the project's long-lasting impact.

Table 8: Justification for reformulation of results statements

Formulation in original project document	Formulation in Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for reformulation and /or consultant's explanatory notes on the interpretation of the result
Objective: To strengthen capacities of LDCs to achieve scaled up and effective adaptation by fostering endogenous technical services for project development, policy mainstreaming, and creation of an enabling environment for adaptation to climate change	**Impact:** Capacities of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to achieve scaled up and effective adaptation by fostering endogenous technical services for project development, policy mainstreaming, and creation of an enabling environment for adaptation to climate change are strengthened and sustained	The Impact has been formulated using the 2023 'Project Objective'. Order of the wording of the Project Objective has been changed, but the original intention and meaning has been preserved. The addition of the words "are sustained" to the Impact statement respond to its character as a long-term result.
N/A	**Intermediate State 1:** Climate change adaptation projects and measures are mainstreamed into national and sectoral policy and development strategies **Intermediate State 2:** Non-state stakeholders from private sector and civil society organizations, particularly women and other marginalized groups are actively engaged in climate change adaptation project implementation	Intermediate State(s) have been introduced in the reconstructed ToC to identify key stable conditions beyond the project outcomes that are required to occur in order for the intended Impact to be realised. These interrelated intermediate states highlight the importance of effective governance-level support for creating an enabling environment for adaptation to climate change, as well as the realization of private sector- and CSO's-owned interventions, where particularly women and other marginalized groups are actively engaged in climate change adaptation project implementation. Intermediate State 1 captures the governance-level condition that national and sectoral policies are receptive to, and integrate, climate change adaptation — a prerequisite for think tank technical outputs to translate into lasting policy change. Intermediate State 2 captures the social and participatory enabling condition: that non-state actors — civil society, the private sector, and marginalized groups including women — are meaningfully engaged in adaptation implementation. This condition was identified as absent from the original project document's ToC, which did not explicitly address non-state actor engagement as a prerequisite for impact. Both Intermediate States were introduced by the evaluator, in consultation with the UNEP evaluation manager and START International, to align the ToC with UNEP's definition of impact-level results and to make the causal logic of the project fully explicit.
Component 1: Collaborative mechanism for sustained endogenous capacity on climate change adaptation		

Formulation in original project document	Formulation in Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for reformulation and /or consultant's explanatory notes on the interpretation of the result
finance		
Outcome 1.1: LUCCC universities effectively facilitate access to climate finance in their respective countries	**Outcome 1.1:** LUCCC universities effectively facilitate access to climate finance in their respective countries	No changes made
Output 1.1.1 LUCCC universities formulate engagement plans with host LDC governments to provide specific technical services to government agencies	**Output 1.1.1** LUCCC universities formulate engagement plans with host LDC governments to provide specific technical services to government agencies	No change made
Output 1.1.2 LUCCC capacity development hub established with at least 8 web-based capacity building modules (2 focusing on GESI/CC themes) responding to LUCCC university priority capacity gaps	**Output 1.1.2** LUCCC capacity development hub established with at least 8 web-based capacity building modules (2 focusing on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion / Climate Change (GESI/CC) themes) responding to LUCCC university priority capacity gaps.	This Output was not part of the original ToC diagram. However, it is present in the revised Project Results Framework (LogFrame) adopted following the 2022–2023 baseline study, but was not included in the original Theory of Change (ToC) diagram in the Project Document (ProDoc/CEO Endorsement, August 2021). The ProDoc ToC diagram depicted only outcomes and the project objective; outputs were listed separately in the results framework table but not visually mapped in the ToC. The output has been included in the RTOC to ensure full alignment between the reconstructed causal pathways and the complete results framework, and to enable output-level performance assessment. Its inclusion does not represent a new intervention — it reflects a structural gap between the original ProDoc ToC diagram and the agreed results framework that the reconstruction corrects. The abbreviation 'GESI/CC' has been expanded to 'Gender Equality and Social Inclusion / Climate Change (GESI/CC)' on first use for clarity.
Output 1.1.3 At least 5 short course programs inclusive of GESI/CC developed for use by LUCCC institutions for technical service delivery to host governments on a fee-basis; at least five training of trainers conducted	**Output 1.1.3** At least 5 short course programs inclusive of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion / Climate Change (GESI/CC) themes developed for use by LUCCC institutions for technical service delivery to host governments on a fee-basis; at least five training of trainers conducted	The abbreviation 'GESI/CC' has been expanded to 'Gender Equality and Social Inclusion / Climate Change (GESI/CC)' within the output statement itself, in keeping with standard practice that abbreviations should be spelled out in full on their first use in a formal results framework. The change is solely presentational; the substance of the output is unchanged. The expanded formulation has been applied consistently to all output statements in which 'GESI/CC' appears for the first time (Outputs 1.1.2 and 1.1.3). Subsequent references retain the abbreviation.
Output 1.1.4 Knowledge and information resource management system set up at the capacity development hub with procedures for updating and disseminating resources repository	**Output 1.1.4** Knowledge and information resource management system set up at the capacity development hub with procedures for updating and disseminating resources repository	No changes made

Formulation in original project document	Formulation in Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for reformulation and /or consultant's explanatory notes on the interpretation of the result
contents	contents	
Outcome 1.2: Select LDC universities have institutional capacity to support adaptation policy and project formulation	**Outcome 1.2:** Select LDC universities have developed institutional capacity to support adaptation policy and project formulation	The word 'developed' has been added to more accurately reflect the evaluative framing required at terminal evaluation stage. The original statement 'have institutional capacity' implies a static condition; the reformulation 'have developed institutional capacity' captures the process of capacity formation that occurred during project implementation, which is what this outcome measures. The substance of the outcome is unchanged.
Output 1.2.1 At least 5 thinktank institutions formalized through MoU or similar mechanism at 5 LUCCC universities	**Output 1.2.1** At least 3 thinktank institutions formalized through MoU or similar mechanism at 3 LUCCC universities	The target of 'at least 5' was set in the original Project Document (ProDoc, 2021). Following the 2022–2023 baseline study, the Project Results Framework was formally revised and adopted, reducing the target to 'at least 3'. This revision was approved through the project's governance process and is reflected in the updated LogFrame (2023). The reduction was justified by the project management team and START International on the grounds that: (i) establishing fully formalized think tanks within the two-year original project timeline was more complex and resource-intensive than anticipated; (ii) the baseline study confirmed that depth of institutional development at a smaller number of sites was preferable to shallow formalization across a larger number; and (iii) only four LUCCC universities were ultimately selected to host think tanks (Uganda, Senegal, Mozambique, Nepal). The RTOC reflects the revised 2023 LogFrame target, which constitutes the agreed performance benchmark for this evaluation.
Output 1.2.2 Thinktanks formally operational through development of organizational charters, staffing plans and steering committees (no less than 5).At least 2 multidisciplinary technical working clusters established at each thinktank (no less than 5 thinktank).	**Output 1.2.2** Thinktanks formally operational through development of organizational charters, staffing plans and steering committees (no less than 3). At least 1 multidisciplinary technical working clusters established at each thinktank (no less than 3 thinktanks).	Same rationale as Output 1.2.1 above. The 2023 revised LogFrame reduced the target from 5 to 3 thinktanks following the baseline study, in recognition that four sites had been selected for think tank formalization and that three was the realistic minimum for demonstrating the model. The 2023 revised LogFrame also reduced the minimum number of multidisciplinary technical working clusters per thinktank from 2 to 1. This adjustment reflected implementation experience showing that establishing a single, well-functioning multidisciplinary cluster was a more achievable and meaningful threshold within the project's revised timeline and budget, rather than requiring two clusters that might

Formulation in original project document	Formulation in Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for reformulation and /or consultant's explanatory notes on the interpretation of the result
		be formed superficially. The revised target of at least 1 cluster per thinktank — across at least 3 thinktanks — was adopted as the agreed performance benchmark.
Output 1.2.3 Technical working clusters and support system established to provide technical goods and services	**Output 1.2.3** Technical working clusters and support system established to provide technical goods and services	Output 1.2.3 is present in the revised Project Results Framework (LogFrame, 2023) but was not part of the original ToC diagram in the ProDoc (2021). As with Output 1.1.2, the output existed in the agreed results framework but was not mapped visually in the ProDoc's ToC diagram. It has been included in the RTOC to ensure full alignment between the reconstructed causal pathways and the complete, agreed results framework. The output statement is reproduced verbatim from the 2023 LogFrame. The content of Output 1.2.3 is closely related to Output 1.2.2 (which covers the establishment of the working clusters); Output 1.2.3 specifically concerns the broader technical support system within which the clusters operate. It is important to ensure women are included in the multidisciplinary technical working clusters established at each thinktank, in order to ensure gender-balance within these institutional structures, and strengthen GESI.
Output 1.2.4 Business and sustainability plans formulated for each thinktank (at least 5).	**Output 1.2.4** Business and sustainability plans formulated for each thinktank (at least 3).	The target reduction from 'at least 5' to 'at least 3' reflects the same 2023 LogFrame revision described under Outputs 1.2.1 and 1.2.2. Since business and sustainability plans are formulated per thinktank, the target was adjusted in direct proportion to the reduction in the number of thinktanks, from 5 to 3 (subsequently implemented as 4 thinktanks). The revised target of at least 3 constitutes the agreed performance benchmark for this evaluation. The substance of the output — that each formalized thinktank must have a business and sustainability plan — is unchanged.
Component 2: Technical capacity building for LDC governments		
Outcome 2.1 Think tanks at select LDC universities provide technical services that meet government demands	**Outcome 2.1** Think tanks at select LDC universities provide technical services that meet government demands	No changes made
Output 2.1.1 Small grants program set up with proposal guidelines, procedures, and evaluation criteria to support demand-led policy research and technical services.	**Output 2.1.1** Small grants program set up with proposal guidelines, procedures, and evaluation criteria to support demand-led policy research and technical services.	No changes made

Formulation in original project document	Formulation in Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for reformulation and /or consultant's explanatory notes on the interpretation of the result
Output 2.1.2 At least 20 demand-led and policy relevant technical outputs prepared across university thinktanks in a minimum of 5 countries.	**Output 2.1.2** At least 12 demand-led and policy relevant technical outputs prepared across university thinktanks in a minimum of 3 countries.	Both target reductions are drawn directly from the 2023 revised Project Results Framework (LogFrame), adopted following the baseline study. The original ProDoc target of 20 outputs across 5 countries was recalibrated in line with: (i) the reduction in the number of formalized thinktanks from 5 to 3 (revised to 4 in implementation); (ii) the recognition that 20 outputs was an over-estimate given the available small grants budget and the capacity of newly established thinktanks; and (iii) the baseline study's assessment of realistic output delivery within the extended project period. The revised target of 12 outputs across a minimum of 3 countries is the agreed performance benchmark for this evaluation. In practice, 13 demand-led technical outputs were produced across 4 countries, exceeding the revised target.
Component 3: Scaling up		
Outcome 3.1: Think tank model incorporated into LUCCC expansion and scale up plan	**Outcome 3.1:** Think tank model incorporated into LUCCC expansion and scale up plan	No changes made
Output 3.1.1 Two meetings (1 per year of project implementation) conducted to a) share knowledge and learning about the thinktank experience; b) strengthen the overall LUCCC thinktank network; and c) increase regional and global awareness of the thinktanks and their capabilities.	**Output 3.1.1** Two meetings (1 per year of project implementation) conducted to a) share knowledge and learning about the thinktank experience; b) strengthen the overall LUCCC thinktank network; and c) increase regional and global awareness of the thinktanks and their capabilities.	Output 3.1.1 is present in the revised Project Results Framework (LogFrame, 2023) but was not included in the original ToC diagram in the ProDoc (August 2021). The ProDoc ToC depicted outcomes only; outputs were listed in the results matrix but not mapped visually in the ToC diagram. The output has been included in the RTOC to ensure full alignment between the reconstructed causal pathways and all outputs in the agreed results framework. Its inclusion is a structural correction, not a substantive addition. The description and targets are reproduced verbatim from the 2023 LogFrame. The lettered list markers (a), b), c)) used in the original statement have been removed and replaced with plain paragraph breaks, consistent with the formatting convention applied to all other output statements in the RTOC. The meaning is unchanged.
Output 3.1.2 LUCCC thinktank network upscaling and sustainability strategy developed	**Output 3.1.2** LUCCC thinktank network upscaling and sustainability strategy developed	No changes made
Output 3.1.3 At least 2 knowledge products developed to synthesize and disseminate lessons learned and best practices from thinktank network	**Output 3.1.3** At least 2 knowledge products developed to synthesize and disseminate lessons learned and best practices from thinktank network	No changes made

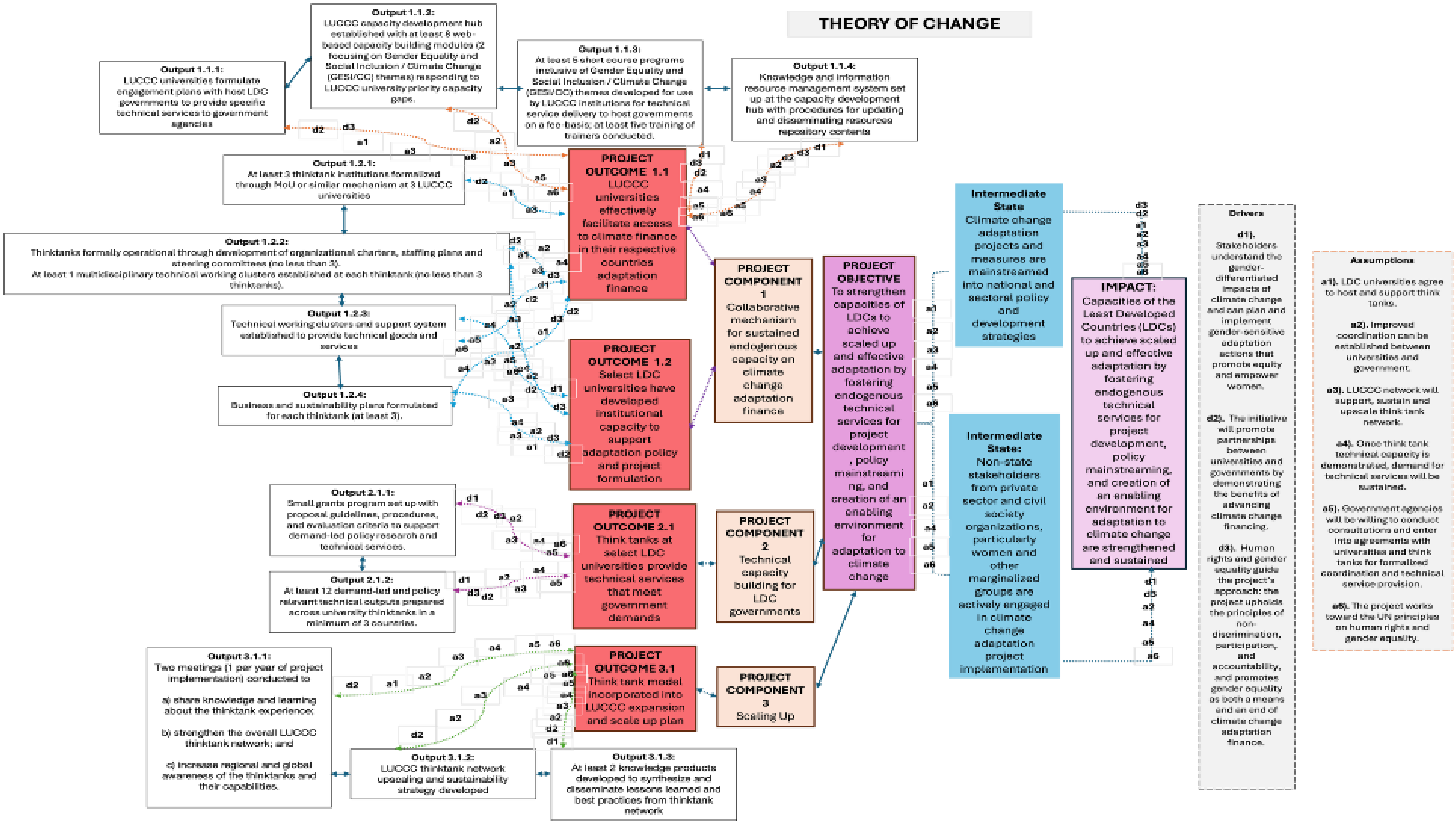
Table 9: Justification for reformulation / expansion of drivers and assumptions

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
DRIVERS		
	D3. Human rights and gender equality guide the project's approach: the project upholds the principles of non-discrimination, participation, and accountability, and promotes gender equality as both a means and an end of climate change adaptation finance.	Driver added at evaluation; source: The original project design document and results framework did not explicitly articulate a commitment to human rights and gender equality as a driver of the change process. However, such commitments are embedded in the project's Gender Action Plan, its GESI short-course content, and UNEP's institutional standards. Completion of incomplete text: The RTOC formulation ('D3. Human rights and gender equality …') was incomplete in the prior draft. The full driver statement has been formulated to describe specifically how human rights and gender equality influence the change process: by guiding the project's approach to non-discrimination, participation, and accountability, and by framing gender equality as both instrumental (necessary for effective adaptation) and intrinsic (a goal in itself). Status in ToC diagram: D3 was identified as missing from the ToC diagram below this table. The driver statement should be added to the ToC diagram to ensure full consistency between the tabular RTOC and the visual representation.
	D1. Stakeholders understand the gender-differentiated impacts of climate change and can plan and implement gender-sensitive adaptation actions that promote equity and empower women.	Driver added at inception. As climate change is not gender-neutral, this driver was introduced at the inception phase of the evaluation to make explicit that gender-sensitive adaptation planning requires that stakeholders — governments, universities, civil society — have the knowledge and tools to understand and act on gender-differentiated climate impacts. The formulation of D1 in this table has been edited to match exactly the wording used in the ToC diagram below, ensuring full consistency between the tabular RTOC and the visual representation. The same alignment has been applied to all other Drivers and Assumptions where the table and diagram formulations previously diverged.
	D2. The initiative will promote partnerships between universities and governments by demonstrating the benefits of advancing climate change financing.	Driver added at inception. The axis of collaboration between governments (as clients) and universities (as service providers) is the central institutional innovation of UNILEAD. This driver captures the project's assumption that demonstrating the value of university-based technical services will strengthen and sustain university-government partnerships over time.
ASSUMPTIONS		
	A6. The project works toward the UN principles on human rights and gender equality.	Assumption added at evaluation. The original project design document and results framework did not mention human rights and gender equality as a project assumption. This assumption was included in the RTOC to reflect the broader UN normative framework within which UNILEAD operates, and to make explicit that the project's outcomes are conditioned on adherence to these principles.

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
A1. LDC universities agree to host, and support think tanks.		
A2. Improved coordination can be established between universities and government.		
A3. LUCCC network will support, sustain and upscale think tank network.		
A4. Once think tank technical capacity is demonstrated, demand for technical services will be sustained.		
	A5. Governments are willing to pay for or are interested in short-course programs.	Governments paying for the services of the Think Tanks and the Universities is the key to financial sustainability of the project, embedded in their Business Plans.

63. A key insight from reconstructing the ToC is that the original project document did not adequately articulate the governance-level and non-state actor enabling conditions required for the project's outcomes to translate into lasting impact — this has now been made explicit through the inclusion of the two intermediate states in the reconstructed TOC at evaluation. A further gap identified is the insufficiency of the project's risk framework: the original ProDoc did not fully incorporate risks of political instability, government changes, or limited political will to utilise think tank services, all of which are likely in LDC contexts. The project design's emphasis on sustainability through Component 3 (scaling up) partially mitigated this gap, but stronger risk management mechanisms during implementation would have been beneficial. Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) is embedded throughout the ToC as both a driver (given explicit GESI commitments in the project document) and an assumption (in relation to the broader UN principles of human rights and equality that condition all outcomes).

Figure 4:Theory of Change at evaluation



4 EVALUATION FINDINGS

4.1 Strategic Relevance

4.1.1 Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities

64. UNILEAD was approved during UNEP's Mid-Term Strategy (MTS) 2018-2021. The progress made towards contributing to the PoW Expected Accomplishments and Indicators was visible in the: (i) Number of national, subnational and private-sector actors that adopt climate change mitigation and/or adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies and policies with UNEP support; (ii) Amounts provided and mobilized in USD per year in relation to the continued existing collective mobilization goal of the USD 100 billion commitment through to 2025 with UNEP support; and (iv) Positive shift in public opinion, attitudes and actions in support of climate action as a result of UNEP action.

65. UNILEAD is fully aligned with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (2022–2025) under the Climate Change sub-programme, and directly supports Expected Result 1a of the UNEP Programme of Work (2022–2023): "Countries advance their National Adaptation Plans, integrating ecosystem-based adaptation." See table 10. It supports strengthening institutional capacity and delivering transformational results, especially in addressing the underfunding of adaptation in LDCs. The project promotes south-south cooperation through LUCCC and mentorship, contributing to the Climate Action subprogramme. It aims to help decision-makers adopt resilience pathways, improve climate transparency, and enhance capacity in LDCs, thereby fostering accountability and better allocation of adaptation finance. Additionally, it supports the science-policy subprogramme by building capacities for scientific uptake to drive climate action.

Table 10: Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW), and Strategic Priorities

UNEP strategic document	Alignment with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities	Level of alignment
MTS (2018-2021)[11]	UNEP Mid-Term Strategy (MTS) 2018-2021 UNEP MTS 2022-2025 – *Direct outcomes: 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.8*	Full
POW (2020-2021)[12]	UNEP POW 2020-2021 - Outcomes: 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A	Full

4.1.2 Alignment to GEF/Donor Strategic Priorities

66. The project contributes directly to GEF-7 Strategic Objective CCA 3 ("Foster enabling conditions for effective and integrated climate change adaptation"), funded through the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) of the GEF, namely to (i) Outcome 3.2 Increased ability of country to access and/or manage climate finance or other relevant large scale programmatic investment as a support to NAP process and/or for enabling activities in response to COP guidance; and (ii) Outcome 3.3 Institutional and human capacities strengthened to identify and implement adaptation measures as a support to NAP process and/ or for enabling activities in response to COP guidance.

Table 11: Alignment to GEF/Donor Strategic Priorities

Donor or partner strategic document	Alignment with donor or partner strategic priorities	Level of alignment
GEF	CCA 3 - Foster enabling conditions for effective and integrated climate change adaptation	Full
START International	START strengthens capacities for global environmental change science in Africa and Asia that addresses critical sustainability challenges, with its programmes and partnerships providing opportunities for training, research, education and networking that strengthen scientific skills and inspire leadership. The main focus of START's work concerns climate	Full

[11] *MTS under which the project was approved.*
[12] *POW under which the project was approved.*

Donor or partner strategic document	Alignment with donor or partner strategic priorities	Level of alignment
	change and extremes in the context of disaster risk reduction land-use and land-cover change, natural resources and ecosystems, water and food security and urban development.	
LUCCC network	UNILEAD aligns with the LUCCC's 2021-2030 draft Ten Year Plan, which aims to build a South-South network for climate education, research, and expertise. It seeks to boost LDC university capacity through joint research and training, support vulnerable countries via collaborative learning, establish universities as knowledge hubs, and offer policy support to governments in managing climate impacts.	Full

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

67. UNILEAD is closely aligned with the priorities of the Paris Agreement, UNFCCC, and SDG 13 (Climate Action), and directly responds to the inequity faced by LDCs in accessing climate finance. The project builds on South-South cooperation principles by establishing a peer-learning network among LDC universities, consistent with the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building.

68. This project responded to UNEA Resolution 2/5: “Delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” by enhancing the coordinated and integrated delivery of the 2030 Agenda through fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships and cooperation, engaging with regional coordination mechanisms, building institutional and human capacity, and engaging with the private sector. The project also supported South-South cooperation through its work in 13 countries in Africa and Asia, as mandated under the Bali Strategic Framework for Technology Support and Capacity Building, by directly supporting Member States’ Governments with GHG emissions-reduction plans and practices, thereby contributing to their Climate Change Mitigation goals.

69. Additionally, this project supported the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially SDG 13 (Climate Action): Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, focusing on adaptation, mitigation, and resource mobilization. SDG 13 aims to strengthen resilience to climate disasters (13.1), incorporate climate measures into policy (13.2), and mobilize USD 100 billion annually for developing countries (13.a). The project created strong synergies with other goals, particularly SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) through funding renewable energy projects and energy efficiency initiatives; SDG 15 (Life on Land) and SDG 14 (Life Below Water) by financing nature-based solutions, biodiversity conservation, and ecosystem restoration to act as carbon sinks; SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities) by investing in resilient infrastructure and climate-adaptive urban planning; and especially SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) by strengthening international collaboration to promote technology transfer and capacity building in developing nations. Climate finance also advances other goals by reducing vulnerabilities, such as poverty reduction (SDG 1), ensuring food security via climate-smart agriculture (SDG 2), and improving public health (SDG 3) by lowering air pollution.

Table 12: Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities

Strategic document or agreement	Alignment with global, regional, sub-regional, national environmental priorities	Level of Alignment
Paris Agreement	The Paris Agreement (Article 9) mandates developed nations to provide financial resources to assist developing countries with climate mitigation and adaptation, reinforcing a shift toward low-emission investments. A key target was mobilizing $100 billion annually, achieved in 2022, with a new goal of $300 billion annually by 2035.	Full
Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building	Technology Support and Capacity Building by directly supporting Member States’ Governments with GHG emissions reduction plans and practices, thereby contributing to their Climate Change Mitigation goals	Full
South-South Cooperation	Fostering South-South cooperation in Climate Finance throughout 13 countries in Africa and Asia	Full
All 13 implementing countries from the LUCCC network	Full alignment with their climate change commitments under the Paris Agreement: Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), all National Communication to the UNFCCC (NCs), Climate Change	Full

Strategic document or agreement	Alignment with global, regional, sub-regional, national environmental priorities	Level of Alignment
	Policy (CCP), National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process, and Regional Action Plans (RAPs) and Local Action Plans (LAPs).	

4.1.4 Complementarity with Existing Interventions/ Coherence

70. The established university networks and adaptive management capabilities of START International served as significant factors contributing to operational efficiency. Complementarity was demonstrated through START International's leveraging of previous university strengthening programmes, and the UNIDO co-financing arrangement for the Mozambique think tank, which illustrates coherence between UN agencies.

Table 13: Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence

Other initiatives by UNEP or other organisations	**Complementarity** *(including collaboration, coordination and overlap or duplication)*	Level of Alignment
UNEP – Global Adaptation Network (GAN)	The UNEP GAN co-financed the UNILEAD project.	Full
UNEP – Global EbA Fund	The project connected the implementing countries to the Global EbA Fund - a funding mechanism supporting innovative approaches to Ecosystem-based Adaptation (Eb for climate change.	Partial
UNIDO	UNILEAD received USD 60,000 co-financing from the UNIDO project: "Strengthening engagement and action by the Least Developed Countries Group on climate change."	Full

Findings Statements on Strategic Relevance and Complementarity

71. UNILEAD addresses a well-documented and persistent systemic gap in LDCs' capacity to access climate finance. By embedding capacity within existing universities rather than relying on external consultants or short-term training, the project pursued a structurally innovative approach aligned with the long-term capacity development priorities of both UNEP and the GEF. This institutional anchoring — the think tank model — is coherent with the sustainability requirements of adaptation finance readiness and differentiates the project from preceding, more transactional capacity-building efforts. UNILEAD did not operate in isolation: it was deliberately positioned to complement and reinforce other LDC-focused climate change initiatives active during the same period, maximizing synergies between UN Organizations while avoiding duplication.

72. The most concrete example of complementarity between UNILEAD and a related intervention was the engagement of UNIDO through the project "Strengthening engagement and action by the Least Developed Countries Group on climate change." UNIDO contributed a total of USD 60,000 to this aligned effort: USD 40,000 supported the establishment of the climate finance think tank at Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (Mozambique)—covering approximately 80% of the think tank coordinator's personnel costs—while the remaining USD 20,000 funded the development of complementary training modules on the gender and youth dimensions of climate finance. Importantly, the UNIDO modules were designed to complement—but were not formally part of—UNILEAD's five short-course curricula, thereby expanding the overall capacity-building offer available to the LUCCC network without duplicating existing UNILEAD deliverables. This collaboration enabled the establishment of the fourth think tank (Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique), which would otherwise not have been possible within the UNILEAD budget, and it strengthened the GESI dimensions of the project's capacity-building reach. The coherence between UNILEAD and this UNIDO-funded initiative illustrates a best practice in UN inter-agency coordination: complementary investments were sequenced and ring-fenced to avoid overlap while extending overall impact across the LDC university network

Rating for Strategic Relevance: Highly Satisfactory (HS)
Rating for Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW, and Strategic Priorities: Highly Satisfactory (HS)
Rating for Alignment to GEF/Donor Strategic Priorities: Highly Satisfactory (HS)
Rating for Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities: Highly Satisfactory (HS)
Rating for Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence: Highly Satisfactory (HS)

4.2 Quality of Project Design

73. At the inception phase, the overall quality of the project design was rated as Satisfactory (4.64 on a 6-point scale). Key strengths identified include: a sound intervention logic with a formalized Theory of Change that incorporates assumptions and drivers; a well-developed results framework with clearly defined roles for the implementation team; outputs and outcomes consistently aligned with the project's key development objective; and a solid baseline analysis. The project design effectively builds on proven pedagogical and capacity-building methods, and the three-component structure coherently links institutional capacity building, demand-led technical services, and long-term scaling. Gender equality and the role of women received attention in the project document, with a dedicated Gender Action Plan.

74. The main weaknesses of the project design include: an overly ambitious scope and timeline for a Medium-Sized Project with a two-year original duration, which required an 18-month extension; insufficient risk analysis, particularly regarding political instability, government changes, and the political will of LDC governments to utilise think tank services; and the absence of an explicit impact statement and intermediate states in the original Theory of Change. The project design also failed to adequately account for the potential underperformance of the Capacity Development Hub at ICCCAD. Vulnerable populations and human rights dimensions beyond gender were not substantively addressed in the original design. Notwithstanding these weaknesses, the project's commitment to developing a sustainability strategy under Component 3 partially addressed the long-term viability concern. A summary of the project design assessment is presented in table 14. The full quality of project design assessment is detailed in the Inception Report (available from the UNEP Evaluation Office).

Table 14: Summary of quality of project design assessment ratings

	SECTION	RATING (1-6)	Summary Assessment
A	Project Preparation	5	The climate change problem is outlined alongside institutional and socio-economic weaknesses. Stakeholders from 14 of 15 LUCCC universities were consulted to identify priorities and needs, but women and minority groups were not engaged. The Prodoc includes a stakeholder contribution table.
B	Risk identification and Safeguards	4	Risk levels are often underestimated in the risk identification table. The Prodoc only briefly mentions project activities affected by climate change (e.g., flooding, storms) with mitigation strategies. There was no plan for a negative environmental footprint, as most activities were planned online.
C	Governance and Supervision Arrangements	6	The project's institutional framework details roles of the implementing agency, executing agency, PMU, PM, LUCCC coordinators, LDC Group, mentoring institutions, etc. UNEP is the implementing agency, overseeing and monitoring the project.
D	Partnerships	6	START International has been the executing agency since project design and has extensive experience with global GEF projects. All partner roles, except mentoring institutions and capacity building hub, are outlined in the Prodoc with clear definitions.
E	Strategic Relevance	4	The project info table details alignment with MTS and PoW, but the Prodoc only mentions this in programming directions CCA-3: Outcome 3.2 and 3.3. It outlines key strategies and priorities in supported LUCCC universities, including NAPs, NDCs, and policies. Several complementary projects are also listed.
F	Logical Framework and Causality	4	The project logic is explained in the project description, with links between Components under each. However, the Prodoc needs a clearer, more consolidated causal pathway illustrating how Outputs overcome barriers, achieve Outcomes, and how these Outcomes align to reach the main goal. There is no explicit causal pathway; risks and assumptions are given, but drivers aren't detailed. Inputs, barriers, and a problem tree are included. Stakeholders, including women, are noted, but their role in the causal pathway is weak. The proposed timeframe was realistic, but a risk of delays from online meetings is noted.
G	Financial Planning	4	Adequate budget is presented in the Prodoc, but there is no detailed resource mobilization strategy with the project budget.

	SECTION	RATING (1-6)	Summary Assessment
H	Efficiency	6	The design aligns with funding and duration, though two years is short given university administrative delays. It complements other initiatives, using LUCCC universities and START International to cut costs. The ProDoc emphasizes efficiency and cost-effectiveness. An 18-month extension was granted due to slow university responsiveness and an alternative for the CBH.
I	Monitoring	6	The risks and assumptions are identified for each outcome. Some indicators and targets were revised to be more realistic after baseline analysis. Baselines are included in the framework, and a baseline analysis was done at project start.
J	Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects	4	A related section is missing in the ProDoc; only project sustainability is detailed. The sustainability strategy was part of Component 3: Scaling Up, which was specially designed.
K	Learning, Communication and Outreach	5	Yes, the project had a knowledge management and communication strategy at its start, as capacity building and knowledge management are core goals. While no clear communication strategy existed, the Prodoc identified several tools. The results framework includes dissemination and lessons sharing info during implementation, but less so at project end.
	Total (Weighted) Score:	***4.64***	***(Full analysis in the Inception Report, available from the Evaluation Office of UNEP)***

Rating for Project Design: Satisfactory (S)

4.3 Nature of the External Context

75. UNILEAD was implemented across thirteen Least Developed Countries (LDCs) during a period marked by multiple external challenges. The project was launched in December 2021 during the tail end of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had disrupted higher education systems, government operations, and international travel across most target countries. Pandemic-related restrictions affected the project's ability to hold in-person meetings early in implementation, prompting the shift of initial activities to online formats. This had downstream effects on the timeline and quality of some capacity-building activities, as virtual engagement proved less effective at building relationships between universities and governments than originally envisaged. The late effects of COVID-19 on outcomes and sustainability — particularly the shift from in-person to virtual meetings and its impact on costs and quality — required careful management throughout implementation.

76. Beyond the pandemic, the project operated in contexts marked by political instability, government transitions (in Senegal, Nepal, and Mozambique), and limited institutional continuity across several LDC countries. These factors directly affected the ability of think tanks to build sustained relationships with government counterparts and reduced the political will of some governments to engage with think tank services — a risk that had not been fully integrated into the project's original risk framework. In some countries, changes in government administration disrupted previously established working relationships between universities and national focal points. The operating environment also presented systemic challenges: LDCs have limited public funds for climate adaptation planning, making universities dependent on donor-funded projects to commission technical services — a structural constraint that the project's sustainability strategy needed to address, yet one that ultimately remained a key risk to post-project viability embodied in the project's financial sustainability. All the factors mentioned above resulted in a moderately unfavourable rating of the nature of the external context.

Rating for Nature of the External Context: Moderately Unfavourable (MU)

4.4 Effectiveness

4.4.1 Availability of Outputs

Result statement	**Output 1.1.1** LUCCC universities formulate engagement plans with host LDC governments to provide specific technical services to government agencies
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s)	**Target:** At least 2 LUCCC universities per region with completed roadmaps; 7 government-engagement plans developed. **Actual:** 7 engagement plans (country profiles) developed for Ethiopia, Bhutan, Rwanda, Senegal, Mozambique, Uganda, and Nepal. An additional 4 LUCCC countries validated their roadmaps with governments without producing formal country profiles. By end of 2023, roadmaps were developed in 11 of 13 countries.
Narrative Assessment	The output was expanded beyond its original scope: 11 of 13 LUCCC universities developed engagement roadmaps with their governments through in-person regional meetings held in Dakar (West Africa), Kampala (East/Southern Africa), and Kathmandu (South Asia) in 2023. Seven formal country profiles were produced. The four think-tank universities plus Rwanda implemented activities directly based on their roadmaps.
Sources of Information/Evidence	-Project reports/PIRs FY2023–2025 -Interviews with project team -Field visits in Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania /observations -Interviews/FGDs with beneficiaries - M&E Dashboard
Level of delivery	Fully delivered

Result statement	**Output 1.1.2** LUCCC capacity development hub established with at least 8 web-based capacity building modules (2 focusing on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion / Climate Change (GESI/CC) themes) responding to LUCCC university priority capacity gaps.
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s)	**Target:** 1 capacity development hub launched; at least 3 capacity needs surveys; training resource packet covering GESI, climate rationale, climate finance proposal development. **Actual:** CDH established at ICCCAD but terminated in 2024 due to underperformance. 3 capacity needs surveys conducted. 5 virtual training sessions held for LUCCC PoCs on all 5 short courses. Web platform (https://unilead.weadapt.org/) developed by START International as replacement.
Narrative Assessment	The Capacity Development Hub at ICCCAD significantly underperformed throughout implementation and was formally terminated in 2024. START International took over responsibility for the web platform and knowledge repository — the hub's main deliverable — and launched https://unilead.weadapt.org/ . All capacity needs assessments were completed, and 5 virtual training-of-trainers sessions were held in 2024.
Sources of Information/Evidence	-Project reports/PIRs FY2023–2025 -Final Report -M&E Dashboard -Interviews with project team -Field visits in Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania /observations -Interviews/FGDs with beneficiaries
Level of delivery	Partially delivered

Result statement	**Output 1.1.3:** At least 5 short course programs inclusive of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion / Climate Change (GESI/CC) themes developed for use by LUCCC institutions for technical service delivery to host governments on a fee-basis; at least five training of trainers conducted.
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s)	**Target:** At least 5 short courses inclusive of GESI/CC developed; at least 5 TOT sessions conducted; at least 1 meeting between PoCs and NFPs for at least 6 universities. **Actual:** 5 short courses completed and made available in English, French, and Portuguese: (1) Fundamentals of Climate Finance; (2) Public and Private Sector Financing; (3) Mainstreaming GESI in Climate Finance; (4) Fundamentals of Developing a Climate Rationale; (5) Developing Concept Notes and Proposals. 5 TOT sessions held. Short course training of government officials carried out by 5 PoCs (Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, The Gambia, Bhutan).
Narrative Assessment	Five short courses with workbooks, PowerPoint presentations, instructor's guides, and recorded videos were completed in 2024 in three languages. Five Training of Trainers (TOTs) sessions trained LUCCC PoCs to deliver the courses independently. Five non-think-tank LUCCC universities delivered short course training to government officials. Think tanks in Senegal and Nepal incorporated short course material into their activities; Uganda is integrating materials into a new MSc in Climate Finance; Mozambique has included fee-based training in its business plan.
Sources of Information/Evidence	-Project reports/PIRs FY2023–2025 -Final Report -M&E Dashboard -Interviews with project team -Field visits in Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania /observations -Interviews/FGDs with beneficiaries
Level of delivery	Fully delivered

Result statement	**Output 1.1.4:** Knowledge and information resource management system set up at the capacity development hub with procedures for updating and disseminating resources repository contents.
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s)	**Target:** 1 knowledge and information resource management system set up at the capacity development hub. **Actual:** A UNILEAD project website developed on the WeAdapt platform (https://unilead.weadapt.org/) that includes an information repository on climate finance in LDCs, short course resources, and links to the think tanks. Note: the CDH at ICCCAD was originally responsible for this system; following contract rescission, START International assumed responsibility and delivered the platform via WeAdapt.
Narrative Assessment	Fully delivered (via alternative mechanism). The CDH at ICCCAD failed to establish the knowledge management system as originally planned. Following the rescission of the ICCCAD contract in 2024, START International took over and successfully launched the UNILEAD WeAdapt platform as a functional replacement, hosting all short course materials, country profiles, and knowledge products in English, French, and Portuguese. The platform is publicly accessible and actively maintained.
Sources of Information/Evidence	-Project reports/PIRs FY2023–2025 -Final Report -M&E Dashboard -Field visits in Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania /observations -Interviews/FGDs with beneficiaries
Level of delivery	Fully delivered

Result statement	**Output 1.2.1:** At least 3 thinktank institutions formalized through MoU or similar mechanism at 3 LUCCC universities.
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s)	**Target:** At least 3 think tank institutions established through MoU or similar mechanism. **Actual:** 4 think tanks established: Uganda/Makerere (MUCCRI-CFH), Senegal/UCAD (INTERFACE), Nepal/Pokhara (NCI), Mozambique/UEM (ADAPTACOMoz). 3 established with direct UNILEAD funding; 1 (Mozambique) with co-financing from UNIDO. 3 of 4 have formalised agreements with host universities; Senegal's agreement was still pending at project close.
Narrative Assessment	Four think tanks established against a target of three, with the fourth enabled by UNIDO co-financing (USD 40,000). Three of four have formalised institutional agreements with their host universities. The Senegal/UCAD agreement remained under negotiation at project close due to internal university governance processes. All four think tanks are operational and have demonstrated government engagement.
Sources of Information/Evidence	-Project reports/PIRs FY2023–2025 -Final Report -M&E Dashboard -Field visits in Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania /observations -Interviews/FGDs with beneficiaries
Level of delivery	Fully delivered (exceeded target)

Result statement	**Output 1.2.2:** Thinktanks formally operational through development of organizational charters, staffing plans and steering committees (no less than 3). At least 1 multidisciplinary technical working cluster established per thinktank (no less than 3 thinktanks).
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s)	**Target:** At least 3 organizational charters, staffing plans, or steering committees developed/established. At least 1 multidisciplinary technical working cluster per think tank. **Actual:** All four think tanks have finalized organizational charters, staffing plans, and steering committees. All four have established multidisciplinary technical working clusters. All four have also completed business and sustainability plans (Output 1.2.4 elements integrated into 1.2.2 delivery).
Narrative Assessment	All four think tanks are formally operational with full governance frameworks in place: organizational charters, staffing plans, and steering committees. Multidisciplinary technical working clusters have been established at each site, comprising senior-level faculty from multiple disciplines, government sector officials, and in some cases private sector representatives. The functionality and breadth of these clusters vary by institution: Uganda (MUCCRI-CFH) and Nepal (NCI) demonstrated the most active and diverse clustering; Mozambique (ADAPTACOMoz) and Senegal (INTERFACE) developed functional clusters but with more limited external participation.
Sources of Information/Evidence	-Project reports/PIRs FY2023–2025 -Final Report -M&E Dashboard -Field visits in Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania /observations -Interviews/FGDs with beneficiaries
Level of delivery	Fully delivered (exceeded target)

Result statement	**Output 1.2.3:** Technical working clusters and support system established to provide technical goods and services.
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s)	**Target:** A list of fee-based services and other activities established for think tanks; a support system enabling technical goods and services delivery. **Actual:** Business plans developed by each of the four think tanks include an analysis of diverse opportunities for future funding, specifying prospective clients for fee-based services, potential partners, and potential sources of grant-based funding. Fee-based service models have been discussed but not yet operationalized.
Narrative Assessment	The technical working clusters established under Output 1.2.2 provide the human infrastructure for technical goods and service delivery. Each think tank's business plan articulates a service portfolio including fee-based advisory services, training delivery, proposal development support, and research. However, the fee-for-services

	support system has not yet been operationalized in practice: no think tank had generated income from fee-based services at project close. This represents a gap between structural delivery and operational readiness, which is the principal risk to financial sustainability.
Sources of Information/Evidence	-Project reports/PIRs FY2023–2025 -Final Report -M&E Dashboard -Field visits in Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania /observations -Interviews/FGDs with beneficiaries -KIIs with think tank coordinators.
Level of delivery	Partially delivered

Result statement	**Output 1.2.4:** Business and sustainability plans formulated for each thinktank (at least 3).
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s)	**Target:** At least 3 business and sustainability plans formulated (one per think tank). **Actual:** All four business and sustainability plans completed in early 2025. The Mozambique business plan was translated into Portuguese. Each plan articulates diverse revenue streams including fee-based services, grants, and international partnerships.
Narrative Assessment	Four business and sustainability plans completed (target: 3), one per think tank. Plans were developed through a participatory process involving PMU guidance and think tank team input, and each articulates a multi-year financial strategy covering fee-based advisory services, grant applications, partnerships with development organisations, and integration with university fee structures. The Mozambique plan was translated into Portuguese to support broader dissemination. Implementation of the plans has not yet begun, which remains the key post-project risk.
Sources of Information/Evidence	-Project reports/PIRs FY2023–2025 -Final Report -M&E Dashboard -Field visits in Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania /observations -Interviews/FGDs with beneficiaries
Level of delivery	Fully delivered (exceeded target)

Result statement	**Output 2.1.1:** Small grants program set up with proposal guidelines, procedures, and evaluation criteria to support demand-led policy research and technical services.
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s)	**Target:** 1 small grants programme developed with proposal guidelines, procedures, and evaluation criteria. **Actual:** A two-phase small grants programme implemented across all four think tanks. Phase 1 funded three of four think tanks; Phase 2 funded all four. Administration successfully completed at all four sites.
Narrative Assessment	The small grants programme was structured into two competitive phases, each requiring think tanks to submit proposals against defined technical and governance criteria. Phase 1 (2023) funded Uganda, Senegal, and Nepal; Phase 2 (2024) funded all four including Mozambique. The programme provided the demand-responsive mechanism through which think tanks engaged governments on identified technical priorities, generating the 13 outputs under Output 2.1.2. The two-phase structure proved effective in building think tank proposal development capacity alongside substantive delivery.
Sources of Information/Evidence	-Project reports/PIRs FY2023–2025 -Final Report -M&E Dashboard -Field visits in Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania /observations -Interviews/FGDs with beneficiaries
Level of delivery	Fully delivered

Result statement	**Output 2.1.2:** At least 12 demand-led and policy relevant technical outputs prepared across university thinktanks in a minimum of 3 countries.
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s)	**Target**: At least 12 demand-led and policy relevant technical outputs prepared across university think tanks in a minimum of 3 countries. **Actual**: 13 demand-led technical outputs completed across 4 countries by March 2025, exceeding the target of 12: Nepal (3): two resource books (Strengthening the Climate Rationale; Integrating GESI in Climate Finance) and training services for provincial and district governments; Uganda (3): national climate finance tracking tool, science-policy platform on climate finance, documentary film on climate finance in Uganda; Senegal (4): sectoral assessment process through interdisciplinary university-government teams, project fiches for four NAP sectors, training materials; Mozambique (3): capacity needs assessment, provincial adaptation plan analysis, piloting local and provincial adaptation planning tools.
Narrative Assessment	13 technical outputs were delivered against a target of 12, across all 4 think-tank countries. All outputs were demand-led: each was developed in direct response to government-identified priorities through the Phase 1 and Phase 2 small grants programme. The outputs span diverse forms — tracking tools, resource books, assessment reports, planning frameworks, documentary films — reflecting the different institutional contexts and government needs of each country. A total of 285 non-academic stakeholders were reached through think tank services (target: 105), and exceeded by 171%.
Sources of Information/Evidence	-Project reports/PIRs FY2023–2025 -Final Report -M&E Dashboard -Field visits in Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania /observations -Interviews/FGDs with beneficiaries
Level of delivery	Fully delivered (exceeded target)

Result statement	**Output 3.1.1:** Two meetings (1 per year of project implementation) conducted to: a) share knowledge and learning about the thinktank experience; b) strengthen the overall LUCCC thinktank network; and c) increase regional and global awareness of the thinktanks and their capabilities.
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s)	**Target**: 2 LUCCC-wide network meetings (1 per year of implementation). **Actual**: 5 network meetings held, exceeding the target of 2: 3 in-person regional meetings (West Africa/Dakar; East-Southern Africa/Kampala; South Asia/Kathmandu, 2023); 1 LUCCC-wide in-person training workshop (Kampala, October 2023); 1 LUCCC-wide project culmination conference (February 2025). The second of the two originally scheduled LUCCC-wide meetings took place in February 2025
Narrative Assessment	Five network meetings were held against a target of two, demonstrating the project's commitment to in-person knowledge sharing and network cohesion. The three regional meetings in 2023 enabled PoCs to develop and validate their government engagement roadmaps in a peer-learning environment. The Kampala training workshop deepened PoC capacity to deliver short courses and manage think tank operations. The February 2025 final conference brought together all 13 LUCCC PoCs for conclusive knowledge sharing, validation of the upscaling strategy, and planning for post-project sustainability.
Sources of Information/Evidence	-Project reports/PIRs FY2023–2025 -Final Report -M&E Dashboard -Field visits in Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania /observations -Interviews/FGDs with beneficiaries
Level of delivery	Fully delivered (exceeded target)

Result statement	**Output 3.1.2:** LUCCC thinktank network upscaling and sustainability strategy developed
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s)	**Target:** 1 upscaling and sustainability strategy for the LUCCC network and think tanks. **Actual:** Upscaling and sustainability strategy developed and co-developed with all 13 LUCCC PoCs. Strategy available at https://unilead.weadapt.org/about-uni/.
Narrative Assessment	The upscaling and sustainability strategy was co-developed through a participatory process involving all 13 LUCCC PoCs, facilitated by the PMU. The strategy articulates pathways for expanding the think tank model to additional LUCCC and non-LUCCC universities, identifies potential co-financing mechanisms, and outlines governance arrangements for the post-project LUCCC network. A target of 2 additional institutions with confirmed interest and funded workplans was not achieved: while Rwanda (University of Rwanda) and Ethiopia (Addis Ababa University) expressed interest, neither had a confirmed funded workplan at project close, leading to an MU rating for Outcome 3.1.
Sources of Information/Evidence	-Project reports/PIRs FY2023–2025 -Final Report -M&E Dashboard -Field visits in Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania /observations -Interviews/FGDs with beneficiaries
Level of delivery	Fully delivered

Result statement	**Output 3.1.3:** At least 2 knowledge products developed to synthesize and disseminate lessons learned and best practices from thinktank network
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s)	**Target**: At least 2 knowledge products synthesising lessons learned and best practices. **Actual**: Two synthesis knowledge products developed: (1) one on institutional arrangements and impact; (2) one on capacity development and impact. Both available on the WeAdapt platform.
Narrative Assessment	Two synthesis knowledge products were completed and published on the WeAdapt platform, consolidating lessons from across the four think tanks and 13 LUCCC universities. The products address the two dimensions of UNILEAD's institutional model — governance and institutional arrangements on one hand, and capacity development processes and results on the other — providing a replicable documentation of the think tank approach for future uptake by development partners, UNEP, and prospective new LUCCC members.
Sources of Information/Evidence	-Project reports/PIRs FY2023–2025 -Final Report -M&E Dashboard -Field visits in Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania /observations -Interviews/FGDs with beneficiaries
Level of delivery	Fully delivered

77. The UNILEAD project delivered its planned outputs with strong overall performance across timeliness, quality, and utility for beneficiaries. The 13 outputs were delivered substantially as intended and on schedule, with several quantitative targets significantly exceeded: training reached 423 people against a target of 260 (a 63 percent overrun, with 39 percent women); think-tank services reached 285 people outside academia versus a target of 105; and the small grants programme generated 13 demand-led technical outputs against a target of 12. The quality of delivery was high and demonstrably fit for purpose—four think tanks were fully operationalized with formal charters, staffing plans, steering committees, technical working clusters, and credible business/sustainability plans, while knowledge products such as Uganda's climate finance tracking tool, Nepal's resource books on climate rationale and GESI, and Mozambique's provincial and local adaptation planning guidelines responded directly to government-identified needs. Utility for beneficiaries was evident in how outputs translated into real-world policy application beyond the immediate participants: freely accessible UNILEAD course content was repurposed by Malawi and Liberia to develop national climate financing manuals, and the Malawi–Mozambique Early Warning System collaboration emerged organically as an unplanned cross-border benefit. Delivery was not uniformly strong everywhere—GESI integration varied across sites, short-course training of officials was achieved in only 5 of 13 countries, and the Component 3 scale-up target

of two new funded institutions was only partially met within a tight timeline—but on balance, the outputs were delivered on time, to a high standard, and with clear, often catalytic, value for the universities, think tanks, and governments they were intended to serve.

4.4.2 Achievement of Project Outcomes

78. The project's four outcomes represent the higher-order results expected from the delivery of the 13 outputs. The assessment of outcome achievement was guided by the reconstructed Theory of Change and its three causal pathways. Outcomes 1.1 and 1.2 pertain to the institutional and human capacity of LUCCC universities; Outcome 2.1 concerns the provision of demand-led technical services by think tanks; and Outcome 3.1 relates to the embedding of the think tank model within the LUCCC structure for long-term sustainability. The following tables present the evaluation's assessment of each outcome against its indicators, targets, and sources of evidence, based on data collected through document review, interviews, evaluation field missions, and FGDs.

Result statement:	**Outcome 1.1:** LUCCC universities effectively facilitate access to climate finance in their respective countries
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):	**Target**: 3 universities with level 3 ability to access climate finance. **Actual**: 4 think-tanks achieved level 3 (Senegal/UCAD – the Think Tank was named INiTiative Réflexion et Action pour le Climat Et le Financement climatique (INTERFACE), Uganda/Makerere – the Think Tank was named Climate Finance Hub (CFH), Mozambique/UEM – the Think Tank was named ADAPTACOMoz - Mozambique Community based Adaptation Platform, Nepal/Pokhara – the Think Tank was named Nepal Climate Initiative (NCI)); 6 non-think-tank universities achieved level 2 (Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, The Gambia, Bangladesh, Bhutan); 3 think tanks achieved level 1 (Liberia, Burkina Faso, Malawi). 11 of 13 LUCCC PoCs held follow-up engagement meetings with key government ministries. PoCs from all 13 countries attended the project culmination workshop. (Determined through Scorecard 1; PIR FY2025.)
Narrative Assessment:	Against a target of 3 universities at level 3, 4 universities (the four think-tank sites) achieved level 3 through sustained, government-endorsed institutional structures. Six additional universities reached level 2 by delivering short course training and validating roadmaps with their governments. The project's causal logic — that capacity-building outputs would enable sustained university-government engagement — was confirmed. The think-tank model provided the critical mechanism for bridging universities and governments at the deepest level of engagement. However, 3 universities (Liberia, Burkina Faso, Malawi) remained at level 1, suggesting that structural factors (limited PoC capacity, government instability) constrained the project's reach. As shown in **Figure 5** below, the Nepal Climate Initiative (NCI) Think Tank at the Pokhara University in Nepal was composed of eleven members: Think Tank Coordinator and member, Government sector officials, University member professors from Kathmandu University and other Universities. Capacity development materials have practical policy applications, as the UNILEAD course content was used by Malawi and Liberia to create a national climate financing manual. Well-designed, freely accessible knowledge products have generated meaningful policy outcomes far beyond initial training participants — applicable to any LDC capacity-building program where curricula are openly available. In Liberia (as seen in **Figure 6**), the Institute of Climate Change and Health Research (ICCHR) is a dedicated non-profit organization, a private institute accredited by the Ministry of Education focused on tackling the urgent challenges posed by climate change in relation to public health in Liberia, which has used the training materials from the UNILEAD project.
Sources of Information /Evidence:	-PIR FY2023-2025 - M&E Dashboard - Final report -Field visits/observations (Uganda, Mozambique and Tanzania as a non-think-tank country) -Interviews/FGDs with beneficiaries
Level of Achievement:	Fully achieved (exceeded target)

Figure 5: Members of the NCI Think Tank at the Pokhara University in Nepal[13]

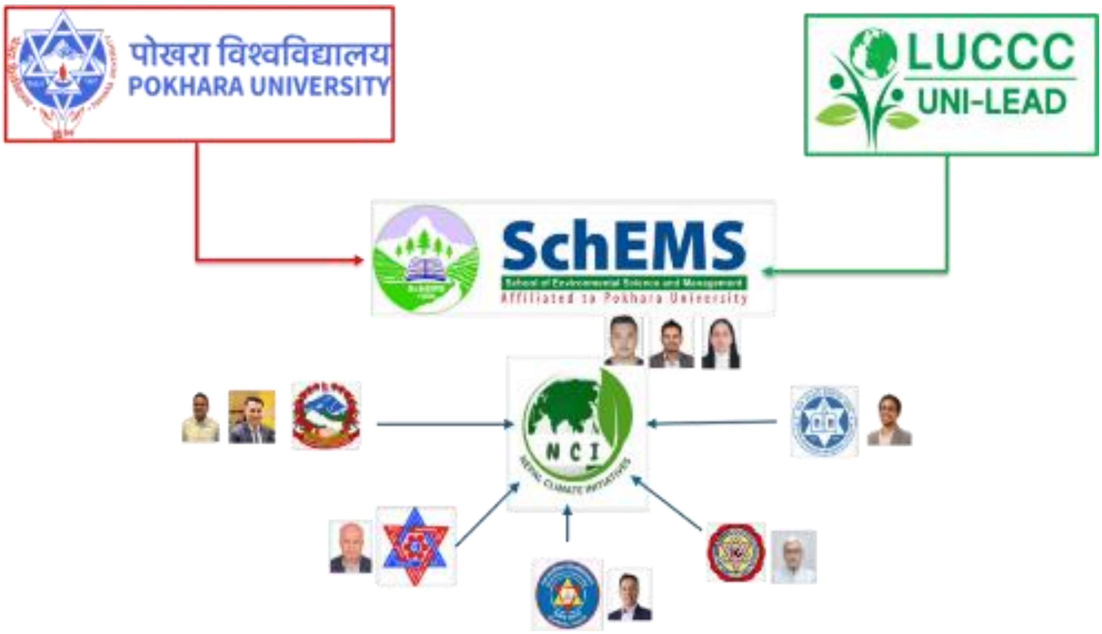


Figure 6: Facebook page of the NGO – private education institute in Liberia ICCHR[14]

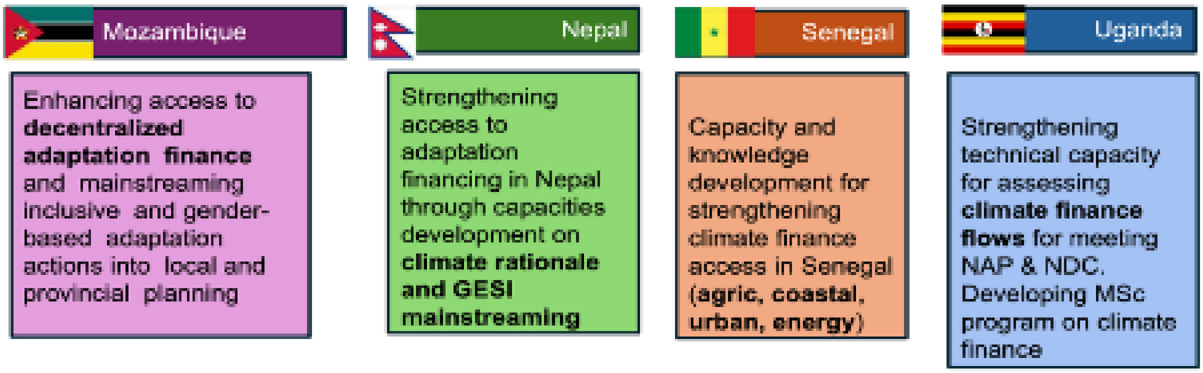
Result statement:	**Outcome 1.2:** Select LDC universities have developed institutional capacity to support adaptation policy and project formulation
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):	**Target**: 260 people trained – 120 women, 140 men. **Actual**: A total of 423 people trained across all project years (257 men, 166 women), exceeding the target by 63%. From think-tank activities alone in the final year: 224 people participated in dialogue, training, and working groups (163 men, 122 women from gender-disaggregated data — Senegal not disaggregated). An additional 66 participants from non-think-tank countries and 88 PoC trainees in short courses. All 4 think-tanks established with formalized charters, staffing plans, and steering committees. 4 multidisciplinary technical working clusters established at each think tank. 4 business/sustainability plans completed.

[13] *Presentation of Pokhara's University in Nepal's Think Tank – Nepal Climate Initiative in Kigali, slide 3*
[14] https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61584403721451

Sources of Information /Evidence:	- PIR FY2023-2025 - M&E Dashboard - Final report - M&E Dashboard - Field visits/observations
Narrative Assessment:	Training targets were exceeded by 63%, with strong gender inclusion (39% women overall). The four think tanks were formally operationalised with organisational charters, staffing plans, steering committees, multidisciplinary technical working clusters, and business plans — all targets met. Business plans articulate diverse future revenue streams, including fee-based services, grants, and international partnerships, indicating credible sustainability planning. Gender and social inclusion were integrated unevenly: Nepal and Mozambique demonstrated the strongest GESI performance, while other think-tank sites and the broader LUCCC network showed weaker integration. Short course training of government officials was achieved in 5 of 13 countries, slightly below the network-wide aspiration but reflecting real-world constraints. Regional LDC cooperation yielded unexpected adaptation benefits: the Malawi–Mozambique Early Warning System collaboration emerged organically from LUCCC network meetings — an unplanned but real cross-border outcome.
Level of Achievement:	Fully achieved (exceeded target)

Result statement:	**Outcome 2.1:** Think tanks at select LDC universities provide technical services that meet government demands
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):	**Target**: 105 people made aware of think tank services and their ability to assist with appropriate adaptation responses. **Actual**: 285 people (outside academia) were reached to learn about the think tank services.
Sources of Information /Evidence:	- PIR FY2025 - Final report - M&E Dashboard - Field visits/observations
Narrative Assessment:	The four established think tanks (Senegal/UCAD-INTERFACE; Uganda/Makerere-CFH; Nepal/Pokhara-NCI; Mozambique/UEM-ADAPTACOMoz) each completed a two-phase small grants programme, resulting in 13 demand-led technical outputs (against a target of 12). The priorities of the GEF Small Grants Programme per country are presented in **Figure 7.** By the end of the project, MoU discussions among think tanks, host universities, and governments were at an advanced stage in all four countries. A total of 285 people (outside academia) were reached by think tank services — far exceeding the target of 105. These products directly responded to government-identified needs in the four Think Tank countries.
Level of Achievement:	Fully achieved (exceeded target)

Figure 7: Priorities of the GEF Small Grants Programme per country[15]



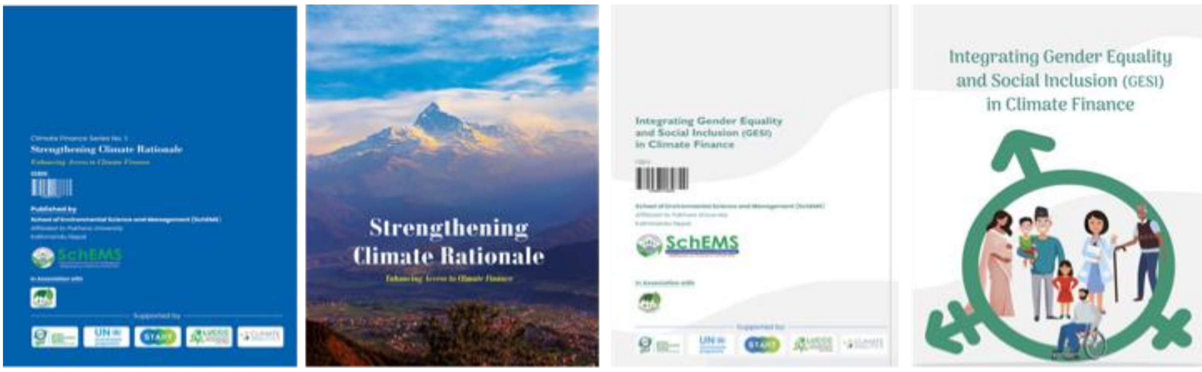
79. Senegal formed multi-stakeholder task forces for four NAP sectors through holding multiple stakeholders' workshops with all concerned Ministries, as seen in **Figure 8**below.

Figure 8: Senegal's numerous ministerial consultation workshops and trainings on climate finance[16]

80. As seen in **Figure 9,** Nepal produced two resource books on climate rationale and GESI for government and civil society use: "Strengthening the Climate Rationale" and "Integrating Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in Climate Finance". .

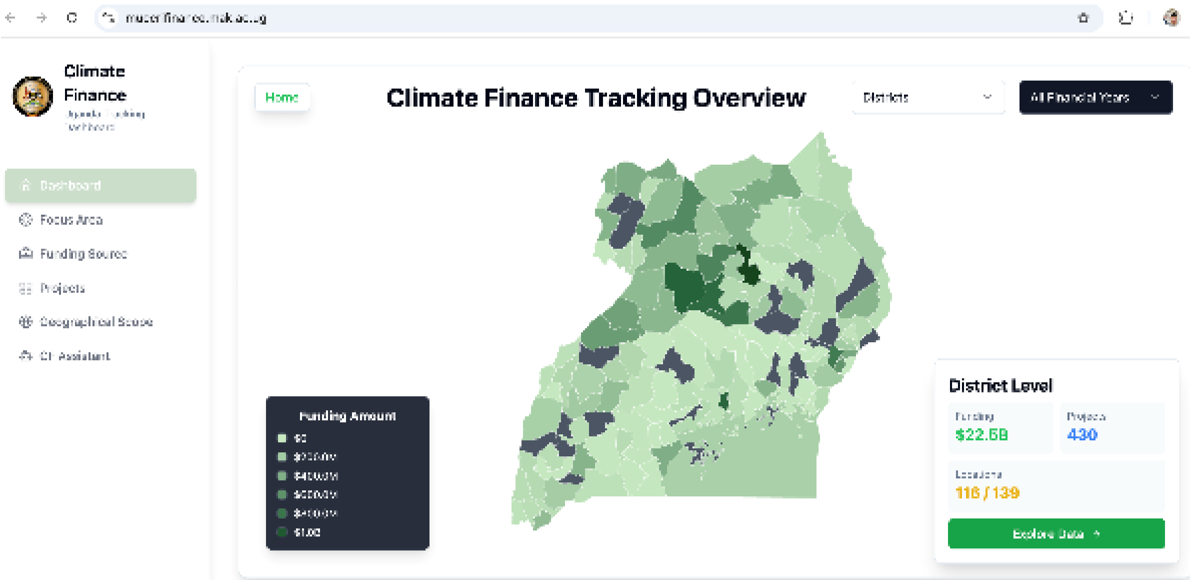
[15] *UNILEAD Presentation Overview, slide 5*
[16] *Presentation of UCAD's University in Senegal's Think Tank – INTERFACE in Kigali, slides 7 and 13*

Figure 9: Nepal's resource books produced[17]



81. Uganda developed a national climate finance tracking tool, awareness materials, and is working on the MSc in Climate Finance at Makerere University's School of Forestry, Environmental and Geographical Science. **Figure 10** illustrates the best practice developed by the Think Tank Climate Finance Hub (CHB) at Uganda's Makerere University Center for Climate Change Research and Innovations (MUCCRI), which is a Climate Finance Tool available at https://muccrifinance.mak.ac.ug/. The tool was created in close collaboration with the Ugandan Ministry of Finance and its Climate Finance Unit. It was shared with other countries through online interviews and field missions as a model for assessing a country's current climate financing status.

Figure 10 Climate Finance Tracking Tool[18]



82. Mozambique supported subnational adaptation planning at the provincial and district levels. As presented in Figure 11, the ADAPTACOMoz produced a practical and comprehensive guideline for Local & Provincial Adaptation Plans (PAPs) development in Mozambique; reviewed one Local Adaptation Plan (LAPs); designed and drafted one Provincial Adaptation Plan (PAPs); and prepared a Policy brief on lessons learned from the experiences of developing PAPs.

[17] *Presentation of Pokhara's University in Nepal's Think Tank – Nepal Climate Initiative in Kigali, slide 6*
[18] *Climate Finance Tracking Tool developed by the Makerere University in Uganda, available at https://muccrifinance.mak.ac.ug/*

Figure 10: Mozambique's Local and Provincial Action Plans produced by ADAPTACOMoz[19]

Result statement	**Outcome 3.1:** Think tank model integrated into LUCCC expansion and scale-up plan
Performance against Indicator(s) and Target(s):	**Target**: 2 additional institutions with confirmed interest and funded workplan to pilot the model. **Actual**: 2 additional universities (University of Rwanda and Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia) only expressed interest in establishing think tanks. They neither had a confirmed interest or funded workplan at project close
Sources of Information /Evidence:	-PIR 2025 - Final report - M&E Dashboard -Interviews/FGDs with beneficiaries
Narrative Assessment:	Outcome 3.1 was partially achieved. An upscaling and sustainability strategy was developed; five network meetings were held (exceeding the target of 2); and two knowledge synthesis products were produced — one on institutional arrangements and impact, and one on capacity development and impact. However, the critical indicator — 2 additional institutions with confirmed interest and funded workplan to pilot the model — was not achieved. While two universities (University of Rwanda and Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia) expressed interest in establishing think tanks, neither had a confirmed interest or funded workplan at project close. This shortfall reflects the project's tight timeline for Component 3 activities and the systemic challenge of securing transition funding for model replication in LDC contexts. The project's sustainability and upscaling strategy provides a foundation for future mobilization, but additional financing would be required.
Level of Achievement:	Partially achieved

83. The UNILEAD project achieved strong delivery, fully meeting three of four outcomes and partially achieving the fourth. Outcome 1.1 saw LUCCC universities surpass expectations in facilitating climate finance access, with four universities reaching level 3 capacity through sustained, government-endorsed structures, and six reaching level 2. This confirmed that capacity-building fosters university–government engagement. Outcome 1.2 was fully achieved, with 423 trained (target 260), and all four think tanks established with charters, staffing, and plans. Outcome 2.1 saw think tanks provide demand-led technical services meeting government needs, reaching 285 people outside academia (target 105) and delivering 13 technical outputs aligned with priorities, with MoU discussions advanced in all countries. Outcome 3.1—embedding the think-tank model within LUCCC for scale-up—was only

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[19] *Presentation of UEM's University in Mozambique's Think Tank – ADAPTACOMoz in Kigali, slide 12*

partial; while strategies were developed, and meetings and products produced, the key goal of two additional institutions with confirmed interest and funding was not met, as Rwanda and Addis Ababa University had interest but no commitments. This was due to tight timelines and challenges securing transition financing in LDCs. Overall, the project delivered its core results with capacity, service, and institutional gains, but sustainability and scale-up depend on further resource mobilization.

4.4.3 Likelihood of Impact

84. The chance of the UNILEAD project achieving its goal of creating lasting improvements—strengthening and maintaining LDC capacities for effective climate change adaptation—is rated as Moderately Likely at this point. From a favourable perspective, UNILEAD was able to achieve successful creation of four operational think tanks within LUCCC universities; the completion of five short courses and their trainers; the delivery of over 20 demand-driven technical outputs; and the embedding of the think tank model into the LUCCC structure to support scaling up. However, the sustained impact largely depends on factors outside the project's immediate control, such as ongoing political support from host country governments to engage and fund the think tanks, and the universities' ability to sustain the think tank model beyond the project's end without continued GEF funding.

Table 15: Likelihood of impact

Factors influencing likelihood of impact	Assessment	Justification
Drivers to support transition from Outputs to the Project Outcomes	Partially in place	The key driver — sustained political will of LDC universities and commitment of LUCCC PoCs — was found to be partially in place. Strong institutional commitment was demonstrated at the four think-tank universities. However, participation was uneven across the 13 LUCCC members (3 remained at Level 1). The Government commitment was stronger in think-tank countries than in non-think-tank LUCCC countries.
Assumptions for the change process from Outputs to Project Outcomes	Partially hold	Key assumptions partially held: governments showed interest in and used think tank services (confirmed in all 4 think-tank countries). However, the assumption that host governments would have sufficient financial capacity to commission and pay for services on a fee-for-services basis did not fully hold. Fee-based models remain aspirational in LDC contexts, and grant-based revenue streams are more viable in the near-term.
Proportion of Project **Outcomes** fully or partially achieved	Most (3 of 4 fully; 1 partially)	3 of 4 outcomes were fully achieved (Outcomes 1.1, 1.2, 2.1 rated Highly Satisfactory). Outcome 3.1 was partially achieved — a sustainability strategy was developed, but the target of 2 additional institutions with funded workplans was not met as they only expressed interest with no confirmed funding (in Rwanda and Ethiopia).
Drivers to support transition from Project Outcomes to Intermediate States	Partially in place	Enabling conditions for Intermediate State 1 (mainstreaming CCA into national policies) are partially present — MoU discussions between think tanks, universities, and governments are at advanced stages in all 4 countries. For Intermediate State 2 (non-state engagement), think tanks in Uganda and Nepal showed strong engagement with civil society and private sector actors. Overall, the structural reform of national adaptation planning processes requires political commitment beyond the project's sphere of influence.
Assumptions for the change process from the Project Outcomes to Intermediate States	Partially hold	The assumption that governments would mainstream adaptation projects — supported by think tank technical services — into national and sectoral policies is partially confirmed. Think tank outputs in Senegal, Uganda, Mozambique, and Nepal were directly linked to NAP and NDC processes. The assumption that non-state actors (private sector, CSOs) would actively engage in CCA implementation is

Factors influencing likelihood of impact	Assessment	Justification
		partially holding — civil society engagement was found to be stronger than private sector engagement.
Proportion of **Intermediate States** achieved	Some (partially)	Intermediate State 1 (CCA mainstreaming into national/sectoral policies) is emerging in the 4 think-tank countries through active government engagement, MoU processes, and policy-relevant outputs. It is not yet confirmed as institutionally embedded. Intermediate State 2 (non-state engagement) is partially achieved — civil society engagement was stronger than in the private sector, especially in Uganda and Nepal.
Drivers to support transition from Intermediate States to Impact	Partially in place	Long-term funding for think tanks is the most critical enabler for sustained impact and remains partially in place — four think tanks have business plans articulating diverse revenue streams but are not yet financially self-sustaining. The LUCCC network structure and upscaling strategy provide an institutional framework for continued collaboration. The political will at the governmental level was evident during the implementation of the project in think-tank countries. However, its sustainability over the long term remains uncertain.
Assumptions for the change process from Intermediate States to Impact	Partially hold	The key assumption — that endogenous LDC capacity will be sustained through government payment for the technical services offered by the think tanks, complemented by diversified funding streams — is the principal influencing factor for long-term impact achievement. All four think tanks have demonstrated strong institutional grounding and government relationships, providing a solid foundation on which to build financial independence. Maturing the fee-for-services model remains a key opportunity. The university-embedded model and diversified funding strategies articulated in the business plans provide a credible pathway to sustained impact..

85. UNILEAD successfully demonstrated the viability of an endogenous, university-based model for climate change adaptation support in LDCs. The think tank approach—embedding technical services within existing academic institutions—represents a major innovation over previous externally-driven capacity-building efforts, fostering more sustainable institutional ownership and local expertise. The project’s participatory design, involving LUCCC PoCs from the start, ensured that the activities were highly relevant to national contexts. The project's causal logic was validated by findings supporting sustained government engagement (Outcome 1.1), institutional operationalization (Outcome 1.2), and demand-driven technical output delivery (Outcome 2.1) that together form a clear and evidence-based proof of the model. Outputs across the three components were delivered at a 97% GEF expenditure rate, with co-financing exceeding the planned target by 17%. The project's participatory design—featuring LUCCC Points of Contact (PoCs) involved from the start—ensured activities were highly relevant to national contexts and fostered genuine institutional ownership at the university level. The outstanding MoU signatures between the four LUCCC universities and their corresponding governments highlight the most significant gap remaining between demonstrated performance and formal institutional endorsement.

Findings Statements on Effectiveness:

86. UNILEAD successfully demonstrated the viability of an endogenous, university-based model for climate change adaptation finance support in LDCs—doing so at a scale and depth that surpassed its original targets in three of four outcomes. The main innovation—integrating technical advisory capacity within existing LUCCC universities as self-sustaining think tanks rather than depending on external consultants or short-term training—proved both effective and distinctive.

87. The project's effectiveness was consistently stronger at the level of institutional output delivery than at the level of systems-change outcomes, and this gap is most vividly illustrated by the contrast between Outcomes 2.1 (technical capacity development) and 3.1 (scaling up). This contrast highlights the core effectiveness boundary of UNILEAD: the project was very effective in building institutional capacity and producing useful technical work but less effective in turning that performance into

systemic adoption, co-financing, and replication that would indicate transformative change. The 18-month extension, although necessary, was not enough to close this gap, and the original two-year timeline was structurally insufficient for the scope of institutional development and model scaling planned.

88. The likelihood of UNILEAD's results translating into lasting impact is credible but fragile. The assessment reveals real vulnerabilities: fee-for-service revenue models have not yet materialized in LDC contexts; MoUs formalizing government-university-think tank relationships remain unsigned; transition funding to bridge the post-project period has not been secured; and nine of the thirteen LUCCC universities have limited institutional integration of results. The think tanks in Uganda, Nepal, Mozambique, and Senegal are each at a critical point where decisions made by host universities, governments, and development partners in the 12 to 24 months following project closure will determine whether UNILEAD's results endure as operational entities or fade into dormant structures. Sustained impact is possible but will require intentional follow-up investment.

Rating for Effectiveness: *Satisfactory (S)*
Rating for Availability of Outputs: *Highly Satisfactory (HS)*
Rating for Achievement of Project Outcomes: *Satisfactory (S)*
Rating for Achievement of Likelihood of Impact (Use 'Likely' scale): *Moderately Likely (ML)*

4.5 Financial Management

4.5.1 Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures

89. Financial management of the UNILEAD project followed UNEP and GEF standards. The executing agency, START International, submitted quarterly expenditure reports and annual PIRs in accordance with agreed schedules. Procurement procedures complied with UNEP and GEF standards. GEF grant expenditures (total project costs, total and per activity) reported as of December 2025 were USD 1,917,583 against an approved GEF allocation of USD 1,980,000, reflecting an underspend balance of USD 61,645 presented in **Annex V**. This underspend is attributable to the rescission of the ICCCAD contract and savings realized in project management costs across the extended project period. All financial reporting appears to have been conducted in accordance with UNEP's financial policies and procedures.

90. Co-financing mobilized as of 30 June 2025 was USD 2,426,795 against the planned co-financing of USD 2,074,424, representing 117% of the planned co-finance target — a positive financial management indicator. The total actual expenditures reported as of 30 June 2025 were USD 3,460,640 against a total planned budget of USD 4,054,424. The two formal project revisions were processed and approved in accordance with UNEP requirements, with the last revision approved in December 2024.

4.5.2 Completeness of Financial Information

91. Financial information for the project is reported to be complete and consistent across quarterly expenditure reports and annual PIRs. The project budget was structured across the three components plus M&E and Project Management Cost (PMC) lines, enabling tracking of expenditure against component outcomes. The co-financing table captures contributions from LUCCC University members (in-kind and grant), UNEP Global Adaptation Network, and START International (grant and in-kind), providing a comprehensive picture of the project's total resource mobilization.

92. The underspend on the GEF grant (approximately USD 61,645, or 3% of the allocation, remaining as of December 2025) was left for the Terminal Evaluation and the Independent Financial Audit.

Table 16: Financial management

Financial management components:	Rating	Evidence/ Comments
Adherence to UNEP's/GEF's policies and procedures:	**HS**	

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		No	No shortcomings in the UNILEAD project adherence to UNEP and donor policies, procedures and rules, also confirmed by the independent external audit from 10 November 2025.
Was first disbursement carried out within 9 months of UNEP's project approval date.		Yes	First disbursement of USD 100,000 on 11 April 2022.
Were the procurement policies of UNEP and the donor(s) followed?		Yes	Yes, UNEP and GEF procurement policies were followed throughout the project.
Completeness of project financial information:			
Provision of key documents to the evaluator (based on the responses to A-H below)		**HS**	
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	Level of co-financing of USD 2,429,496 was given in detail per co-financer.
B.	Revisions to the budget	Yes	Two budget revisions were performed by FMO of the regular budget, based on incoming funding.
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	Relevant SSFAs, budgets, expenditure reports, and annual reports of contracted entities were provided for the terminal evaluation.
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	Proof of fund transfers was provided.
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Yes	Detailed proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind) was provided by the FMO or during the evaluation field missions.
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	Summary of project's expenditures for the project life was provided by budget lines on annual level.
G	Copies of any completed audits and management responses	Yes	Copy of external audit report from 10 November 2025 was provided.
H.	Procure documents, including the approved requisition document and Source Selection Plan	Yes	Procurement documents provided.
I.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	N/A	
Overall rating		**HS**	**Highly Satisfactory**

Findings Statements on Financial Management*:*

93. The cost per think tank established – which was approximately USD 60,000 in GEF resources, with additional resources from the GEF Small Grants of USD 409,804. The project achieved significant institutional and capacity results within a relatively modest budget (a USD 1.98 million GEF grant), particularly given the complexity of establishing think tanks across thirteen LDCs.

Rating for Financial Management: Highly Satisfactory (HS)
Rating for Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures: Highly Satisfactory (HS)
Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: Highly Satisfactory (HS)

4.6 Efficiency

94. The efficiency and timeliness of UNILEAD were affected by the discrepancy between the initially designated two-year schedule and the actual forty-two-month implementation period. The 18-month no-cost extension - granted to enable the completion of all project activities, including in response to unforeseen external events as well as elections in several implementation countries - facilitated the delivery of outputs but resulted in heightened coordination expenses and an increased management burden on the project team.

95. Annual work planning and the governance of seven PSC meetings throughout the project duration established structured checkpoints that generally supported adaptive management. However,

the delayed recognition of the CDH underperformance - which was not formally addressed until 2024, several years into implementation - represents a significant gap in process efficiency, as earlier course correction could have reduced associated transaction costs and prevented downstream delays in knowledge management deliverables.

96. The deployment of START International as an experienced executing agency with existing university-strengthening programmes facilitated efficiency gains through institutional knowledge, established networks, and the capacity to integrate materials from prior projects.

97. The decision to designate Climate Analytics as the sole mentor institution - instead of two as originally planned - was intended to reduce costs; however, it may have limited the diversity of technical viewpoints available to the think tanks during the capacity-building phase. This limitation was subsequently addressed by incorporating the expertise of the Climate Finance Action Network (CFAN) later in the project.

98. To minimize UNEP's carbon footprint, online meetings were organized for UNILEAD capacity-building activities to the extent possible during both project implementation and evaluation.

99. Co-financing mobilization exceeded the planned target, with USD 2,426,795 achieved against USD 2,074,424 planned - an indicator of the project's ability to leverage additional resources and align with complementary initiatives. The Mozambique think tank at the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, which established with co-financing from the related UNIDO project "Strengthening engagement and action by the Least Developed Countries Group on climate change" (USD 40,000 of the USD 60,000 UNIDO contribution), represents a particularly efficient example of inter-agency coherence that amplified the value of the UNILEAD investment and enabled the fourth think tank to be established without additional GEF resources.

Type of project extension (cost/no-cost)	Duration (# months)	Reason for no-cost extension
No-cost project extension	18 months	Finishing of all project activities. Due to unforeseen external events, like elections in few implementation countries.

Findings Statements on Efficiency:

100. The efficiency of resource use was generally adequate given the project's scope and geographic complexity but was reduced by two avoidable factors: the delayed identification of the CDH's underperformance and the mismatch between the project's original two-year timeline, the limited budget, and the operational demands of establishing functional think tanks across thirteen LDC countries. These are not unrelated: a more rigorous front-loaded assessment of the CDH's capacity to deliver - and of the realism of the two-year schedule for institutional capacity-building at this scale - could have prompted earlier course corrections, reducing the coordination costs associated with the extended implementation period. The 18-month no-cost extension was ultimately necessary and appropriate given unforeseen external circumstances (including elections in several implementation countries), but it represented an efficiency cost that more proactive risk management might have partially mitigated.

101. UNILEAD demonstrated effective use of institutional partnerships and inter-agency coherence as efficiency levers. START International's established networks and track record in university-strengthening programs reduced setup costs and enabled faster mobilization than would have been possible with a new executing partner. The inter-agency coordination with UNIDO amplified the overall return on UNILEAD's investment and represents a replicable approach for future UNEP-GEF projects operating in resource-constrained LDC contexts.

Rating for Efficiency: Satisfactory (S)

4.7 Monitoring and Reporting

4.7.1 Monitoring of Project Implementation

102. The project maintained a regular monitoring system through the Project Management Unit (PMU), with quarterly expenditure reports, annual Project Implementation Reports (PIRs), and regular Project Steering Committee (PSC) oversight. The revised 2023 Project Results Framework (LogFrame) provided a clearer basis for tracking output and outcome indicators than the original ProDoc LogFrame. Progress against indicators was reported consistently in the PIRs. Monitoring of gender-disaggregated data and GESI outcomes was uneven across the project period, with stronger reporting in later PIRs following the 2023 revision.

103. Field-level monitoring relied primarily on self-reporting by LUCCC Points of Contact (PoCs) to the PMU, occasional PMU field missions, as well as capacity-building workshops. The absence of a mid-term review, while compliant with UNEP requirements for an MSP, meant there was no formal independent monitoring checkpoint during implementation. The PSC served as the main oversight mechanism, meeting seven times, which provided adequate governance-level monitoring.

4.7.2 Project Reporting

104. Reporting quality improved over the project period. Annual PIRs and Half-Yearly Progress Reports were submitted to UNEP on schedule, and the project maintained transparent communication with the Evaluation Office. PIRs became more detailed and evidence-based following the 2023 LogFrame revision, which provided clearer indicator baselines and targets. GEF portal reporting requirements were met.

105. The final PIR and project completion report has provided a comprehensive account of output delivery against all thirteen output targets, outcome achievement, co-financing mobilization, and lessons learned from the CDH rescission and extended project period. These documents were important records for institutional learning within UNEP, START International, and the LUCCC network. Some reporting contained gender disaggregated data, but there was no consideration of vulnerable/marginalized groups, including those living with disabilities.

Findings Statements on Monitoring and Reporting:

106. UNILEAD's monitoring system was functional and compliant with UNEP requirements. The 2023 LogFrame revision improved the quality of indicator tracking and PIR evidence, although it came two years into implementation. Taken together, these factors point to a monitoring architecture that was adequate for accountability.

107. Reporting quality strengthened progressively over the project period, with PIRs becoming increasingly detailed, evidence-based, and aligned with the revised 2023 LogFrame indicators - a trajectory that reflects institutional learning by the PMU and START International. GEF portal requirements and UNEP reporting obligations were met on schedule. The PIRs provided gender-disaggregated data, but no reporting systematically addressed the situation of vulnerable or marginalized groups, including people living with disabilities. This is a notable gap given UNEP's normative commitments to human rights and social inclusion, and should be built into the reporting frameworks of a possible successor project from the design stage.

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting: Highly Satisfactory (HS)

Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation: Satisfactory (S)

Rating for Project Reporting: Highly Satisfactory (HS)

4.8 Sustainability

4.8.1 Socio-political Sustainability

108. The socio-political sustainability of UNILEAD's results depends primarily on whether host country governments, LUCCC universities, and the broader LDC Group continue to value and support the think tank model after project closure. At the four think tank sites (Uganda, Mozambique, Senegal, and Nepal), business and sustainability plans were developed, providing an institutional basis for continued operations. The LDC Group's strategic endorsement of the think tank network and LUCCC's role as both implementation partner and intended custodian of the network are positive socio-political sustainability factors.

109. Political risks remain significant. Political instability, government changes, and shifting priorities within LDC ministries responsible for climate change could undermine the use of think tank services. The project's original risk framework did not adequately address these risks, and while Component 3 sought to embed the model within the LUCCC structure, the depth of government engagement varies across the thirteen countries. Countries where think tanks are not formally established (9 of 13) face a higher sustainability risk.

110. However, this solid framework is weakened by a key socio-political issue: at the close of the project, none of the four think tanks had formalized MoUs with their host governments due to a lack of political and university administrative efficiency in securing these agreements through the relevant institutional channels. MoUs are not just formalities—they symbolize official government endorsement, can turn active engagement into a lasting institutional partnership, open opportunities for fee-based and co-financed services, and demonstrate to development partners that the think tanks have a mandate worth backing. Without this formal recognition, the think tanks exit the project with solid internal governance but without the government mandate essential to their long-term success. The nine LUCCC universities without established think tanks face an even greater sustainability risk, as they lack both the institutional framework and the strong government relationships that the four think tanks have built.

4.8.2 Financial Sustainability

111. Financial sustainability is the most significant risk to UNILEAD's long-term impact and the area where the project's design assumptions were least aligned with LDC realities. The think tanks were designed to generate revenue through fee-based technical services for governments and other clients, but they are unable to achieve financial self-sufficiency in the near term. The envisioned fee-for-services revenue model — in which think tanks would earn income by selling technical advisory services to governments and development partners - has not proven viable in the short term. In LDC contexts, where government procurement of advisory services is limited, competitive, and typically managed through established firms, new university units without a proven commercial track record face structural barriers to market entry. University funding models in these countries are also constrained, limiting host institutions' ability to subsidize think tank operations.

112. The business and sustainability plans outlined in Output 1.2.4 offer credible frameworks for diversified revenue streams—including grants, partnerships, and fees—but their implementation has yet to start, and no transition funding from development partners has been secured to support the think tanks during the post-project growth phase. The upscaling strategy under Component 3 should have explicitly addressed this financing gap; its failure to do so means that UNILEAD's financial sustainability risk remains as much a design issue as a post-project challenge.

4.8.3 Institutional Sustainability

113. Institutional sustainability is supported by several structural design choices: the think tanks are embedded within existing universities rather than created as standalone entities, reducing overhead and leveraging existing institutional infrastructures. The formalization of think tanks through MoUs or equivalent mechanisms provides legal and institutional recognition. Organisational charters, staffing plans, and steering committees were developed to provide governance frameworks.

114. The capacity development hub web platform, eventually established by START International, functions as a shared institutional resource for the LUCCC network and represents a modest yet vital institutional public good. The platform's sustainability relies on ongoing hosting and maintenance by a future custodian organization, as START International had to dismantle it due to a lack of sustainable funding.

115. A significant institutional sustainability gap is the heavy reliance on a small number of LUCCC PoCs, who mainly drove the creation and operation of think tanks at each university. Succession planning and expanding institutional ownership beyond individual champions will be crucial for long-term success. Multi-disciplinary technical working clusters, created as part of Output 1.2.2, aimed to increase institutional capacity more broadly, but their effectiveness varies across think tank sites.

116. UNILEAD's structural approach to institutional sustainability—embedding think tanks within existing LUCCC universities rather than creating standalone entities—was well-designed and stands out as the project's most important contribution to long-term stability. By integrating the think tanks into established academic institutions, the project cut down on costs, utilized existing infrastructure, and made think tank survival dependent on the continuity of these institutions, which typically have longer-term outlooks than donor-funded projects. Documents like organizational charters, staffing plans, steering committees, and business and sustainability plans further reinforced governance structures at all four sites.

Findings Statements on Sustainability:

117. A cross-cutting risk that simultaneously threatens socio-political, financial, and institutional sustainability is the concentration of operational capacity in a small number of individual LUCCC PoCs. Across all four think tank sites, the relationships, institutional knowledge, and drive that enabled think tank establishment were held mainly by one or two individuals per institution. The multidisciplinary technical working clusters established under Output 1.2.2 were meant to distribute this capacity more evenly, but their functionality varies significantly across sites, and succession planning remains underdeveloped. This "key person risk" is especially severe in LDC university and government contexts, where political instability, staff turnover, and redeployment are common: the departure or displacement of a single champion could directly undermine a think tank's operational continuity, government relationships, and funding prospects. The web platform developed by START International offers a shared knowledge resource for the LUCCC network—a modest but important institutional public good—though its long-term sustainability also depends on a dedicated custodian. Overall, these findings point to a sustainability outlook that is feasible but fragile: the structural and institutional foundations are genuinely in place, but the combination of unformalized MoUs, an untested revenue model, and concentrated human capital means that maintaining UNILEAD's results will require deliberate, resource-supported follow-up actions from UNEP, START International, the LDC Group, and development partners working in the four think-tank countries. Therefore, one key recommendation is to pursue a second phase of the UNILEAD project (UNILEAD 2.0) to ensure sustainability and build on the momentum of UNILEAD phase 1.0.

Rating for Likelihood of Sustainability: Unlikely (U)
Rating for Socio-political Sustainability: Moderately Likely (ML)

Rating for Financial Sustainability: Unlikely (U)

Rating for Institutional Sustainability: Moderately Unlikely (MU)

4.9 Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

4.9.1 Quality of Project Management and Supervision

4.9.1.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:

118. Project management and supervision by UNEP (implementing agency) were generally satisfactory. UNEP maintained regular engagement through PSC participation, review of work plans and budgets, and outreach to development partners.

119. The project's ambitious scope relative to its original two-year timeline was an ongoing management challenge, and the 18-month extension, while ultimately enabling delivery, also increased coordination demands across 13 countries.

4.9.1.2 Partners/Executing Agency:

120. Project management and supervision by START International (executing agency) were generally satisfactory. It demonstrated adaptive management capacity, particularly in resolving the changes in the executing arrangements and reorganizing the knowledge management activities. The PMU maintained open communication channels with LUCCC PoCs and provided regular progress updates.

121. A weakness in project management was the late identification and resolution of the CDH underperformance. Earlier monitoring of the CDH's deliverables could have prompted corrective action sooner, easing timeline pressure on knowledge management outputs.

4.9.2 Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

122. Stakeholder participation in UNILEAD was generally strong, especially at the university level. LUCCC Points of Contact (PoCs) were active and dedicated partners throughout, helping design and deliver capacity-building activities, offering feedback on outputs, and representing their universities at knowledge-sharing events. The Program Steering Committee (PSC), led by the LDC Group Chair and with rotating LUCCC university representatives, ensured meaningful stakeholder engagement at the governance level.

123. Engagement with host-country governments — the main intended clients for think tank services — varied across countries and indicated a relative weakness in stakeholder management. While university-government engagement plans were created under Output 1.1.1, the level and formality of government involvement varied significantly among the thirteen participating countries, impacting the demand-responsiveness of think tank technical outputs and their chances for ongoing use.

4.9.3 Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

124. The project incorporated Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) commitments through its Gender Action Plan. The two short courses on GESI and climate change themes (part of the five developed under Output 1.1.3) show a meaningful integration of gender considerations into the capacity-building curriculum. Procedures were established by START International and LUCCC PoCs to encourage the participation of female graduate students in think tank activities.

125. The extent to which GESI outcomes were achieved is partly limited by the scarce availability of gender-disaggregated monitoring data in earlier project phases. Human rights considerations are integrated into the project's focus on LDC capacity and the participation of marginalized groups, but having a more explicit human rights framework in the original project design would have enabled more consistent monitoring of equity outcomes.

4.9.4 Environmental and Social Safeguards

126. UNILEAD is a capacity-building project without direct physical interventions, which minimizes environmental risks. Environmental and social safeguard requirements were fulfilled during the project design, and no negative environmental or social impacts were observed during implementation. The project's emphasis on supporting climate change adaptation in LDCs is fundamentally environmentally beneficial.

127. The three-terminal evaluation field missions were geographically concentrated in Uganda, Mozambique, and Tanzania to minimize the evaluation's environmental carbon footprint, in line with UNEP's sustainability commitments. No issues related to environmental or social safeguards were raised by stakeholders during the evaluation process.

4.9.5 Country Ownership and Driven-ness

128. Country ownership was strong at the university level across all 13 LUCCC member institutions. LUCCC PoCs were highly involved in project design and showed true ownership of the think tank idea, bringing local knowledge, government contacts, and institutional commitment. The LDC Group's strategic support of the project — as the first initiative carried out in close partnership between the LDC Group and LUCCC — is a key sign of LDC-driven ownership.

129. Country ownership at the government level was more limited and variable. Government engagement was strongest in countries where think tanks were formally established and where LUCCC PoCs had existing relationships with national climate change agencies. In countries where think tank formalization was not achieved (nine of thirteen), government ownership of the project's results is weaker, posing a challenge for the post-project uptake of think tank services.

4.9.6 Communication and Public Awareness

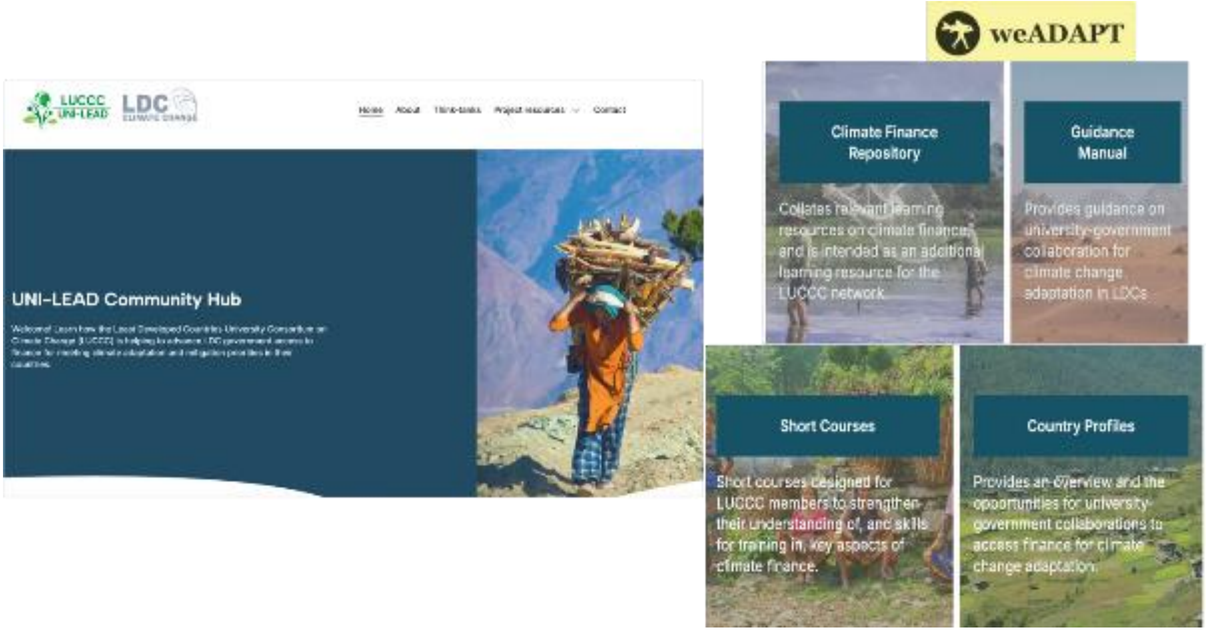
130. Communication and outreach activities during the project were carried out through UNEP's regular publications and project reporting channels, PSC meetings, and the LUCCC network's internal communications. The LUCCC Capacity Development Hub web platform functions as a public repository for project outputs and as a communication tool for the LUCCC network.

131. The two network meetings held under Output 3.1.1 provided key opportunities for knowledge sharing and communication among LUCCC PoCs and the broader think tank network. Knowledge products that synthesize lessons learned and best practices from the think tank network (Output 3.1.3) will serve as important communication tools for expanding the model beyond the current 13 participating universities.

132. The UNILEAD project has built an excellent website repository with extensive information about the project and the five short courses on climate finance: https://unilead.weadapt.org/climate-finance-repository/, as presented in **Figure 9.** The website includes training manuals for these courses (Short Course 1 to 5: Basics of Climate Finance in the LDC context, Public and Private Sector Financing for Climate Change Adaptation, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Climate Finance, Fundamentals of Developing a Climate Rationale) available at: https://unilead.weadapt.org/short-courses/. These resources can help all LDCs and other countries enhance their capacity on climate finance. However, it is unclear who will maintain the website after the project has ended.

133. More proactive external communication of project results — for example through UNFCCC processes, GEF knowledge management platforms, and LDC Group advocacy channels — could have strengthened the project's visibility and catalytic potential. This represents a lesson for future similar initiatives.

Figure 11: UNILEAD project website on WeAdapt[20]



Findings Statements on Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues:

134. Project Management: The adaptive management demonstrated by START International in addressing the CDH crisis and developing the web platform internally—reflects genuine institutional agility and is the clearest example of effective course correction in UNILEAD's implementation history. However, this adjustment came late: the CDH's underperformance was apparent for a long period before action was taken, compressing the timeline for knowledge management deliverables and contributing to the need for an 18-month extension. This pattern indicates that management structures were more reactive than proactive. The root cause lies partly in the mismatch between the project's goal—establishing operational think tanks and a functional knowledge hub across 13 countries in two years—and its monitoring system, which relied heavily on self-reporting and lacked independent verification of partners' deliverables. For projects of this scale and complexity, more systematic milestone-based monitoring of key partners, including third-party subcontractors, is essential for timely adaptive management. A key part of adaptive management was START's leadership in restructuring the project to focus resources on LUCCC Points of Contact (PoCs). This motivated PoCs to engage with their governments on country road maps, short-course training, and other goals. Initially, non-think tank PoCs received no funding, but after budget adjustments, modest funding supported in-country events, expanding the project to 11 of 13 countries. This broader impact was not possible under the original budget, which only funded think tanks. Notably, non-think-tank PoCs demonstrated strong leadership in delivering training due to START's adaptive management.

135. Stakeholder Participation and Country Ownership: UNILEAD's most notable stakeholder strength—and one of its key contributions to climate finance capacity in LDCs—is the deep university-level ownership it fostered. LUCCC Point of Contacts (PoCs) were not just project implementers; they served as co-designers, advocates, and institutional champions, maintaining the think tank model through political shifts, slow government procedures, and resource limitations. Beyond the LUCCC's PoC and faculty ownership, the project fostered engagement of graduate students as emerging stakeholders, providing hands-on research experience and building the next generation of in-country climate finance expertise, with particular attention to female graduate students under the GESI framework. The LDC Group's leadership of the Project Steering Committee (PSC), marking the first project implemented in close partnership between the LDC Group and LUCCC, further highlights UNILEAD as a truly LDC-driven effort. This strength at the university level was not reflected equally at

[20] https://unilead.weadapt.org/

the government level, where ownership remained limited and inconsistent. Nine of the thirteen LUCCC countries without formalized think tanks have significantly weaker government engagement and, as a result, lower prospects for sustained impact beyond the project. This imbalance in ownership—strong at the institutional level but weak at the political level—poses UNILEAD's main stakeholder management challenge and is a primary factor influencing the long-term use of project outcomes.

136. Gender Equality and Human Rights: UNILEAD showed a meaningful but uneven commitment to GESI. The creation of a dedicated short course on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Climate Finance, translated into French and Portuguese and used for training government officials in five countries, is a significant contribution that goes beyond mainstreaming. The Gender Action Plan provided an explicit framework, and two of the four think tanks (Nepal and Mozambique) strongly integrated GESI considerations into their technical outputs. The project's human rights and inclusion framework was not sufficiently explicit in the original design: gender-disaggregated monitoring data was limited in early project phases and improved only after the 2023 LogFrame revision, and there was no systematic monitoring of outcomes for other vulnerable or marginalized groups (including people with disabilities) at any stage. GESI integration in project activities was stronger in some countries and think tank sites than in others. Future projects working in LDC university contexts should treat GESI as a structural design requirement, not just as a thematic add-on, with dedicated indicators, baselines, and monitoring systems built in from the start. During the project design phase for complex multi-regional or multi-country initiatives, it is essential to consider various national contexts. This involves examining opportunities and challenges to advance and sustain GESI progress by evaluating what is practical, achievable, and sustainable across different cultural settings.

137. Communication and Public Awareness: UNILEAD created a comprehensive, publicly accessible knowledge platform (https://unilead.weadapt.org/), which serves as a valuable, lasting public resource for the LDC climate finance community. The website features the complete five-course climate finance training series, including workbooks, PowerPoint presentations, instructor guides, and recorded videos, available in English, French, and Portuguese. This makes it a freely accessible tool for any LDC or developing country interested in enhancing climate finance capacity. This contribution is often overlooked: the short courses and their materials have the potential to reach far beyond the 13 LUCCC universities that participated in the project. This potential was slightly limited by a lack of proactive external communication. Sharing project results through UNFCCC processes, GEF knowledge management platforms, and LDC Group advocacy mechanisms—during the project rather than afterwards—could have significantly boosted visibility, attracted more partners, and amplified the catalytic impact of the think tank model. For future projects like this, a dedicated external communication strategy aimed at global climate governance audiences would be essential to support turning project results into systemic change.

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues: Highly Satisfactory (HS)

Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision: (IA and EA separately) Highly Satisfactory (HS) for both IA and EA

Rating for Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation: Highly Satisfactory (HS)

Rating for Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality: Satisfactory (S)

Rating for Environmental and Social Safeguards: Highly Satisfactory (HS)

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

Rating for Communication and Public Awareness: Satisfactory (S)

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

138. Three outcomes of the project were fully achieved, and one outcome was partially achieved. The main results of the project include: (i) establishing four fully operational climate finance think tanks within LUCCC universities in Senegal, Uganda, Mozambique, and Nepal, each with organizational charters, staffing plans, steering committees, and business and sustainability plans; (ii) delivering 13 demand-driven technical outputs aligned with national government priorities, such as Uganda's Climate Finance Tracking Tool, Mozambique's subnational adaptation plans, Senegal's NAP sector task forces, and Nepal's GESI and climate rationale resource books; (iii) providing a five-course climate finance training series in English, French, and Portuguese on the public platform https://unilead.weadapt.org/, along with 5 Training of Trainers sessions enabling LUCCC Points of Contact to independently deliver courses; (iv) achieving sustained government engagement (levels 2 or 3 on the project's scorecard) at 11 of 13 LUCCC universities, with 4 reaching level 3; and (v) surpassing co-financing targets by 17%, including a USD 60,000 contribution from UNIDO that helped establish the fourth think tank at the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane in Mozambique.

139. These results were primarily driven by three key factors: first, the deployment of START International as an experienced implementing agency with established university networks and institutional knowledge, which lowered setup costs and sped up mobilization; second, the active and sincere engagement of LUCCC Points of Contact, who acted not just as project recipients but as co-designers, institutional advocates, and political navigators within their universities and governments; and third, the flexible management shown by the PMU in addressing the CDH crisis, reorganizing knowledge management efforts, and transitioning the project from fully virtual to hybrid delivery based on LUCCC feedback. The LDC Group's strategic backing—as the first initiative executed in close collaboration between the LDC Group and LUCCC—also conferred political legitimacy, setting UNILEAD apart from earlier donor-led programs.

140. The project demonstrated an innovative institutional approach through the university-embedded think tank model, which represents a significant departure from preceding externally-driven, short-cycle capacity-building efforts in LDC climate finance. By anchoring technical advisory capacity within existing academic institutions - leveraging their infrastructure, credibility, and permanence - UNILEAD created structures with longer institutional time horizons than donor-funded projects. The complementarity with UNIDO's project "Strengthening engagement and action by the Least Developed Countries Group on climate change" further illustrates a best-practice model for UN inter-agency coordination: ring-fenced, non-duplicative contributions that jointly expanded the project's reach beyond what either agency could have achieved independently. The project's five-course climate finance training series, made freely available in three languages on a public platform, is a knowledge public good with replication potential far beyond the 13 LUCCC universities.

141. Factors supporting the longevity of project benefits include the university-embedded governance structures (charters, staffing plans, steering committees) at all four think tank sites; credible business and sustainability plans outlining diverse revenue strategies; the public WeAdapt knowledge platform serving as a shared institutional resource; and strong political support from the LDC Group and LUCCC as network custodians. Factors undermining sustainability include the lack of formalized MoUs between think tanks and host governments at project close; the unproven fee-for-services revenue model in LDC market conditions; the absence of transition funding; high operational capacity concentration in individual PoCs; and limited government engagement in the nine LUCCC countries without think tanks. A structure, searchable database of approved and successful climate finance projects-organized by region, fund (GCF, GEF, AF, CIF), sector, and project size-is the most practically valuable knowledge resource for LDC climate finance practitioners. This was the most frequently mentioned knowledge gap in KIIs and should be a key focus for the WeAdapt platform in any future phase.

142. No significant unintended negative effects were identified during the evaluation. However, two unintended positive effects are worth noting. First, the Malawi and Liberia LUCCC PoCs used UNILEAD

short-course material as the basis for developing a national climate financing manual, a tangible policy output not anticipated in the project design that demonstrates the curriculum's knowledge-transfer potential. Second, the project catalysed a regional cooperation arrangement between Malawi and Mozambique for an Early Warning System, which emerged directly from cross-country learning facilitated through the LUCCC network meetings. In the future, UNEP should design explicit mechanisms to capture and scale such unintended positive spillovers, and strengthen the human rights framework of successor projects by integrating disability inclusion and monitoring of marginalized groups from the design stage.

143. Regarding South-South Cooperation, UNILEAD exemplified the principle by establishing a peer-learning network of LDC universities in Africa and Asia, facilitating regional meetings in West Africa, East/Southern Africa, and South Asia, and promoting cross-border learning (for instance, the Malawi-Mozambique Early Warning System collaboration). Concerning equality, the project incorporated GESI through a dedicated short course, a Gender Action Plan, and specific procedures to encourage female graduate student participation in think tank activities; however, integration was uneven across sites, and monitoring outcomes for other vulnerable groups (including persons with disabilities) remained a gap throughout the project.

144. UNILEAD's achievements directly support the UNEP Climate Change Subprogramme's efforts on adaptation finance readiness and align with the broader GEF-7 strategic goal of creating enabling conditions for effective and integrated climate change adaptation in Least Developed Countries. The project's think tank model, its multilingual training programmes, and its policy-relevant technical outputs collectively enhance the climate change adaptation knowledge infrastructure in LDC universities—strengthening a key sector that is crucial for LDCs to access, absorb, and utilize the increasing amounts of international climate finance aimed at adaptation. Additionally, the project advances SDG 13 (Climate Action) by building knowledge and capacity to address climate change and supports the National Adaptation Plan processes of each of the thirteen participating countries.

Responses to Key Strategic Questions

145. **Q1 - How have the think-tanks helped to advance NDCs and NAPs (and other policy frameworks) in their respective countries?** - The four think tanks delivered outputs that directly align with national planning frameworks: Uganda's think tank created a national climate finance tracking tool linked to the Paris Agreement reporting needs of Uganda's Climate Finance Unit; Senegal's INTERFACE established multi-stakeholder task forces for key NAP sectors (agriculture, renewable energy, coastal zones, urban resilience); Mozambique's think tank supported the development of Provincial Adaptation Plans that connect national planning with district implementation; and Nepal's NCI produced resource books on climate rationale and GESI, which are directly used in NAP and NDC processes at the national, provincial, and municipal levels.

146. **Q2 - What role is the think-tank playing in harnessing and channelling knowledge and expertise across its university to address government needs related to climate adaptation and finance?** - The think tanks act as institutional bridges, connecting academic departments, graduate students, and faculty to government priorities through demand-driven technical work. Multi-disciplinary technical working clusters established under Output 1.2.2 are designed to draw expertise from the host universities; this approach was most effective in Nepal and Uganda, where the think tanks attracted faculty from multiple disciplines and created new pathways for graduate student research and employment, including Uganda's new MSc in Climate Finance. UNILEAD successfully demonstrated the viability of an endogenous, university-based model for climate finance capacity in Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Instead of engaging external consultants or organizing standalone training sessions, the project integrated think tanks as permanent entities within existing LUCCC universities - intentionally utilizing the infrastructure, academic credibility, and disciplinary diversity (including multidisciplinary university research capacity in climate finance economics, risk management, agriculture, GESI, and climate science) that these institutions already possessed. What "institutional ownership" means in practice was not uniform across the four sites, but in each case, it was concrete and traceable to the university's own strategic priorities and multidisciplinary capacity: Uganda - Makerere University (CFH/MUCCRI): The think tank drew on faculty from Makerere's School of Forestry, Environmental and Geographical Sciences, the economics department, and climate science

researchers to co-develop Uganda's National Climate Finance Tracking Tool with the Ministry of Finance's Climate Finance Unit. Ownership deepened further when Makerere initiated an MSc in Climate Finance - a degree programme rooted in the think tank's work - institutionalizing the project's results within the university's academic mission in a way no short-term consultancy could have achieved; Nepal - Pokhara University (NCI/CcHEMS): Rather than confining expertise to a single institution, Nepal's think tank deliberately drew on faculty and researchers from four to six universities across the country, creating an inter-university network that made the think tank's outputs more technically robust and its ownership broader. The two resource books produced on Climate Rationale and GESI in Climate Finance are now used at national, provincial, and municipal levels in NAP and NDC processes - embedding the university's academic output directly into the government's planning cycle; Mozambique - Eduardo Mondlane University (ADAPTACOMoz/UEM): The think tank was explicitly anchored within UEM's strategic priorities and its mandate for applied research and public policy engagement. This alignment produced a government-relevant portfolio: practical guidelines for Local and Provincial Adaptation Plans (PAPs), a reviewed Local Adaptation Plan, a drafted Provincial Adaptation Plan, and a policy brief on lessons learned - all at the subnational level, bridging the gap between Mozambique's national NAP and district-level implementation; and Senegal - UCAD (INTERFACE): Institutional ownership here took the form of cross-university working groups matched with government stakeholders, organized around four key NAP sectors (agriculture, renewable energy, coastal zones, and urban resilience). Faculty from multiple departments participated in multi-stakeholder workshops with relevant Ministries, creating a structured, ongoing interface between academic expertise and government demand - rather than a one-off knowledge transfer. This design, rooted in the project's original intent under Output 1.2.2 (multidisciplinary technical working clusters), sets UNILEAD apart from transactional capacity-building efforts. External consultants generate reports; embedded think tanks develop institutional habits, degree programmes, inter-ministerial relationships, and academic credibility that outlast the project itself. The depth of that embedding, and consequently the depth of genuine ownership, varied across sites; however, the model's architecture made it structurally feasible in a way no externally located intermediary could replicate.

147. **Q3 - How has the think tank developed relationships with government that can be carried forward? -** All four think tanks established meaningful relationships with key government ministries and agencies (such as the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Water and Environment, GCF/AF/GEF National Focal Points), utilizing the two-phase GEF small grants programmes to progress from consultation (Phase 1) to co-production of technical outputs (Phase 2). By the project’s end, MoU discussions involving think tanks, host universities, and governments had advanced in all four countries; however, none had been formally signed due to limited political momentum to finalize the agreements. These ongoing but incomplete processes pose the primary governance risk after the project.

148. **Q4 - UNILEAD was innovative in that it envisioned a long-term, sustained institutional approach to addressing the underlying capacity gaps. To what degree of success was the project able to create an enabling environment for scaling up its model to additional universities, thus expanding the network of thinktanks for LUCCC members and LDCs?** - The project achieved partial success in creating an enabling environment: the upscaling and sustainability strategy, network meetings, and knowledge synthesis products laid a foundation, but the goal of adding two more LUCCC institutions with confirmed and funded work plans was not reached. Rwanda and Ethiopia showed interest but lacked secured funding, highlighting a systemic gap between the proven model's viability and the availability of transition financing for replication.

149. **Q5 - How well did the project help to strengthen the LUCCC network? In what ways was the project design conducive or non-conducive towards strengthening the network?** - Strengthening the LUCCC network was a major achievement: all 13 LUCCC universities were actively involved throughout; 11 of 13 maintained ongoing government engagement; three regional meetings and one culmination conference enhanced peer learning; and the WeAdapt platform established a shared knowledge infrastructure. The network's cohesion was strongest at the PoC level but less integrated at the institutional level, where formal governance mechanisms for the post-project network are still underdeveloped. The LDC Chair’s involvement in the project was rather limited. Mobilizing the LDC Chair is essential to amplify the LUCCC network’s work — the current lack of coordination with the LDC Chair is limiting the network's potential.

150. **Q6 - What has been the effect of the choice of key project partners on the success of the project's implementation, and were there any missed opportunities or unintended effects (positive or negative) as a result of the partners engaged?** - START International's existing university networks and adaptive management capacity were key efficiency drivers. Climate Analytics, as the sole mentor institution, designed high-quality short courses but at the expense of narrower technical diversity. The ICCCAD CDH partnership was the single most significant negative factor, causing delays and leading to a mid-course contract rescission; earlier due diligence on ICCCAD's delivery capacity could have prevented or mitigated this disruption. The UNIDO partnership for the Mozambique think tank and the complementary GESI modules stand out as the most successful example of inter-agency collaboration in the project.

151. **Q7 - To what degree of success did the inclusion of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) capacity development and integration into project implementation enhance the understanding and application of gender as it relates to Climate Finance among the LUCCC member institutions?** - GESI integration had clear positive effects: the dedicated GESI short course was delivered in three languages and utilized by government officials in five countries; Nepal and Mozambique showed the strongest incorporation of gender considerations into technical outputs; and 39% of all project trainees were women, nearly reaching the planned 40%. However, integration was inconsistent across the 13 LUCCC countries, GESI monitoring data were limited in early project stages, and there was no systematic monitoring of disability or other vulnerability outcomes. The project increased GESI awareness but did not achieve consistent mainstreaming throughout the entire network.

Comparative Performance of Think Tanks and LUCCC Universities

152. While this evaluation assesses UNILEAD against its own indicators at the aggregate level, the evidence gathered across the four think tank sites and nine non–think tank LUCCC universities also supports a comparative reading of where performance converged and diverged. All four think tanks were formally established and delivered demand-led technical outputs, but the depth of institutional embedding, multidisciplinary engagement, government integration, and policy reach varied meaningfully across sites.

153. Uganda (Makerere University / CFH-MUCCRI) emerged as the strongest performer across nearly every dimension. Its National Climate Finance Tracking Tool was co-produced with the Ministry of Finance's Climate Finance Unit rather than simply delivered to it, and was subsequently shared with other countries as a replicable model. Makerere's initiation of an MSc in Climate Finance represents the clearest case of the think tank model taking permanent root within a university's academic structure. Nepal (Pokhara University / NCI-CcHEMS) ranked a close second, distinguished by the most innovative institutional architecture: it operated as a genuine multi-institution consortium drawing on faculty from several universities, achieved policy reach across national, provincial, and municipal levels, and — alongside Mozambique — showed the strongest integration of gender considerations into technical outputs. Mozambique (Eduardo Mondlane University / ADAPTACOMoz) followed in third place, notable for its tight alignment with the host university's research mandate and for unique subnational work bridging the national NAP framework and local implementation. Senegal (UCAD / INTERFACE) delivered a credible portfolio with the broadest multi-ministry reach across four NAP sectors, but ranked fourth owing to a lighter institutional footprint, less prominent GESI integration, and the disruption caused by national government transitions.

154. Three factors consistently distinguished the stronger performers: pre-existing ministry-level relationships that the project deepened rather than created; effective multidisciplinary faculty engagement, which the evaluation found worked best in Nepal and Uganda; and alignment between the think tank and the host university's own strategic priorities. Where a single coordinator carried the full institutional burden, both performance and sustainability were weaker.

155. Among the nine non–think tank universities, three stood out. Malawi was the most impactful overachiever, generating two concrete policy outcomes with neither a think tank nor a small grant: a national climate financing manual developed from freely accessible short-course content, and a cross-border Early Warning System initiative with Mozambique that grew organically from network meetings. Both feature in the evaluation's Lessons Learned (Lessons 1 and 3) and provide the clearest evidence

that the LUCCC network model holds tangible value independent of the formalized think tank structures. Tanzania (University of Dar es Salaam) was selected as the sole non–think tank field mission site, implying it was regarded as the most substantively engaged of the nine. Liberia presents a distinctive edge case: its LUCCC partner appears to be an NGO or private education institute rather than a public university — the only structural anomaly of its kind among the thirteen partners — yet it nonetheless drew on UNILEAD materials, alongside Malawi, to develop a national climate financing manual.

156. This comparative dimension carries direct implications for UNILEAD 2.0. Uganda and Nepal offer the clearest replication models, both for their institutional design and for their emphasis on co-production over delivery. Malawi demonstrates what the network alone can produce, suggesting Phase 2 should build in explicit mechanisms to identify and scale unplanned policy outputs from non–think tank members. Senegal's lighter institutional embedding points to a design requirement that think tank selection be conditioned not only on strong Points of Contact but on a formal strategic mandate from host university leadership. Finally, because key-person risk was most acute where multidisciplinary team-building was weakest, team diversification and succession planning should become explicit selection and monitoring criteria rather than optional management activities.

157. The table below provides a summary of the ratings and findings discussed in Chapter 4. Overall, the project is rated **'Satisfactory (S)'**.

Table 17: Summary of project findings and ratings[21]

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
Strategic Relevance	Fully aligned with UNEP's POW 2018-2019&,2020-2021, MTS 2018-2021&2022-2025, GEF-7 Strategic Objective CCA 3 and LDCF, SDGs, and national priorities. . The project exemplifies best-practice inter-agency coherence.	**HS**
1. Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities	Full alignment with UNEP Climate Change Sub-programme and POW Expected Result 1a	**HS**
2. Alignment to UNEP Donor/GEF/Partner strategic priorities	Full alignment with GEF-7 CCA 3 and LDCF mandate. Consistent with SDG 13 and Paris Agreement NAP processes.	**HS**
3. Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	Highly relevant to national adaptation planning (NAPs/NDCs) in 13 LDCs across Africa and Asia. Directly responsive to UNFCCC and Paris Agreement capacity-building obligations.	**HS**
4. Complementarity with existing interventions/ Coherence	Strong complementarity leveraging with existing institutions.	**HS**
Quality of Project Design	Sound intervention logic, well-developed results framework, and clear implementation roles. Under-ambitious original 2-year timeline, inadequate risk framework, and incomplete Theory of Change	**S**
Nature of External Context	COVID-19 pandemic, political instability and government changes in several LDC countries posed systemic risks throughout.	**MU**
Effectiveness	3 were outcomes fully achieved, and one outcome was partially achieved. one partially achieved. 13 demand-led outputs vs target of 12. Impact is moderately likely to be achieved.	**S**
1. Availability of outputs	12 of 13 outputs fully delivered.	**HS**
2. Achievement of project outcomes	Outcomes 1.1, 1.2, 2.1 exceeded targets. Outcome 3.1 partially achieved.	**S**
3. Likelihood of impact (use 'likely' scale)	Four embedded think tanks with government relationships and business plans provide credible foundation. Principal risks: unsigned MoUs, unproven fee-for-services model, no transition financing secured, key-person concentration.	**ML**

[21] *Most criteria will be rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated, 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
Financial Management	GEF grant expenditure of 97%. Planned co-financing exceeded by 17%. Procurement compliant with UN/GEF standards. Quarterly expenditure reporting maintained throughout.	**HS**
1. Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures	Full compliance with UNEP financial policies and GEF reporting requirements. No financial irregularities identified.	**HS**
2. Completeness of project financial information	Final expenditure reports comprehensive, covering all 13 output budget lines and co-financing sources. GEF portal reporting requirements met.	**HS**
Efficiency	START International institutional knowledge and UNIDO inter-agency co-financing enhanced efficiency. Co-financing overachievement (117%) demonstrates strong resource leverage.	**S**
Monitoring and Reporting	Regular monitoring maintained through PMU. Gender-disaggregated data uneven in early phases. No disability/vulnerability monitoring.	**HS**
1. Monitoring of project implementation	Functional PMU-based monitoring. 2023 LogFrame revision improved indicator tracking. Weakness: reliance on PoC self-reporting.	**S**
2. Project reporting	PIRs and Half-Yearly Progress Reports submitted on schedule. GEF portal requirements met. Final report comprehensive. Gap: no systematic monitoring of vulnerable/marginalised groups including persons with disabilities.	**HS**
Sustainability	Overall sustainability Unlikely due to critical financial viability gap.	**U**
1. Socio-political sustainability	MoU discussions advanced in all 4 think-tank countries but none signed.	**ML**
2. Financial sustainability	Fee-for-services model unproven in LDC market context. Most significant sustainability risk.	**U**
3. Institutional sustainability	Succession planning underdeveloped.	**MU**
Factors Affecting Performance	Overall performance of factors was highly satisfactory.	**HS**
1. Quality of project management and supervision	Both UNEP (IA) and START International (EA) managed the project to a Highly Satisfactory level, with regular PSC oversight, responsive communication, and demonstrated adaptive management	**HS**
2.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:	UNEP maintained regular PSC participation, work plan and budget oversight, and outreach to development partners.	**HS**
2.2 Partners/Executing Agency:	START International demonstrated adaptive management capacity	**HS**
2. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	LUCCC PoCs were active, PSC governance meaningful. Government engagement variable	**HS**
3. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	Gender Action Plan implemented; GESI integration uneven across sites; no disability/vulnerability monitoring.	**S**
4. Environmental and social safeguards	No adverse safeguard impacts observed. SRIF screening confirmed low risk.	**HS**
5. Country ownership and driven-ness	Government ownership strong in four Think Tank countries: Uganda, Senegal, Mozambique, and Nepal; weaker in nine non-Think Tank countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gambia, Liberia, Malawi, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, .	**HS**
6. Communication and public awareness	Network meetings and knowledge products used. Insufficient proactive external communication through UNFCCC/GEF/LDC advocacy channels.	**S**
Overall Project Performance Rating	**UNILEAD achieved a Satisfactory overall performance.**	**S**

5.2 Lessons Learned

158. Lessons learned are used to bring together any insights gained during the project that can be usefully applied in future projects. Capturing lessons learned from the project implementation is extremely important, as it may lead to more effective and efficient future rollout of project activities and to organizational learning. Seizing lessons learned and turning that hindsight into best practices will

achieve far greater long-term project success, which can be captured and possibly replicated within UNEP and beyond. The following lessons were learned from the implementation of the UNILEAD project:

Lesson Learned #1:	**Course materials have immediate practical applicability beyond training events.**
Context/comment:	The UNILEAD short course curricula proved directly transferable to policy contexts. Malawi used the course content as the basis for developing a national climate financing manual, demonstrating that well-designed capacity development materials can catalyse tangible policy outputs that outlast the training event itself. This lesson is applicable in any LDC capacity-building programme where knowledge products are intended for sustained institutional use beyond the training participants. In Liberia, the Institute of Climate Change and Health Research (ICCHR) is a dedicated non-profit organization, a private institute accredited by the Ministry of Education, that is focused on tackling the urgent challenges posed by climate change in relation to public health in Liberia, and uses the training materials from the UNILEAD project.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paras 149-150;; Annex VII.

Lesson Learned #2:	**GESI must be structurally embedded from project design, not treated as a thematic add-on.**
Context/comment:	Gender is often overlooked in climate finance project proposals unless specific mechanisms mandate its incorporation. While a dedicated GESI short course has shown effectiveness, varying levels of adoption across the 13 LUCCC countries indicate that such a standalone initiative is inadequate. Therefore, it is essential to embed GESI criteria within all project templates, monitoring frameworks, and technical output requirements from the outset to achieve consistent mainstreaming. Furthermore, proposals that integrate GESI are generally more competitive when seeking climate finance from donors.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paras 130–131; Findings on GESI (Section 4.9.3).

Lesson Learned #3:	**Regional LDC cooperation unlocks results that no single country can achieve alone.**
Context/comment:	The Malawi-Mozambique Early Warning System (EWS) collaboration — an unplanned but real outcome of the LUCCC network meetings — demonstrates that peer-learning networks generate cross-border cooperation dividends that formal project designs typically underestimate. Future projects should design explicit mechanisms to catalyse and sustain regional cooperation, not leave it to emerge informally.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Para 150;; Section 4.9.5.

Lesson Learned #4:	**In-person convenings are essential for institutional trust and relationship-building in think tank establishment phases.**
Context/comment:	Initial over-reliance on virtual delivery (due to COVID-19 constraints) reduced early capacity-building quality and network cohesion. The pivot to in-person regional meetings in 2023 (Dakar, Kampala, Kathmandu) significantly improved engagement, institutional relationships, and PoC ownership. For projects building new institutional structures in LDCs, adequate budget for in-person convenings is not a luxury but a prerequisite for the relational infrastructure think tanks require.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paras 84–86; Section 4.4 (Effectiveness).

Lesson Learned #5:	**Creating a standalone fee-for-services model is unlikely in LUCCC-country contexts, especially shortly after establishment.**
Context/comment:	Developing a robust and viable fee-for-services model is unlikely to be possible as a stand-alone revenue generation stream in the LUCCC-country contexts, at least not during the near-term post-establishment period. All of the think-tanks were open to eventually developing a fee-for-services approach but viewed it as an element within a larger strategy of identifying diverse revenue streams that would include project grants, donations, international partnerships and other sources. Scepticism about being able to implement fee-for-services at the outset of establishing a think-tank was raised by the LUCCC partners early in the project timeline, and consistently throughout. A pure fee-for-service model is insufficient on its own; sustainability improves with a mixed model

	combining fee-for-service and grants from various funders, as shown by Mozambique's work with Enabel and SIDA.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paras 88–89, 121–122; Effectiveness; Findings 1–2 on Sustainability (Section 4.6).

Lesson Learned #6:	**Think tank sustainability requires a two-step sequencing approach: broad capacity building first, then competitive institutional formalization.**
Context/comment:	Attempting to build capacity and establish think tanks simultaneously within a two-year project window proved over-ambitious. A more effective design would: (1) build systematic capacity across the full university network first; then (2) competitively select and formalise think tanks among the best-prepared, government-endorsed universities. This reduces the risk of establishing underprepared institutions and allows sustainability planning to be grounded in demonstrated performance.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paras 77–78; Section 4.2 (Quality of Project Design).

Lesson Learned #7:	**Formalizing government-university relationships through MoUs is a governance necessity, not a bureaucratic formality.**
Context/comment:	All four think tanks ended the project without signed MoUs with their host governments, despite advanced discussions in all four countries. MoUs convert demonstrated engagement into a durable service mandate, recognised institutional status, and a basis for future fee-based or co-financed work. Government representatives in Senegal noted that sector task forces only became viable once the university had a recognised ministerial interface. The MoU process must be actively facilitated — it does not happen organically in LDC institutional contexts.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paras 94–95, 98–99; Findings on Sustainability (Section 4.8).

Lesson Learned #8:	**Adequate and sustained financing — approximately USD 50,000 per year per think tank — is the single most important enabler for operational continuity.**
Context/comment:	Interviews consistently flagged underfunding as a key bottleneck. Ethiopia's capacity-building activities were constrained by insufficient project funding, requiring supplementary co-financing from the Ministry of Agriculture. The Uganda KII identified approximately USD 50,000 per year as the minimum operational budget for a functional think tank. Without transition funding to bridge the post-project period, the risk of dormancy is high regardless of the institutional quality established.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paras 122; Finding 2 on Sustainability (Section 4.8.2).

5.3 Recommendations

159. The evaluator identified several recommendations based on the findings of this report. As the UNILEAD project closed on 30 June 2025, and START International has ceased its operations, all recommendations are directed to the four think tank countries and the remaining nine countries in the project intervention. There is also a general recommendation for GEF and UNEP for the next phase of the project UNILEAD 2.0.

Recommendation #1:	**Formalize all outstanding MoUs between the four think tanks, host universities, and relevant government ministries (Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Environment/Water; GCF/GEF National Focal Point) within six months. UNEP should co-convene tripartite signing sessions per country, with a standardised MoU template defining the think tank's service mandate, government engagement obligations, and co-financing expectations.**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	None of the four think tanks had signed MoUs at project close. Without formal government endorsement, think tanks lack the institutional mandate and credibility needed to attract fee-based work, secure co-financing, or be recognised in national climate finance processes.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paras 94–95, 98–99; Finding 1 on Sustainability; Uganda KII conclusions.
Priority Level:	High

Type of Recommendation	Partner
Responsibility:	UNEP Regional Climate Offices; LUCCC PoCs (all 4 TT countries)
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Short-term: within 6 months of project closure (by December 2025)

Recommendation #2:	**Mobilize at least USD 200,000 in dedicated transition seed funding (approximately USD 50,000 per think tank per year for two years) through UNEP, GEF, and bilateral partners (SECO, NORAD, GIZ, AFD). Structure funding as conditional performance-based grants tied to defined milestones: active government contract, annual output delivery, and updated business plan progress report.**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Think tanks currently lack operational financing to remain functional after project closure. Without seed funding, they risk dormancy despite strong institutional foundations and government interest. The estimated minimum annual operational budget per think tank is USD 50,000.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paras 96–97; Finding 2 on Sustainability (Section 4.8.2); Recommendation #2 in TE report.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	UNEP; GEF; SECO; NORAD; National Government Counterparts (Ministries of Finance and Environment)
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Medium-term: funding to be committed within 12 months of project closure

Recommendation #3:	**Design UNILEAD 2.0 using a two-phase sequencing model: Phase 1 (Years 1–2) focused on broad capacity building across the full LUCCC network and at least 5 additional universities; Phase 2 (Years 3–4) focused on competitive selection and formalisation of new think tanks in the most prepared, government-endorsed universities. Allocate a minimum 20% of the project budget to in-person regional convenings.**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The original two-year timeline and the limited financing for thirteen countries was inadequate for the dual goal of network-wide capacity building and think tank establishment. The mismatch reduced efficiency and required an 18-month no-cost extension. Virtual-only delivery in early project phases weakened institutional relationships.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paras 83–86; Section 4.2 (Quality of Project Design); Section 4.6 (Efficiency)
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	UNEP GEF Senior Programme Manager; GEF at CEO Endorsement stage
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Long-term: to be incorporated in UNILEAD 2.0 project document

Recommendation #4:	**Engage all key government stakeholders — Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Environment, and GCF/GEF National Focal Points — systematically from project inception. Develop a structured Government Engagement Plan with named counterparts, defined meeting frequencies, signed engagement letters, and an annual presentation requirement to relevant inter-ministerial committees. This should be a deliverable in the first three months of any future project phase.**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Government officials at senior levels were often unaware of think tank roles and outputs. Variable and late government engagement limited the demand-responsiveness of technical outputs and reduced prospects for post-project utilisation of think tank services. Involve the Local and Regional Government authorities in the project activities and the training for Climate Finance as the first vulnerable faces to the climate change that need to become resilient through Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation.

Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paras 108–109, 114–115; Finding 2 on Factors Affecting Performance.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Partner
Responsibility:	Think Tank Coordinators; LUCCC PoCs; UNEP Regional Offices
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Short-term: first 3 months of any future project phase

Recommendation #5:	**Develop and maintain a structured, searchable repository of approved and successful climate finance projects on the WeAdapt platform, organised by region, fund (GCF, GEF, AF, CIF, L&D Fund), sector, and project size, with downloadable concept note and proposal templates. Explore CFAN's existing repository and Ethiopia's CRG Facility as input sources.**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The absence of a structured project repository was the single most consistently cited knowledge gap across KIIs. LDC practitioners need concrete examples of bankable projects to develop their own proposals — without this, the short courses risk remaining theoretical.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paras 116–119; Annex VII.
Priority Level:	Medium-High
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	CFAN; UNEP Knowledge Management Unit
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Medium-term: within 18 months (can be initiated immediately using existing platform)

Recommendation #6:	**Integrate GESI requirements structurally into all project templates, output criteria, and M&E frameworks from the outset of any future project phase. Include: mandatory GESI review of all think tank outputs before submission; a disaggregated monitoring framework covering gender, disability, age, and vulnerability; GESI-competent reviewers on the PSC; and explicit disability inclusion targets. Short course materials on GESI should be updated to incorporate disability and intersectionality dimensions.**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	GESI was implemented inconsistently across the LUCCC network, with no systematic monitoring of outcomes for individuals with disabilities or other vulnerable populations. The consideration of gender may be overlooked in project proposals unless structural mechanisms are established to ensure its integration.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paras 110–111; Finding 3 on Factors Affecting Performance (Section 4.9.3); Monitoring gap (Section 4.7.2).
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	UNEP; LUCCC PoCs; Climate Analytics (curriculum revision)
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Short-term: to be built into any future project document from inception

Recommendation #7:	**Create Regional UNILEAD Think Tanks for francophone and lusophone countries, and consider establishing anglophone think tanks for the LDCs in Africa and Asia in a potential Phase 2.**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	To effectively address language barriers and enhance the utilize of human and knowledge resources, it is recommended that the think tanks in Senegal (UCAD/INTERFACE) and Mozambique (UEM/ADAPTACOMoz) serve as replication hubs for establishing regional Francophone and Lusophone think tanks across Africa. Drawing on the model of the Think Tank in Uganda (Makerere/CFH), the establishment of Anglophone regional think tanks within Anglophone countries should be considered. Similarly, inspired by the Think Tank in Nepal (Pokhara/NCI), the creation of a regional think tank encompassing Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh is advised, with the possibility of future expansion to other Asian LDCs.

Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paras 84; Section 4.4 (Effectiveness).
Priority Level:	Medium
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	UNEP; LUCCC Network; UCAD/INTERFACE; UEM/ADAPTACOMoz; Makerere/CFH; Pokhara/NCI)
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Long-term: to be incorporated in a potential UNILEAD 2.0 design

Recommendation #8:	**Proactively communicate UNILEAD results through UNFCCC, GEF, and LDC Group advocacy channels to attract co-financing and support model replication. Specifically: (1) present UNILEAD results at the next UNFCCC COP LDC Group side event; (2) submit a knowledge brief to the GEF Knowledge Management Platform; (3) develop a two-page replication brief for bilateral donors (SECO, NORAD, GIZ, AFD) active in the four think-tank countries; (4) register the WeAdapt platform with NAP Global Network and UNFCCC NDC Registry as an endorsed training resource.**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	UNILEAD's results — particularly the five-short courses package in three languages and the think tank model — are insufficiently visible at the international climate governance level. Failure to communicate results proactively reduces the project's catalytic potential and limits co-financing prospects for a second phase.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paras 116–119; Finding 4 on Factors Affecting Performance (Section 4.9.6); Annex VII.
Priority Level:	Medium
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	UNEP; LDC Group Secretariat.
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Short-term: first communication outputs within 6 months of project closure

Recommendation #9:	**Develop digital versions of the training, including the five concise courses on climate financing, to enhance accessibility and incentivize faculty and government engagement in the formulation of climate finance programme proposals.**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	There is an on-going need to continue to investigate opportunities to modify the short courses to fit diverse needs, such as MSc programmes. The short courses were informative and useful as a comprehensive resource, but the detailed content was a potential training obstacle. The depth hampers offering all five courses consecutively. LUCCC members suggested packaging the courses as short-term training options to secure funding for service and certification programmes on climate adaptation finance at various levels. These trainings require modest funds and human resources. Members could collaborate with government and university to find in-kind resources to reduce costs.
Cross-reference(s) to relevant paragraphs	Paras 33, 61, 85, 150
Priority Level:	Medium
Type of Recommendation	Partner
Responsibility:	LUCCC members; LDC Group Secretariat.
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Medium-term: within 18 months

ANNEX I. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

This annex will be completed if there were any stakeholder comments that are not/only partially accepted by the consultant.

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

Page Ref	Stakeholder comment	Evaluator(s) Response	UNEP Evaluation Office Response
	XX	XX	

ANNEX II. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Evaluation Criteria	Indicators / Means of verification	Data Sources	Evaluation Questions
A. Strategic relevance			
i. Alignment to the UNEP Medium term strategy (MTS), programme of Work (POW), and other strategic priorities	• Degree of alignment between project objectives and UNEP strategic priorities • Alignment to UNEP POW • Alignment to UNEP MTS	• Project Document and Deliverables • UN Environment Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work	• Was the UNILEAD Project in line with UNEP's mandate and how? • Is the Project responding to UNEP strategies and programme of work, and how (qualitative and quantitative contributions)?
ii. Alignment to Donor Strategic Priorities – the GEF	• Degree of alignment between project objectives and GEF strategic priorities	• Project documents • Project deliverables (strategies, activity reports) • GEF 7 – Strategic Priorities	• Was the UNILEAD Project in line with GEF 7's programming strategic priorities and how?
iii. Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities	• Degree of alignment between project objectives and national and regional (subnational level) strategic priorities in terms of climate change adaptation, climate financing, development, and environmental protection • Degree of coordination, complementarity, and alignment with other relevant initiatives • Number and scale of co-financing	• Project document and deliverables • National and regional strategies • Think tank Coordinators • LUCCC and LDC coordinators • NFPs • Government representatives of other national and regional initiatives	UNEP and START International project managers; Think tank coordinators; NFPs: • What key national/ sub-national strategies did the project strongly supports or aligned with? • Was the Project responding to the stated environmental concerns and needs of the countries/sub- regions/regions? • With which initiatives did the project coordinate? • How is this coordination demonstrated (meetings, emails, calls, joint missions, etc.)?
iv. Complementarity with relevant existing interventions / Coherence	• Extent to which the project activities accounted for planned and ongoing initiatives that address similar needs in the same target groups, including optimising synergies and avoiding duplication of effort or being implemented by other agencies in the same country, sector or institution.	• Project documents • Project deliverables (strategies, activity reports) • Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) • Focus-Group Discussion	• To what extent was the project coherent with other relevant interventions? • To what extent did the Project, at design and/or mobilization phase, take account of ongoing and/or planned initiatives? • To what extent did the Project team make efforts to ensure that the Project was complementary to other UNEP and UN interventions, and optimize any synergies?
	• Extent to which the project applied the UN Common Understanding of the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. • Extent to which the project adhered to the UNEP Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment.		• Did the project address human rights and gender equality?

Evaluation Criteria	Indicators / Means of verification	Data Sources	Evaluation Questions
	• Extent to which the project context incorporated gender-related policies/plans/processes or trends linked with the project theme. • Extent to which marginalised groups were consulted in project design and implementation (as appropriate). • Existence of procedures and strategies related to gender equality, inclusion of gender experts etc.		
	• Assessment of extent of country ownership, including consideration of management difficulties faced during the COVID pandemic • Assessment of stakeholder engagement and interaction/cooperation throughout the project implementation		• To what extent was country ownership achieved through the project? • How was the project implementation/ activities adjusted in response to crisis, such as COVID-19?
B. Quality of the project design			
Relevance and logic of Project Objectives, activities, Outputs and Outcomes according Project Quality Design template (see Annex 4).	• Result of Overall Project Design Quality rating	• Project document • Interviews with PMU	• The Quality of Project Design is assessed using the template provided by the UNEP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO).
C. Nature of external context			
Challenges posed by the social, political, environmental and institutional context in which the project was implemented	• Key obstacles faced by the project team during implementation, and how they were tackled or affected the project • Number of Project delays / extensions, ProDoc / log frame revisions and budget revisions	• Activity reports, PIRs • KII with Project Management Unit	PROJECT MANAGER, PMU: • Did the project team face any obstacles related to the social, political, environmental, and institutional context? • If so, how did these contexts affect project implementation? • What measures were taken to limit these potential negative impacts? • Were these measures effective?
D. Effectiveness			
i. Availability of Outputs	• Implementation of activities as described in the revised project logical framework • Concrete examples of Outputs being used by end users • Approved Project extensions / budget revisions • Involvement of stakeholders in the production of Outputs	• Project Document • Project progress reports • PIRs • KIIs and FGDs with Project team members • KIIs with Think tank coordinators • KIIs with NFPs • KIIs with LUCCC coordinators	PROJECT MANAGER, PMU: • Was the work plan described in the project document being followed? If not, why not? • Were planned timelines met and if not, what caused delays? • Were Outputs and milestones delivered on time and as planned? If not, what were the reasons of delay/changes?

Evaluation Criteria	Indicators / Means of verification	Data Sources	Evaluation Questions
			• What is the quality of these Outputs? • To what extent do the Outputs contribute to their planned Outcomes? • How useful, relevant and appropriate did beneficiaries find the Outputs produced by the Project? • Which factors contributed to the achievement of Outputs (and/or what were the reasons Outputs were not produced)?
ii. Achievement of Project Outcomes	• Level of achievement of the project outcomes as per revised project logical framework • Number national mechanisms and policies for requirements of climate finance and accessing it through project proposals written by the think tanks. • Amount of new funds secured from the international donor community through project outreach and advocacy, and the provision of technical expertise at country levels to climate change adaptation projects • Level of dissemination among other project parties of the Project's lessons learned	• Project Document • Project Progress reports • PIRs • KIIs and FGDs with PMU, Project manager • KIIs with Think tank coordinators • KIIs with NFPs • KIIs with LUCCC coordinators	PROJECT MANAGER, PMU: • What concrete outcomes can be linked directly to project interventions? How? • Were all the targets, results and activities indicated in the revised Results Framework relevant, and if not, what recommendations can be made for a future project? • How likely are the project's Outcomes sustainable over time? PMU, THINK TANK COORDINATORS: • What budget is allocated to the think tanks for its sustainability? What is your source of financing? • What is the coordination and collaboration level with the LUCCC and NFP coordinators? Please state examples. THINK TANK COORDINATORS, BENEFICIARY GRADUATE STUDENTS: • Has the project built capacities for you to be able to write project proposals on accessing climate finance projects? • How many project proposals have you written by now? • How many of them were approved by the Climate Financing Institutions? LUCCC COORDINATORS, NFPS, GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES: • Did your institution make use of the services of the think-tanks to date? • How many projects were prepared by the think tanks for your government? • What is the long-term maintenance plan for this infrastructure of the think tanks?

Evaluation Criteria	Indicators / Means of verification	Data Sources	Evaluation Questions
iii. Likelihood of Impact	• Number of Institutional arrangements between the think tanks and the governments to use their services • Number of projects written by the think tanks • Potential co-benefits or negative effects of the project activities	• Project Document • Project Progress reports • PIRs • KIIs and FGDs with PMU, Project manager • KIIs with Think tank coordinators • KIIs with NFPs • KIIs with LUCCC coordinators	PMU, THINK TANK COORDINATOR: • What is the likelihood of expected positive impacts to be realized? • To what extent have any possible negative effects been identified in the Project as risks? • How successful was the Project in playing a catalytic role and/or promoting the scaling up or replication of Project results? • Is the Project likely to contribute to the long-lasting changes represented by the Sustainable Development Goals, and/or the intermediate-level results reflected in UNEP's MTS, POW and national strategic priorities of participating countries? Are there any perceptible co-benefits or negative effects of the project activities? • Can you cite any examples? • If there are negative effects, have you proposed solutions? If so, what are they? If not, have you raised the issues in question? With whom?
E. Financial management			
i. Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures	• Timeliness of financial reports and audits • Clarity of the financial reporting process • Completeness of project financial information	• Project budget • PIRs • Budget reviews • Financial Reporting and Audits • PMU and UN Environment • Interview with UNEP FMO • Interviews with PC and PSC • Interviews with Project partners that received financial support	UNEP PM, UNEP FUND MANAGEMENT OFFICER (FMO); PMU • Was the Project implemented in compliance with UN financial management standards and procedures? • Were financial adjustments required? If so, were these explained and justified? • Did the cash advances support project activities in a timely manner? Were there any payment delays? • If so, did these delays cause delays for certain activities? Which ones?

ii. Completeness of financial information	• Approval of contracting documents, Project reports and financial reporting
	• -Alignment of expenditures during Project implementation with approved budget
	• Adequacy of the financial management:
	  o Development of annual budgets, budgets by region, and implementation rates
	  o Annual disbursement rate
	  o Degree of diligence demonstrated in fund management by the project coordination unit
	  o Management of procurement procedures and recruitment of service providers
	  o Operating costs compared to forecasts
		• Budget reviews
		• Audits
		• Project team and UN Environment
		• Cofinance partners
		• Interview with UNEP FMO
		• Interviews with PC and PSC
		• Interviews with Project partners that received financial support
			• Was the Projects' key financial
			• information complete?
			• What was the actual expenditure across the life of the Project?
			• To what extent were the projects' expenditures in line with the corresponding approved budget?
			• What changes, if any, have been
			• made to the projects' budget and
			• why?
			• How were co-finance resources used to support the project? What were the impacts?

Evaluation Criteria	Indicators / Means of verification	Data Sources	Evaluation Questions
	• Co-finance mobilisation		
iii. Communication between financial and Project management staff	• Communication between Project management and financial management staff	• Project budget • Financial reports, audit reports • Interview with UNEP FMO • Interviews with PC and PSC • Interviews with Project partners that received financial support	• To what extent did the quality of communication between Project management and financial management staff affect project efficiency?
F. Efficiency			
Cost-effectiveness and timeliness of Project execution	• Implementation in the most efficient manner possible, compared to other approaches or alternatives o Use of other initiatives and partnerships to improve the project's efficiency o Ability of the project team to build on the existing institutions, agreements, partnerships, data sources, synergies, and complementarity with other pre-existing initiatives to maximize the project's efficiency • Efficiency of the contracting processes • Measures taken to optimize project timelines and manage unforeseen events (e.g., socio-political instability) • Number of Project extensions, budget adjustments, revisions • Number of measures to mitigate delays • Timeliness of report submission	• Project documents • Planning documents • Budget revisions • Financial reports • PIRS • PMU and FMO • PSC meetings	UNEP PMU, PROJECT MANAGER, FMO: • Were any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximize results within the secured budget and agreed Project timeframe? • Did the Project make use of / build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, etc. to increase Project efficiency? How? • What factors have caused delays (if any) and have affected Project execution, costs and effectiveness? How? • If so, have you changed your approach to avoid further delays? • Can you name any measures that have allowed you to save time in project implementation? • Were events leading to completion of activities sequenced efficiently? • What was the role of the Project's • governance structure and management approach on its efficiency? • Were there any initiatives or partnerships set up to maximise the project's efficiency?
G. Monitoring and Reporting			
i. Monitoring design and budgeting	• Indicators SMART • Quality of monitoring plan • Number and quality of monitoring documents • Sufficient budgetary resources allocated to monitoring • Monitoring roles clearly defined o Central project team o Local project teams o UNEP (Evaluation Manager / Evaluation Office) • External experts	• Project document • Work plans • Project team, UNEP	PROJECT COORDINATOR, M&E OFFICER: • Were there sufficient budgetary resources to carry out the monitoring described in the Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy? • Do you feel that monitoring roles were well defined? • To what extent were the monitoring plans designed to track progress against SMART indicators?
ii. Monitoring of project implementation	• Adequate timing of the baseline studies and its adequacy to allow for effective monitoring? • Number and quality of monitoring documents	• Project Document • Terms of Reference for Baseline Studies • Baseline Studies	PMU, M&E OFFICER: • To what extent were the monitoring plans operational?

Evaluation Criteria	Indicators / Means of verification	Data Sources	Evaluation Questions
		• PIR • Project budget • Project progress reports • Financial reports • Monitoring reports • Interviews with PMU and PSC	• To what extent did the monitoring system facilitate the timely tracking of results and progress towards Project Objectives? • To what extent was the information, generated by the monitoring system, used to adapt and improve Project execution, achievement of Outcomes and ensure sustainability? • To what extent were the allocated funds for monitoring actually used to support monitoring?
iii. Project reporting	• Timing of the MTR/ TE and other progress reports • Quality of reports submitted • Budget availability • Use of GEF-related tracking tools • Use of recommendations (from PSC, UN Environment, MTR, etc.) • Use of monitoring data for adaptive management	• PIRs • Other monitoring reports (tracking tools, quarterly and ad hoc reports) • Audits • KIIs with PMU and PSC	PMU, M&E OFFICER: • Have the project status reports been delivered in a timely manner? • To what extent have other UNEP and donor reporting requirements been fulfilled?
H. Sustainability			
i. Socio-political sustainability	• Concrete integration of sustainability into the intervention logic • Extent to which the project outcomes are likely to be sustained following project closure, based on the socio-political dimension • Number of projects prepared by the Think tank, involving improvements of livelihoods that are approved by the climate financing institutions	• Project Document & CEO ER • Sustainability Strategies • KIIs and FGDs with PMU, Project manager • KIIs with Think tank coordinators • KIIs with NFPs • KIIs with LUCCC coordinators	PMU, THINK TANK COORDINATORS, NFP, LUCCC COORDINATORS: • To what extent are social or political factors supporting the continuation and upscaling of the benefits derived from project outcomes. • What is the extent of ownership, interest and commitment among government and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forward? • Are capacity development efforts likely to remain a priority and be sustained?
ii. Financial sustainability	• Amount of funding available • Formulation of an exit strategy, with the following dimensions: ○ Institutional ○ Financial ○ Social ○ Economic ○ Environmental • Extent to which the project outcomes are likely to be sustained following project closure, based on the financial dimension	• Project Document & CEO ER • Sustainability Strategies • Steering Committee Meeting Minutes • Project Team & UN Environment • Beneficiaries • Direct Observations • KIIs and FGDs with PMU, Project manager • KIIs with Think tank coordinators • KIIs with NFPs • KIIs with LUCCC coordinators	PMU, THINK TANK COORDINATORS, NFP, LUCCC COORDINATORS: • Were all project identified risks discussed and To what extent are project outcomes dependent on future funding for their benefits to be sustained? • Has an exit strategy been formulated? Was it implemented and how? Was there a budget to support it? • What are the alternative means to financially secure the think tank, if they have not been provided to date?

Evaluation Criteria	Indicators / Means of verification	Data Sources	Evaluation Questions
	• Integration of adaptation into regional and national strategies, including budgets		• To what extent are Project Outcomes dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained? • Is there any government funding secured to sustain the think tanks established by the UNILEAD project? • What efforts are being made to secure funding for future complementary activities?
iii. Institutional sustainability	• Number and quality of policies and legal and accountability frameworks • Number of follow-up activities initiated by governments • Extent to which the project outcomes are likely to be sustained following project closure, based on the institutional dimension • Actions aimed at strengthening institutional capacities, ensuring ownership by national and local stakeholders, and the potential of these actions to improve sustainability • Mainstreaming of various potential risks o Socio-political instability o Institutional turnover o Anthropogenic pressure on ecosystems o Climatic factors o Economic factors o Dependence on project financial support	• Project Progress Reports • KIIs and FGDs with PMU, Project manager • KIIs with Think tank coordinators • KIIs with NFPs • KIIs with LUCCC coordinators	PMU, THINK TANK COORDINATORS, NFP, LUCCC COORDINATORS: • To what extent does the sustainability of project outcomes dependent on institutional frameworks and governance.? • Will institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. be robust enough to continue delivering the benefits associated with the project outcomes after project closure? • Are institutional capacity development efforts likely to be sustained following project closure? • Has adaptation been integrated into regional and national strategies, including budgets? • In your opinion, what actions aimed at strengthening institutional capacity and ensuring ownership by national and local stakeholders have been the most useful? • How would you recommend improving a project sustainability, based on your experience?
I. Factors affecting project performance and cross-cutting issues:			
i. Preparation and readiness	• Number and quality of appropriate measures taken (if necessary) • Quality of partner agreements • Measures taken to address weaknesses in project design or respond to changes taking place between project approval, securing funds and mobilising the project.	• Project Document • Project reports • Project Steering Committee Meeting Minutes • Partner agreements • Interviews with PC and PSC • Interviews with other project stakeholders and beneficiaries • Interviews with government representatives	PROJECT MANAGER AND PMU, THINK TANK COORDINATORS: • Were appropriate measures taken to either address weaknesses in the Project design or respond to changes that took place between Project approval, securing of the funds and Project mobilization? Which measures? • What was the nature and quality of engagement with stakeholder groups by the Project team during Project preparation? • What process was followed to assess the capacities of implementing partners and develop the partnership agreements?

Evaluation Criteria	Indicators / Means of verification	Data Sources	Evaluation Questions
			• Were initial staffing and financing arrangements sufficient to drive implementation? Assessment of degree of project implementation from preparation phase to start of activities determine efficiency and initial implementation, considering: o Nature and quality of engagement of stakeholder groups by the project team o Confirmation of partner capacity and development of partner agreements o Initial staffing and financing arrangements.
ii. Quality of project management and supervision	• Project management, including how the project coordination unit (Executing Agency) is organized and manages regional teams, and the management of human and financial resources • Management by regional staff • Risk identification and management system • Strengths and weaknesses of UNEP's (implementing Agency) project management	• KIIs and FGDs with PMU, Project manager • KIIs with Think tank coordinators • KIIs with NFPs • KIIs with LUCCC coordinators	PROJECT MANAGER AND PMU, THINK TANK COORDINATORS: • What were the main challenges in managing the coordination team? At the national level? At the regional level? • In your opinion, what are UNEP's strengths and weaknesses in managing this project? • Were these strengths sufficiently exploited? • Were the risks as identified in the latest PIR tackled? How? • Was Project management by UNEP pro-active and responding timely and adequality to any issues encountered within the Project? • What was the nature of communication and collaboration with stakeholders? • What was the nature of communication and collaboration with UNEP staff and the Think Tank, LUCCC and NFP coordinators? How were risks managed? Did this require use of problem-solving and/or Project adaptation? How?
iii. Stakeholders participation and cooperation	• Number of stakeholders identified and actively involved in Project implementation • Number of stakeholders satisfied with the stakeholder participation • Evidence of participatory development of the project's intervention logic o National/local o Administration/communities/private sector/associations/NGOs	• Project document & CEO ER • Documents establishing partnerships (e.g., MoU) • Activity reports • Minutes and attendance sheets for workshops, seminars, training sessions, and Project Steering Committee meetings • Beneficiaries & partners • PIRs • Other reports • KIIs and FGDs with PMU, Project manager	PROJECT MANAGER AND PMU, THINK TANK COORDINATORS: • Were all important Project stakeholders properly identified at Project design and duly involved in Project implementation? • What consultation and communication mechanisms were put in place to ensure an active stakeholder engagement and ownership? Were these effective? • What was the level of support provided to maximize collaboration and coherence between stakeholders?

Evaluation Criteria	Indicators / Means of verification	Data Sources	Evaluation Questions
	• Number and types of partnerships established during project implementation (associations, NGOs, universities, etc.) • Active implementation of partnerships beyond their formal establishment • Evidence of representative participation of the population in the project's various activities • Evidence of consideration of stakeholders' observations, requests, and comments in the flexible project management	• KIIs with Think tank coordinators • KIIs with NFPs • KIIs with LUCCC coordinators	• What measures were taken to ensure inclusion and participation of all differentiated groups, including gender and vulnerable groups?
iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender dimension	• Existence of activities and results that take gender into account ○ Quality of analyses justifying the consideration of this dimension • Existence of indicators disaggregated by gender • Percentage of women present at various seminars, training sessions, and Steering Committee meetings • Considerations for Human rights • Number of gender and human rights stakeholders identified and actively involved in Project implementation • Number of stakeholders satisfied with the stakeholder participation realized • Evidence that sensitivity in gender has been observed in Project design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation activities, including gender distribution in participation in Project activities and events	• Project document & CEO ER • Minutes and attendance sheets for workshops, seminars, training sessions, and Steering Committee meetings • KIIs with PMU, PM • KIIs and FDGs with project Beneficiaries • KIIs with Think Tank Coordinators	PROJECT COORDINATOR, BENEFICIARY COMMUNITIES – WOMEN: • Which activities and products take gender into account? • What percentage of women attend the various seminars, training sessions, and steering committee meetings? • As a woman, were you consulted during the project design phase? Do you feel that the project sufficiently supported interventions aimed at improving your livelihood? • -To what extent did the Project intervention adhere to UNEPs policy and strategy for gender and human rights? • To what extent did Project implementation and monitoring take into consideration: * Possible inequalities (especially gender-related) * Specific vulnerabilities of women, youth, children) to climate change adaptation and mitigation * The role of disadvantaged groups (especially gender-related) in mitigating or adapting to climate change
v. Environmental and social safeguards	• Frequency of review of risk ratings • Number of monitoring reports that include monitoring of safeguard issues • Evidence of adequate responses to • safeguard issues • Did the project effectively apply Environmental and Social Safeguards in its operations?	• Project reports • KIIs • ProDoc • PIRs • Final report • Interviews with PMU and PSC • Interviews representatives of other Stakeholders	• To what extent were UNEP's requirements, with respect to environmental and social safeguards, met (through the process of environmental and social screening at Project approval stage, risk assessment and management) of potential environmental and social risks and impacts associated

Evaluation Criteria	Indicators / Means of verification	Data Sources	Evaluation Questions
		• Interviews with government representatives • Awareness raising materials developed within the Project	with Project and programme activities? • To what extent were the following activities carried out: * Review of risk ratings on a regular basis * Monitoring of Project Implementation for possible safeguard issues * Providing responses to safeguard issues; • To what extent did the Project management minimize UNEP's environmental footprint? What measures, if any, where taken? • Were UNEP requirements met, including: - Regular reviews of risk ratings; - Monitoring project implementation for possible safeguard issues; - Responding (where relevant) to safeguard issues through risk avoidance, minimization, mitigation or offsetting; and - Reporting on the implementation of safeguard management measures taken. • To what degree were issues arising from the project environmental/ risk assessment impact in relation to gender and marginalized groups integrated? • The extent to which the management of the project minimized UNEP's environmental footprint. • Implementation of management measures against Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval.
vi. Country ownership and driven-ness	• Involvement of national stakeholders ○ Number of government officials present at the various seminars, training sessions, and Steering Committee meetings ○ Number of laws, regulations, etc. influenced by the project ○ Existence of activities directly aimed at improving national stakeholders' ownership of the project's main issues (climate change adaptation, climate financing) • Perceived and measured progress	• ProDoc • PIRs • Contracts/terms of reference • Minutes and attendance sheets for workshops, seminars, training sessions, and Steering Committee meetings • Laws, regulations, etc. • PIR • KIIs with PMU, PM • KIIs and FDGs with NFPs • KIIs with Think Tank Coordinators	• To what extent was the government / public sector qualitatively involved with the Project? (in respect to the need to embed the Outputs and Outcomes of Project work in their respective institutions) • How did this contribute to embed changes in their respective institutions and offices? • To what extent do these representatives/agencies consider the needs or interest of all gendered and marginalized groups?

Evaluation Criteria	Indicators / Means of verification	Data Sources	Evaluation Questions
	• Number of Project Outputs and Outcomes entrenched in government / public sector institutions • Degree to which Project results have been adopted and championed nationally • Degree to which countries have willingly resourced the Project and its Outcomes and indicated on-going budgetary funding and capacity for the UNILEAD project and the think tanks established		
vii. Communication and public awareness	• Existence and number of communication media o Types of media o Quality o Frequency • Target audiences and those reached o Distribution o Targets (by gender, age, socio-professional category, etc.) o Audience assessment • Operative communication platforms • Discussion boards • Degree on awareness of project stakeholders on existence of the think tanks and the services they offer • Knowledge of project stakeholders of the UNILEAD website, the repository of documents and the Short Courses on Climate Finance for CCAM 1 to 5 • Existence, number, nature, quality, and reach of awareness campaigns • Existence of measures of the impact of these campaigns o Surveys o Interviews • Different categories of target populations o Women o Youth o Elderly • Indigenous populations	• Project document • Communication materials • Awareness campaign materials • KIIs with PMU, PM • KIIs and FDGs with NFPs • KIIs with Think Tank Coordinators • KIIs and FGDs with project Beneficiaries •	PROJECT COORDINATOR, COMMUNICATION OFFICER, PROJECT BENEFICIARIES: NFPS, GRADUATE STUDENTS: • How did the project communicate about its objectives and progress made? • How were learning and experience sharing communicated between Project partners and interested groups? • Which public awareness activities were undertaken during Project implementation? • To what extent did they influence attitudes or shape behaviour among wider communities and civil society at large? How? • To what extent were existing • Communication channels and networks used effectively, including meeting the differentiated needs of gendered or marginalized groups • Are you aware of the UNILEAD website, the repository of documents and the Short Courses on Climate Finance for CCAM 1 to 5? • Are you aware of the existence of the think tank and the services they offer? • What kind of awareness-raising actions were carried out to encourage ownership of the project by national and local stakeholders? • What communication channels were used? Who did you reach out to?

ANNEX III. EVALUATION ITINERARY AND STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

Stakeholders consulted during the evaluation

Country	Organisation / Institution	Position and Role in the Project	Date of Interview	Gender
Project Management Unit; Project Steering Committee				
Kenya	UNEP Evaluation Office	Evaluation Manager Climate Change and Security Project	2025, 2026	F
Kenya	UNEP's Climate Change Adaptation Unit (CCAU); UNEP Ecosystems Division	Project Manager UNILEAD Implementation Agency	01.12.2025	F
Kenya	UNEP's Climate Change Adaptation Unit (CCAU); UNEP Ecosystems Division	Project Manager UNILEAD Implementation Agency	27.01. 2026	F
Kenya	UNEP's Climate Change Adaptation Unit (CCAU); UNEP Ecosystems Division	Portfolio Manager / Senior Programme Officer GEF Climate Change Adaptation Portfolio	05.12.2025	F
Kenya	UNEP's Climate Change Adaptation Unit (CCAU); UNEP Ecosystems Division	FINANCE AND BUDGET ASSISTANT	20.03. 2026	F
Kenya	UNEP's Climate Change Adaptation Unit (CCAU); UNEP Ecosystems Division	2021-22 Project Manager UNILEAD Implementation Agency	05.12.2025	F
USA	START International	Executive Director	2025, 2026	M
USA	START International	Managing Director / Director of Programs	04.12.2025	F
Senegal	START International	Project Specialist	04.12.2025	F
Kenya	Climate Analytics	UNI-LEAD mentoring institution	05.12.2025	M
Bhutan	Climate Analytics	UNI-LEAD mentoring institution	08.12.2026	F
Bangladesh	Independent University of Bangladesh, formally with the International Centre for Climate Change and Development	UNI-LEAD capacity development hub	09.12.2025	M
Senegal	Climate Analytics	Office of the LDC Group Chair	09.12.2025	F
UK	Climate Finance Action Network	UNI-LEAD Project Steering Committee member	16.01.2026	F
Canada	Climate Finance Action Network	UNI-LEAD Project Steering Committee member	08.12.2026	M
India	UNDP	UNI-LEAD Project Steering Committee member	16.01.2026	F
LUCCC Points of Contact				
Liberia	University of Liberia	LUCCC Point of Contact's team	10.12.2025	M
Tanzania	University of Dar es Salaam	LUCCC Point of Contact	23.12.2025	M
Tanzania	University of Dar es Salaam	LUCCC Point of Contact's team	23.12.2025	M
Ethiopia	Addis Ababa University	LUCCC Point of Contact's team	26.12.2025	F
Rwanda	University of Rwanda	LUCCC Point of Contact	15.12.2025	M
Rwanda	University of Rwanda	LUCCC Point of Contact's team	15.12.2025	M
Rwanda	University of Rwanda	LUCCC Point of Contact's team	15.12.2025	F
Malawi	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources	LUCCC Point of Contact	08.12.2025	M
Bhutan	Royal University of Bhutan	LUCCC Point of Contact	18.12.2025	M
Think-tanks				
Nepal				
Nepal	Pokhara University	Think-tank coordinator	16.01.2026	M
Nepal	Pokhara University	Think-tank staff member	16.01.2026	F
Nepal	Climate Analytics	UNI-LEAD mentoring institution	22.01.2026	F
Senegal				
Senegal	University of Cheikh Anta Diop	Think-tank coordinator	19.03.2026	M
Senegal	University of Cheikh Anta Diop	Think-tank staff member	19.03.2026	M
Senegal	Ministry of Fishery	Ministry of Fishery and attended the Kigali final event	05.01.2026	F

Country	Organisation / Institution	Position and Role in the Project	Date of Interview	Gender
Think-tanks				
Uganda				
Uganda	Makerere University	Think-tank coordinator	16.03.2026	M
Uganda	Makerere University	Think-tank staff member	16.03.2026	M
Uganda	Makerere University	Researcher MUCCRI	16.03.2026	M
Uganda	Makerere University	Professor Meteorology	16.03.2026	M
Uganda	Makerere University	Coordinator Climate Finance Tracking Tool MUCCRI IT	16.03.2026	F
Uganda	Makerere University	Deputy Coordinator Climate Finance Tracking Tool MUCCRI IT	16.03.2026	F
Uganda	Uganda Editors Guilt	Environmental Journalist	16.03.2026	M
Uganda	ACOR – Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment Research, policy analysis and advocacy for Climate Financing – NGO	Head of ACOR	16.03.2026	M
Uganda	Makerere University	Postgraduate Students in Climate Change and Environmental Programmes at Makerere University	16.03.2026	6 F, 6 M
Uganda	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development	Head Department Climate Financing	18.03.2026	F
Uganda	Ministry of Water and Enviroment	Commissionar Department Climate Change	17.03.2026	M
Uganda	Ministry of Water and Enviroment	Climate Change Department	17.03.2026	F
Uganda	Ministry of Water and Enviroment	Commissionar Department Climate Change	17.03.2026	M
Uganda	Ugandan Development Bank	Green Finance Officer	18.03.2026	M
Uganda	Ugandan Development Bank	Manager Green Finance	18.03.2026	M
Uganda	Ugandan Development Bank	Manager Green Finance	18.03.2026	M
Mozambique				
Mozambique	Eduardo Mondlane University	Think-tank coordinator	23.03.2026	F
Mozambique	Eduardo Mondlane University	Think-tank staff member	23.03.2026	M
Mozambique	Eduardo Mondlane University	Research Chair	23.03.2026	M
Mozambique	Eduardo Mondlane University	Researcher	23.03.2026	M
Mozambique	Eduardo Mondlane University	Researcher	23.03.2026	M
Mozambique	Department of Climate Financing, Ministry of Planning and Development	Deputy Head of National Directorate of Climate Financing Ms. Ana Cleta Chiangua Direcção Nacional do Financiamento Climático – DNFC (UNFCCC NDA GCF) in Mozambique Ministry of Planning and Development	23.03.2026	F
Mozambique	Department of Climate Change, Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries	Coordinator at the Department Climate Change	24.03.2026	M
Mozambique	Department of Climate Change, Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries	Director of Department of Climate Change	24.03.2026	F
Mozambique	Department of Climate Change, Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries	Leader of process NDC 3.0	24.03.2026	M
Mozambique	Department of Climate Change, Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries	Operational GEF Focal Point of Mozambique, has to issue the Non-objection letter	24.03.2026	M
Mozambique	NGO: ODEI – Organização para o Desenvolvimento e Educação Infantil	Leader of the Youth Organization	25.03.2026	M
Mozambique	CEDES - – Comité Ecuménico para o Desenvolvimento Social	Executive Director	24.03.2026	F
Mozambique	CEDES - – Comité Ecuménico para o Desenvolvimento	Programme Manager	24.03.2026	F
Mozambique	CEDES - – Comité Ecuménico para o Desenvolvimento	Programme Managers	24.03.2026	2 F, 1 M
Mozambique	FNDS -- Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento Sustentavel	Coordinator of the Program and Project Management Office at the National Fund for Sustainable Development	25.03.2026	F

Uganda Terminal Evaluation UNILEAD Field Evaluation Mission from 14.03.-20.03.2026			
Date	**Activity**	**Time**	**Location**
Monday, 16 March 2026	Meeting at the Think Tank at the Makerere University in Uganda	9:00 a.m to 11 a.m	Kampala, Uganda
	Meeting with graduate students at Makerere University	11:00 a.m to 1 p.m	Kampala, Uganda
	Civil Society Organizations at Makerere University	2 pm to 4 pm	Kampala, Uganda
Tuesday, 17 March 2026	Meeting at the Ministry of Finance - Climate Finance Unit and the National Designated Authorities (NDA) / Focal Points for the GCF in Uganda	9:30 a.m - 12 p.m	Kampala, Uganda
	Meeting at the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) - Climate Change Department and the National Implementing Entity for GCF	2:00 p.m - 4 p.m	Kampala, Uganda
Wednesday, 18 March 2026	Uganda Development Bank	10:30 p.m - 11:30 p.m	Kampala, Uganda

Mozambique Terminal Evaluation UNILEAD Field Evaluation Mission from 20.03.-28.03.2026			
Date	**Activity**	**Time**	**Location**
Monday, 23 March 2026	Meeting at the National Directorate of Climate Financing Direcção Nacional do Financiamento Climático – DNFC (UNFCCC NDA GCF) in Mozambique	10:00 a.m to 12 p.m	Maputo, Mozambique
	Meeting at the Think Tank at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo, Mozambique	1 p.m to 3 p.m	Maputo, Mozambique
Tuesday, 24 March 2026	Meeting at the Climate Change Department at the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries (MAAP)	10:00 a.m - 12 p.m	Maputo, Mozambique
Wednesday, 25 March 2026	Youth Leaders maybe at Eduarto Mondlane University	10:00 a.m - 12 p.m	Maputo, Mozambique
	Women and Girls Organisation at their organization Comité Ecuménico para o Desenvolvimento Social (CEDES)	1 p.m - 3 p.m.	Maputo, Mozambique
Thursday, 26 March 2026	Meeting with the NDS focal point for the GCF accreditation process in Mozambique - the National Fund for Sustainable Development (FNDS) at the Ministry Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADER)	10:00 a.m - 12 p.m	Maputo, Mozambique

Tanzania Terminal Evaluation UNILEAD Field Evaluation Mission from 28.03.-03.04.2026			
Date	**Activity**	**Time**	**Location**
Monday, 30 March 2026	Meeting at the Dar Es Salaam University	10:00 a.m to 12 p.m	Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
	Meeting with Dr. Mabhye - Head of the Center for Climate Change - at the University of Dar Es Salaam	1 p.m to 2 p.m	Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
	Meeting with Dr. Moshy - Gender Focal Point at the University of Dar Es Salaam	2 p.m to 3 p.m	Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
	Meeting - Focus-Group Discussions with Graduate Students at the Dar Es Salaam University (especially women and students with vulnerabilities)	3 p.m to 4 p.m	Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
Tuesday, 31 March 2026	Travel from Dar Es Salaam to Dodoma by train	8:00 a.m - 11 p.m	Dodoma, Tanzania
	Meeting at the Prime Minister's Office – Local Government Authority – RALG	1:00 p.m - 3 p.m	Dodoma, Tanzania
	Meeting at the Ministry of Finance – Responsible for Climate Finance (GCF projects)	3 p.m - 5 p.m	Dodoma, Tanzania
Wednesday, 1 April 2026	Meeting at the Vice President's Office	10:00 a.m - 12 p.m	Dodoma, Tanzania
	Travel from Dodoma to Dar Es Salaam by train	3 p.m - 6 p.m	Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

ANNEX IV. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Inception

- Project design documents, original Theory of Change, Project results framework (LogFrame) - original and updated, and project budget;
- Project Document (ProDoc);
- ToR for the Terminal Evaluation;
- Chief Executive Officer Endorsement Request (CEO ER); and
- Baseline study from the inception phase and its annexes.

Additional for Terminal Evaluation

- Activity Report from 2018–2022;
- Progress Implementation Reports (PIRs) for 2023, 2024 and 2025;
- Final Report;
- Budget revisions;
- Financial reports;
- Communication Strategy and communication documents;
- M & E Strategy;
- Sustainability Strategy;
- Gender Action Plan;
- Minutes of the project steering committees;
- Annual work plans and implementation reports (PIRs);
- Terminal Results Report;
- Project website: https://unilead.weadapt.org/project-resources/, including its climate finance repository;
- Progress reports from collaborating partners;
- Meeting minutes and relevant correspondence;
- Mapping of relevant sources of finance for climate change adaptation for the least developed countries, November 2023, UNFCCC LDC EXPERT GROUP, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- Project Implementation Reviews and Tracking Tool; and
- Training materials, especially for Short Course 1 to 5: Basics of Climate Finance in the LDC context, Public and Private Sector Financing for Climate Change Adaptation, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Climate Finance, Fundamentals of Developing a Climate Rationale, and Developing concept notes and funding proposals.

ANNEX V. UNILEAD PROJECT EXPENDITURE

QUARTERLY EXPENDITURE STATEMENT (US$)

Project title:	Strengthening endogenous capacities of LDCs to access finance for climate change adaptation
Project number:	GFL- Ecosystems Division - S1-32LDL-000052/SB-018532
Project executing partner:	START INTERNATIONAL
Project implementation period:	From: Jan-22 To: Jun-25
Project number:	GEF ID: 10525; Agreement Number 2000008848; S1-32LDL-000052; SB-018532
Reporting period:	From: To:

UNEP Budget Line		GEF-approved budget: Total project budget (as per the recorded budget revision June 2025)	GEF-approved budget: Current year budget	Actual expenditures incurred*: Cummulative expenditures from previous period	Jan-Mar Qtr 1	Apr-Jun Qtr 2	Jul-Sep Qtr 3	Oct-Dec Qtr 4	Current year total	Cummulative expenditures to-date	Cummulative unspent balance to-date
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H=D+E+F+G	I=C+H	J=A-I
1100	**Project personnel**								-	-	-
1101	Senior Project Manager	140,000	7,335	132,665	1,335	6,000	-	-	7,335	140,000	-
1102	Junior Project Manager	116,000	14,001	102,000	-	14,000	-	-	14,000	116,000	(0)
1103	Administrative and financial assistant	99,070	6,337	92,734	2,266	4,070	-	-	6,336	99,070	-
									-	-	-
1199	**Sub-total**	355,070	27,673	327,399	3,601	24,070	-	-	27,671	355,070	- 0
1200	**Consultants**	-							-	-	-
1201	International consultant to develop best practices guidebook/manual	0		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1202	Capacity development specialist based at capacity development hub university	75,000		75,000	-	-	-	-	-	75,000	-
1203	10 national consultants to conduct exploratory economic analysis of thinktank	0		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1204	5 international consultant business development experts to develop business and	0		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1205	Institutional strengthening specialist to implement institutional strengthening activities.	100,000		100,000	-	-	-	-	-	100,000	-
1206	Stipends to support 15 LUCCC university points of contact to help implement project	114,232	7,268	112,732	1,500	-	-	-	1,500	114,232	-
0	5 thinktank coordinators to help implement thinktank development activities	160,035	32,000	128,035	-	32,000	-	-	32,000	160,035	-
1299	**Sub-total**	449,267	39,268	415,767	1,500	32,000	-	-	33,500	449,267	-
SUB-CONTRACT COMPONENT									-	-	-
2100	**Sub-contracts (MOUs/LOAs for cooperating agencies)**								-	-	-
2101	MOUs with two mentor institutions for work on outcome 1.	100,000		100,000	-	-	-	-	-	100,000	-
2102	MOUs with two mentor institutions for work on outcome 2	124,422	24,422	100,000	-	24,422	-	-	24,422	124,422	-
2103	MOUs to capitalize the small grants program (Activity 2.1.1.3)	409,804	29,859	379,945	-	29,859	-	-	29,859	409,804	0
2104	Capacity development hub	30,014		30,014	-	-	-	-	-	30,014	-
2199	**Sub-total**	664,240	54,281	609,959	-	54,281	-	-	54,281	664,240	0
2300	**Sub-contracts (for commercial purposes)**								-	-	-
2301	Contractual services to develop and implement instructional webinars including at least two	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2302	Contractual services for translation services (French) for short courses	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2303	5 contractual services to develop GESI-sensitive short course curricula and implement trair	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2304	5 national IT contractual services contracts to set up online task management systems for	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2305	Contractual services to develop 2 synthesis knowledge products based on thinktank netw	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2306	Contractual services for translation services (Portuguese) for select short course materials	18,398	18,398	5,425	5,357	7,617	-	-	12,973	18,398	(0)
2307	Contractual services for microsite and communications	30,000	5,000	25,952	-	4,048	-	-	4,048	30,000	-
2399	**Sub-total**	48,398	23,398	31,377	5,357	11,665	-	-	17,021	48,398	- 0
TRAINING COMPONENT									-	-	-
3200	**Group training**								-	-	-
3201	Online learning and coordination meeting for LUCCC members and other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3202	Online learning and coordination meeting for LUCCC members and other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3203	UNI-LEAD event in Kathmandu (Dec 2022)	19,123		19,123	-	-	-	-	-	19,123	-
3204	Regional event in Dakar (May 2023)	36,509		36,509	-	-	-	-	-	36,509	-
3205	Regional event in Kampala-East and Southern combined - (May 2023)	46,403		46,403	-	-	-	-	-	46,403	-
3206	Regional event in Kathmandu (July 2023)	25003		25,003	-	-	-	-	-	25,003	-
3207	Networkwide and ThinkTank event in Kampala (Oct 2023)	103,837		103,836	-	-	-	-	-	103,836	1
3208	Culmination learning event (February 2025)	113,998	100,000	48,924	66,378	(1,304)	-	-	65,074	113,998	0
3209	Climate Analytics travel for ThinkTank mentoring	13,696		13,696	-	-	-	-	-	13,696	-
3299	**Sub-total**	358,369	100,000	293,294	66,378	- 1,304	-	-	65,074	358,367	2
3300	**Meetings/Conferences**										
3301	UNI-LEAD PMU meeting in Nairobi	26,583	-	26,583					-	26,583	-
3302	UNFCCC events in 2024	-	-	-					-	-	-
3303									-	-	-
3304									-	-	-
3399	**Sub-Total**	26,583	-	26,583	-	-	-	-	-	26,583	-
Supplies, Commodities & Materials									-	-	-
4100	**Expendable equipment**	-							-	-	-
4101	Develop logos and relevant branding materials	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
4102	Internet bundle package for LDC Chair	-		-	-	-			-	-	-
4199	**Sub-total**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Miscellaneous component									-	-	-
5300	**Sundry**								-	-	-
5301	Bank fees	2,532	1,500	2,050	326	156	-	-	482	2,532	-
5503	Audit	13,125	13,125	-	-	-		13,125	13,125	13,125	-
5399	**Sub-total**	15,657	14,625	2,050	326	156	-	13,125	13,607	15,657	-
	Total expenses incurred by the Executing Agency	1,917,584	259,245	1,706,429	77,161	120,868	-	13,125	211,154	1,917,583	1
	Expenses incurred by UNEP										
3300	**Meetings/Conferences**										
3301	UNI-LEAD PMU meeting in Nairobi	772	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	772
5500	**Evaluation**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
5501	Baseline Study	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
5502	Terminal evaluation	61,644	61,644	-	-	-			-	-	61,644
	Total expenses incurred by UNEP	62,416	61,644	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	61,644
	GRAND PROJECT TOTAL	1,980,000	320,889	1,706,429	77,161	120,868	-	13,125	211,154	1,917,583	61,645

ANNEX VI. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS ASSESSMENT

ESS PLANNING AT PROJECT DESIGN	
List any ESS issues identified at project design (e.g. SS 1.7, SS 2.3, etc.)[22]	No ESS issues were identified at project design. UNILEAD is a normative capacity-building project with no direct physical interventions, ground-level activities, or community-level implementation. The SRIF (Safeguards Risk and Impact Framework) screening conducted at CEO Endorsement confirmed a Low risk classification. No safeguard standards (SS 1–8) were triggered.
For any ESS issues identified at project design, were mitigation strategies developed (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	N/A — No ESS issues were identified at project design, so no mitigation strategies were required. However, the project document included a Stakeholder Response and Grievance Redress Mechanism as a precautionary measure, accessible to all project stakeholders via the project website.
Were any gaps in ESS issues identified at the evaluation inception phase (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	No new gaps in ESS issues were identified at the evaluation inception phase. The evaluator confirmed that the project's low-risk classification remained valid throughout implementation. No social or environmental impacts were reported in any PIR or through the Grievance Redress Mechanism.

ESS MONITORING AT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	
Is there evidence that the potential emergence of ESS issues was actively monitored during project implementation (Y/N)? [23] (If yes, briefly describe)	Yes. ESS monitoring was conducted as part of the routine project monitoring framework. PIR reporting included an annual confirmation of No adverse environmental or social safeguard impacts under the SRIF. No incidents, complaints, or safeguard-related issues were reported across all seven PSC meetings (April 2022 – June 2025) or through the Stakeholder Response and Grievance Redress Mechanism.
Is there a justification for the absence of ESS monitoring (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe[24])	N/A — ESS monitoring was conducted (see above). No justification for absence is required.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIVENESS DURING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

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

[23] ***Low risk:*** *Negative impacts minimal or negligible: no further study or impact management required.*

Moderate risk: *Potential negative impacts, but limited in scale, not unprecedented or irreversible and generally limited to programme/project area; impacts amenable to management using standard mitigation measures; limited environmental or social analysis may be required to develop an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP). Straightforward application of good practice may be sufficient without additional study.*

High risk: *Potential for significant negative impacts (e.g. irreversible, unprecedented, cumulative, significant stakeholder concerns); Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) (or Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA)) including a full impact assessment may be required, followed by an effective comprehensive safeguard management plan.*

[24] *For instance, during COVID, access to the field may have been restricted*

Identify the ESS issues/events triggered [25] by the project.[26]	No ESS issues or events were triggered by the project. UNILEAD's activities were limited to: (i) capacity-building and training workshops; (ii) development of short course curricula and training materials; (iii) institutional support for think tank establishment within existing university structures; and (iv) small grants to think tanks for advisory service delivery to governments. None of these activities triggered any safeguard standards (SS 1–8). No physical works, land use change, chemical substances, or community resettlement were involved.
Describe consequences of ESS issues/events during project implementation.	No consequences. No ESS issues or events were triggered during implementation (see above). The project maintained environmental consciousness through proactive measures: field missions and evaluation visits were geographically concentrated (Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania) to minimize the carbon footprint of evaluation travel, consistent with UNEP's sustainability commitments.
Describe the management response and identify supporting documentation. [27, 28]	No management response to ESS issues was required, as no ESS issues were triggered. The Stakeholder Response and Grievance Redress Mechanism remained active throughout the project period and received no complaints. Supporting documentation: PIR FY2023, FY2024, FY2025 (all confirm no adverse environmental or social safeguard impacts); SRIF screening document (CEO Endorsement, August 2021).
Were negative ESS effects offset by management response (Y/N)? (If yes, briefly describe)	N/A — No negative ESS effects were identified or observed during the project. The project's focus on supporting climate change adaptation in Least Developed Countries is fundamentally environmentally beneficial, contributing to the building of LDC institutional capacity to develop and implement adaptation projects that will reduce climate vulnerability.

[25] *'Triggered' refers to environmental or social issues/events that are caused or exacerbated—directly or indirectly—as a result of the project's activities, interventions, or presence.*
[26] *Select from the list of Environmental and Social Safeguards Risks in Table 1 of the template (tool 14, Safeguards Assessment Template).*
[27] *For most low-moderate risk projects, good practice approach may be sufficient. Project should demonstrate safeguard management approach in the project activities, budget, risks management, stakeholder engagement or/and monitoring segments of the project document to avoid or minimize the identified potential risks without preparing a separate safeguard management plan.*
[28] *E.g., GEF Project Implementation Report (PIR), Progress Report, Minutes, etc.*

ANNEX VII. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH TOOLS

The following communication and outreach tools were developed and used by the UNILEAD project to disseminate results and strengthen the knowledge base for LDC climate finance capacity:

1. UNILEAD Project Website (WeAdapt Platform) — A comprehensive, publicly accessible knowledge platform at https://unilead.weadapt.org/ that serves as the primary communication and dissemination tool for the project. The website includes: (i) a Climate Finance Repository with resources, country profiles, and policy-relevant outputs; (ii) five short course training materials (workbooks, PowerPoint presentations, instructor guides, and recorded videos) in English, French, and Portuguese at https://unilead.weadapt.org/short-courses/; (iii) think tank profiles and project stories; and (iv) links to all knowledge products. The platform was developed and managed by START International following the rescission of the ICCCAD contract in 2024.

2. Five Short Course Curricula on Climate Finance — Fully developed training materials for five climate finance short courses available in English, French, and Portuguese. Each course includes a participant workbook, a PowerPoint presentation, an instructor's guide, and a recorded video: (1) Fundamentals of Climate Finance in the LDC Context; (2) Public and Private Sector Financing for Climate Change Adaptation; (3) Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Climate Finance; (4) Fundamentals of Developing a Climate Rationale; (5) Developing Concept Notes and Proposals for Existing Climate Finance Mechanisms. These resources are freely accessible at https://unilead.weadapt.org/short-courses/. They are used by five LUCCC universities for government training in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, The Gambia, and Bhutan.

3. Two Synthesis Knowledge Products (Output 3.1.3) — Two written knowledge outputs synthesizing lessons learned and best practices from the four LUCCC think tanks: (i) one on institutional arrangements and impact; (ii) one on capacity development and impact. These serve as communication tools to scale the think tank model beyond the 13 participating universities and are available on the WeAdapt platform.

4. UNEP Blog Post and Media Coverage — UNEP highlighted the project on its website: https://www.unep.org/gan/news/blogpost/role-think-tanks-climate-change-adaptation. Two project stories were published on the WeAdapt platform: "The role of think tanks in climate change adaptation" and "Local minds, global impact: think tanks for climate action in LDCs."

5. Think Tank Technical Outputs (Demand-Led Products and Services) — Thirteen demand-led technical outputs produced by the four think tanks, including: Uganda (MUCCRI): a national climate finance tracking tool, a science-policy platform on climate finance, and a documentary film on climate finance in Uganda (available at https://muccrifinance.mak.ac.ug/); Senegal (INTERFACE): sectoral assessment reports and project fiches for four NAP sectors; Mozambique (CEAGRE): a capacity needs assessment, provincial adaptation plan analysis, and pilot local/provincial adaptation planning tools; Nepal (CcHEMS): two resource books on climate rationale and GESI in climate finance, disseminated through national, provincial, and municipal workshops.

6. Project Culmination Conference and Network Meetings — Five network meetings took place during the project period, surpassing the target of two. These included three in-person regional meetings (West Africa, East/Southern Africa, and South Asia) in 2023; one LUCCC-wide in-person training workshop in Kampala in October 2023; and a LUCCC-wide project culmination conference in February 2025. These events served as important opportunities for communication and knowledge sharing among all 13 LUCCC universities, think tank teams, and government partners.

ANNEX VIII. BRIEF CV OF THE EVALUATOR

Name	Iva Bernhardt
Profession	Independent Principal Evaluator, Team Leader, Multilateralist, Diplomat, Head of International Relations and Evaluation
Nationality	Macedonian, German
Country experience	**Europe:** Germany, Austria, North Macedonia, France, Serbia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Russia, Romania, Belgium, Spain, Greece, Luxembourg, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Türkiye, Malta, Cyprus **Africa:** Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, Chad, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cameroon, Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Libya, Egypt, Mali, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Sudan, South Sudan, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique **Americas:** USA, Canada, Mexico, Panama, Jamaica, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay **Asia:** Japan, Iran, China, Nepal, India
Education	Graduated Engineer (Dipl.-Ing.) Technical Environmental Protection Master of Business and Engineering (MBE) in Information Technologies

Short biography

Ms. Iva Bernhardt is an independent senior evaluation expert, multilateralist, and diplomat with over two decades of international experience in development cooperation. She has managed and led over fifty high-quality evaluations of complex projects, programmes, countries, thematic, strategic, peer-reviews, etc., for the United Nations System, Multilateral Development Banks, European Union, bilateral cooperation agencies, and other international organizations. The evaluations were mainly related to climate change and the environment, sustainable energy and industrial energy and resource efficiency, integrated natural resources management, chemical waste management, as well as youth employment, sustainable, competitive, innovative and responsible enterprise development and decent work.. Moreover, she possesses university experience as a scientific researcher, and held several managerial and internal auditor positions in the steel industry and the private sector. She holds a Master's Degree in Business and Engineering (MBE) in Information Technologies, and a Dipl.-Ing. Engineering Degree in Technical Environmental Protection. She has worked and lived in over seventy countries across the globe (Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Asia) for international corporations, organizations and multilateral development banks and donors, like Arcelor Mittal, UNEP, ILO, UNESCO, WMO, UNIDO, GEF, World Bank, IFC, AfDB, SECO, USAID, GIZ, NORAD, AFD, UKAid, KOICA, Bezos Earth

Fund etc.. She is fluent in English, French, German, Macedonian, Serbian, and has a working knowledge of Spanish and Russian.

Key specialties and capabilities cover:

Climate change and Environment, Peace & Security, Sustainable Energy, Resource Efficiency, Integrated Management of Natural Resources, Biodiversity and protected areas; Early Warning Systems, Disaster Risk Reduction, Youth Entrepreneurship, Sustainable, competitive, innovative and responsible enterprise development, Decent Work. Innovation Management, and Monitoring and Evaluation

Selected assignments and experiences

- UNIDO: Islamic Republic of Iran: Mid-Term Evaluation of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) – Global Environment Facility (GEF) project: "Industrial Energy Efficiency in Iran"
- African Development Bank (AfDB): Africa-wide: Evaluation Synthesis Report of the "African Natural Resources Centre Strategy 2015-2020" at the African Development Bank (AfDB), Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
- UNEP: Terminal Evaluation of Western Balkans (Serbia, North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina) project: "Enhancing Environmental Performance and Climate Proofing of Infrastructure Investments in the Western Balkan Region from an EU integration perspective (ClimaProof)", Vienna, Austria
- UNEP: 39 Belt and Road Countries: Terminal Review Report for UNEP – Government of China project: "Sharing Experience and Knowledge for a Sustainable Belt and Road", Geneva, Switzerland
- WMO: Ex-Post Project Evaluation of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) – UK Aid Project for the four East African Community (EAC) countries: Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania: "HIGH Impact Weather lAke sYstem (HIGHWAY) Project - a proposal framework for the Lake Victoria region - Strengthening of the Regional Meteorological Early Warning System in the Lake Victoria Basin", Geneva, Switzerland
- ILO: Mid-term Evaluation of the International Labour Organization (ILO) – Impact Insurance Facility Partnership - Agence Française de Développement (AFD), France for the following African countries: Rwanda, Kenya, Senegal, and Ghana: "Stimulating Innovation and Impact Insurance in Africa", Geneva, Switzerland
- UNEP: Functional and Mid-Term Review of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – European Union (EU), Governments of Germany, United States of America, Canada, Australia; Bezos Earth Foundation, Global Methane Hub Programme: "International Methane Emissions Observatory (IMEO)", Paris, France
- UNESCO: Final Evaluation of the regional disaster risks management in tsunamis and early warning system of the UNESCO – EU Commission DG ECHO's regional project in seven North Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean countries: Türkiye, Cyprus, Greece, Egypt, Malta, Spain and Morocco: "Strengthening the Resilience of Coastal Communities in the Northeast Atlantic, Mediterranean Region to the Impact of Tsunamis and Other Sea Level-Related Coastal Hazards (CoastWAVE)", Paris, France
- UNEP: Terminal Evaluation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – European Union (EU) Project: "Climate Change and Security" with pilot projects in Sudan and Nepal, Nairobi, Kenya
- UNESCO: Final Evaluation of the biodiversity and protected areas UNESCO Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) project: "Biodiversity Conservation and

Sustainable Natural Resource Management for Integrated Community Development in National Parks of Madagascar - (BIOCOM)" in Antananarivo, Madagascar

- ILO: Final Evaluation of the ILO projects: "Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (SCORE) Programme Phase IV" for the countries: Tunisia, Bolivia, Myanmar and Ethiopia; and BMZ / GIZ Support for Crisis Management for 100 SMEs in Tunisia (AGC Project), funded by Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany through Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in Geneva, Switzerland and Tunis, Tunisia
- World Bank – International Finance Corporation (IFC): Final independent regional project evaluation: "Western Balkans Manufacturing Value Chains, South Eastern Europe (SEE) Light Manufacturing", funded by SECO

ANNEX IX. GEF PORTAL INPUTS

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

Table 18: GEF portal inputs

Question: What was the performance at the project's completion against Core Indicator Targets?
Response: UNILEAD is a GEF-7 project (approved August 2021, GEF ID 10525) and reports against GEF-7 Core Indicators. Performance at project completion: (1) GEF Core Indicator 4 — Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender: Target 300 (120 women, 180 men). Actual: 423 total (166 women / 39%, 257 men / 61%) — exceeded by 41%. (2) GEF Core Indicator 3.2.1 — Number of institutions with increased capacity to access climate finance: Target 3 institutions at Level 3. Actual: 4 think-tank universities at Level 3 (Senegal/UCAD, Uganda/Makerere, Mozambique/UEM, Nepal/Pokhara); 6 non-think-tank universities at Level 2; 3 at Level 1 — exceeded. (3) GEF Core Indicator 3.3.2 — Number of non-academic stakeholders reached by think tank services: Target 105. Actual: 285 — exceeded by 171%. Overall GEF grant expenditure: USD 1,917,583 against an approved allocation of USD 1,980,000 (97% utilisation rate). Co-financing: USD 2,426,795 realised against USD 2,074,424 planned (117%). Source: PIR FY2025; M&E Dashboard; Final Report. See paras 88–91 of this evaluation report.
Question: What were the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program as evolved from the time of the MTR?
Response: No mid-term review was conducted (not required for an MSP). All 13 LUCCC PoCs were engaged throughout. 7 PSC meetings held. Government engagement improved progressively: 11 of 13 universities achieved sustained government engagement by project close. MoU discussions at advanced stages in all 4 think-tank countries at project close; none formally signed. Grievance Mechanism active; no complaints received. Source: PIR FY2023–2025; PSC minutes. See paras 108–109, 114–115 of this evaluation report.
Question: What were the completed gender-responsive measures and, if applicable, actual gender result areas?
Response: GESI was integrated through a Gender Action Plan (GAP) and dedicated implementation procedures. Gender-responsive measures completed: (i) a dedicated short course "Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Climate Finance" developed in English, French, and Portuguese and delivered to government officials in 5 countries; (ii) procedures established by START International and LUCCC PoCs to encourage female graduate student participation in think tank activities; (iii) gender-disaggregated training data collected and reported from project year 2 onwards. Actual gender results: 166 women trained out of 423 total (39%; target was 40%), of which 122 women participated in think-tank activities alone in the final year (Senegal data not disaggregated). Nepal and Mozambique demonstrated the strongest GESI integration into technical outputs. GESI integration was uneven across the LUCCC network; monitoring of other vulnerable/marginalised groups (including persons with disabilities) was not conducted. Source: PIR FY2023–2025; M&E Dashboard; Gender Action Plan. See paras 110–111 of this evaluation report.
Question: What was the progress made in the implementation of the management measures against the Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval? The risk classifications reported in the latest PIR

report should be verified and the findings of the effectiveness of any measures or lessons learned taken to address identified risks assessed.
Response: The SRIF screening at CEO Endorsement confirmed Low risk classification — no safeguard standards (SS 1–8) were triggered. No mitigation measures were required beyond standard good-practice approaches. ESS monitoring: Annual PIR confirmations of no adverse environmental or social safeguard impacts were provided in all PIRs (FY2022–FY2025). No ESS incidents, complaints, or issues were reported through the Stakeholder Grievance Redress Mechanism. No negative ESS impacts were identified or observed at any field mission (Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania) or through remote interviews. The Low risk classification was confirmed valid at the evaluation inception phase and throughout implementation. Supporting documentation: PIR FY2022–FY2025; SRIF document (CEO Endorsement, August 2021); Annex VI of this evaluation report. See paras 112–113 of this evaluation report.
Question: What were the challenges and outcomes regarding the project's completed Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions?
Response: The main challenge in knowledge management was the underperformance and subsequent rescission of the Capacity Development Hub (CDH) contract with ICCCAD (Bangladesh) in 2024. The CDH, intended to house training modules and serve as a shared learning platform, significantly underperformed throughout implementation. START International responded by building a replacement platform: https://unilead.weadapt.org/ (the LUCCC WeAdapt platform), which now hosts all five short course curricula, project stories, country profiles, and knowledge products in English, French, and Portuguese. Knowledge and Learning Deliverables: 5 short courses in 3 languages; 13 demand-led think tank technical outputs; 2 synthesis knowledge products (institutional arrangements and impact; capacity development and impact); 2 national climate financing manuals developed by Malawi and Liberia an based on course materials (unintended positive output). Knowledge Products/Events: 5 network meetings (exceeding target of 2); project culmination conference (February 2025); 3 regional meetings (Dakar, Kampala, Kathmandu); 2 UNEP project stories published. Communication Strategy: WeAdapt platform as primary public repository; PSC meetings and LUCCC internal communications; UNEP blog post at https://www.unep.org/gan/news/blogpost/role-think-tanks-climate-change-adaptation. Lessons Learned: Earlier CDH monitoring and due diligence on executing agency delivery capacity could have prevented the rescission; START International's rescue response was effective but added management burden. Adaptive Management: CDH contract rescinded; START built replacement platform; activities restructured to fully virtual delivery based on LUCCC PoC feedback. Source: PIRs FY2023–2025; Final Report; Annex VII of this evaluation report. See paras 88–91, 116–119 of this evaluation report.
Question: What are the main findings of the evaluation?
Response: The UNILEAD Terminal Evaluation assessed performance across 9 criteria. Key findings: (1) Strategic Relevance HS: fully aligned with UNEP MTS, GEF-7 CCA 3, Paris Agreement, and SDG 13; think tank model innovative and endogenous. (2) Quality of Project Design S: sound logic; weaknesses in original 2-year timeline and risk framework. (3) Nature of External Context MU: COVID-19 tail effects, political instability, and structural LDC financing constraints. (4) Effectiveness HS: 3 of 4 outcomes fully achieved/exceeded; 423 trained (target 300); 13 technical outputs (target 12); 285 stakeholders reached (target 105). CDH partially delivered (ICCCAD rescission), resolved by START. (5) Financial Management HS: 97% GEF expenditure; co-financing exceeded target by 17% (USD 2.43M vs 2.07M). (6) Efficiency S: reduced by timeline mismatch and CDH delay; enhanced by

START institutional knowledge and UNIDO complementarity. (7) Monitoring and Reporting HS: regular monitoring maintained; PIR quality improved post-2023 LogFrame revision; gap in disability/vulnerability monitoring. (8) Sustainability U overall (ML socio-political; U financial; MU institutional): unsigned MoUs, unproven fee-for-services model, no transition financing. (9) Factors Affecting Performance HS: LUCCC PoC ownership exceptional; adaptive management effective; government engagement variable; GESI integrated but uneven. Overall Project Performance: Highly Satisfactory (HS).

Source: UNILEAD Terminal Evaluation Report, Iva Bernhardt, 2026.

ANNEX X. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

Quality Assessment of the Evaluation Report

Evaluand Title: Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP-GEF Project titled "Strengthening endogenous capacities of least developed countries to access finance for climate change adaptation" (short title: "UNILEAD")

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

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Section A: Executive Summary	Assessment	
1. Does the ***Executive Summary*** act as a concise, accurate standalone section, especially to inform decision-making? Consider how clearly and concisely the report presents: • a clear summary of the evaluation object • evaluation objectives, scope and methodology • the overall project evaluation rating • a summary of main evaluation findings, including key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) • summary responses to key strategic evaluation questions • summary of main conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations	The Executive Summary is complete and presents a suitable stand-alone summary of the main evaluation findings, including key features of the project's performance, recommendations and lessons learned. The key strategic questions are not explicitly covered here, but they are discussed in depth in the evaluation conclusion (section 5.1)	5
Section B: The Project	Assessment	
2. Does the report clearly describe the ***key parameters, scale and complexity of the evaluand***? Consider how well the report presents: • an overview of the main issue that the project is trying to address • timeline, including dates of project approval, duration and number of phases (where appropriate) • geographic coverage (regions/countries) • total secured budget and project financing, including a table with funding sources • implementing and funding partners • institutional context (i.e. UNEP sub-programme, Division, Branch etc.) • implementation structure with diagram • UNEP results frameworks to which it contributes (e.g. PoW Direct Outcome) • summary of results framework as stated in the ProDoc (or as officially revised) • stakeholder groups organised according to relevant common characteristics • whether the project has been evaluated in the past (e.g. mid-term, by an external agency, etc.) • substantive or significant changes in design during implementation	Section is complete and includes a concise description of the purpose of the evaluand and the evaluation	6
Section C: Evaluation Methods and Theory of Change	Assessment	

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
3. Does the report present a clear, comprehensive and adequate description of the ***evaluation methodology***? Consider how well it presents the following elements, and their adequacy based on the scope of the evaluation: • statement of the purpose of the evaluation and the key intended audience for the evaluation findings • data collection methods and information sources • justification for methods used (e.g. electronic/face-to-face interviews, qualitative/quantitative analysis) • criteria and sampling strategies used to select stakeholders for consultations, and for sites/countries visited • number and types of respondents *(including in a table broken down by gender)* • strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and response rate • methods used to include the voices/experiences of different and potentially excluded groups (e.g. women, marginalised) • data verification methods (e.g. triangulation) • data analysis methods (e.g. scoring, thematic analysis) • evaluation limitations and mitigation measures (e.g. how these were addressed by the evaluator) • consideration for ethics and human rights issues, including how anonymity and confidentiality were protected	The section is complete. The evaluation methods have been clearly described, including limitations to the study. Consideration for ethics and human rights issues are included, including how anonymity and confidentiality were protected, and strategies used to observe gender considerations / include the views of marginalised or potentially disadvantaged groups	6
4. Does the report describe an assessment and reformulation of the ***Theory of Change***, and present an adequate articulation of the TOC causal pathways that were used to assess project performance (*narratively and diagrammatically)?* Consider how well the report presents: • whether the project design included a TOC • how the *TOC at Evaluation*[29] was designed (e.g. who was involved, etc) • confirmation/reconstruction of results in accordance with UNEP definitions (*including reformulation table, which may have initially been presented in the Inception Report and should appear in the Main Evaluation report.)* • articulation of causal pathways • identification of drivers and assumptions • identification of key actors in the change process	The section is complete. The TOC has been presented in both diagrammatic and narrative formats. A clear comparison between the original and reformulated TOC has been included. The TOC narrative presents a description of the main causal chains from outputs through to the Impact.	6
Section D: Evidence and Analysis	Assessment	
5. Is the report based on ***sufficient and adequate data*** and ***clear and credible evidence***? Consider how well the report presents: • sufficient evidence that is consistent throughout the report • evidence that is supported by data sources (e.g. quotes, reports, etc) • evidence that is explicitly triangulated, unless noted as having a single source • gaps in data are explained and justified • data sources that are reliable, adequate, sufficient for the scope of the evaluation	The report is based on sufficient data, and the limitations are well described. Strengths/weaknesses: The evaluation findings are adequately corroborated with suitable examples from different data sources, providing clear and credible evidence.	6

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

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
6. Does the report include ***rigorous analysis*** and ***logical findings***? Consider the extent to which the findings are: • supported by clear analysis that is consistent with the evidence presented • logical, clear and coherent • aligned with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix • aligned with the evaluation framework • more than descriptions and provide insights into 'how' and/or 'why' the project performed a certain way • balanced, presenting both successes and weaknesses	The report presents good analyses and logical findings. The analyses are logical, coherent, and well-reasoned. The findings are consistent throughout the report. The report is balanced, identifying both successes and weaknesses in project implementation. The findings are insightful and provide a good overview of why the project performed as it did. Some factual errors and omissions were observed by reviewers during draft review, and these have been adequately addressed in the Final Report.	6
Section E: Evaluation Findings	Assessment	
7. Does the report present evidence and analysis of project ***Strategic Relevance*** with respect to UNEP, partner and geographic policies and strategies at the time of project approval? Consider how well the report addresses: • Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities • Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities • Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities • Complementarity with Existing Interventions: complementarity of the project at design (or during inception/mobilisation[30]), with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups.	The section is complete, and all the sub-criteria have been assessed in detail.	6
Does the report present a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the ***Quality of Project Design***, based on the detailed assessment presented in the Inception Report?	Design strengths and weaknesses are described and the overall rating for project design is suitable justified.	***NOT RATED**
Does the report recognise and describe, when appropriate, key features of the ***Nature of the External Context*** under which the project was implemented that limited the project's performance (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, political upheaval[31]), and how they affected performance?	The challenges faced by the project are presented in a structured and clear way. The rating is consistent with the findings presented.	***NOT RATED**
8. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the ***Availability of Outputs*** to the intended beneficiaries? Consider how well the report presents: • a convincing, evidence-supported and clear presentation of the outputs made available by the project compared to its approved plans and budget • assessment of the nature and scale of outputs versus the project indicators and targets • assessment of the timeliness, quality and utility of outputs to intended beneficiaries • identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	The section is complete and thorough. A clear and evidence-based assessment of the outputs is provided in detail. The rating for this sub-criterion is consistent with findings presented.	6

[30] A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity <u>during project implementation</u> is considered under Efficiency, see below.

[31] Note that 'political upheaval' does not include regular national election cycles, but unanticipated unrest or prolonged disruption. The potential delays or changes in political support that are often associated with the regular national election cycle should be part of the project's design and addressed through adaptive management of the project team.

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
9. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the ***Achievement of Outcomes***, as a result of the uptake, adoption and/or implementation of outputs by the intended beneficiaries? This may include behaviour changes at an individual or collective level. Consider how well the report presents: • a convincing and evidence-supported analysis of the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries • assessment of the nature, depth and scale of outcomes versus the project indicators and targets • 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).	The section is complete. The report provides a well-reasoned and evidence-based assessment and addresses each Outcome individually and systematically against their respective targets. The assessment is balanced, addressing both the successes and challenges in the uptake, adoption and/or implementation of outputs by the intended beneficiaries. It is possible to get a sense of the contribution, credible association and/or attribution of outcome level changes to the work of the project itself.	6
10. Does the report present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to ***Likelihood of Impact***? Consider how well the report presents: • an explanation of how causal pathways emerged and the resulting change processes • an explicit discussion of how drivers and assumptions played out • an explanation of roles played by key actors and change agents • identification of any unintended negative effects of the project, especially on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	The section is complete and thorough. A clear and evidence-based assessment of the likelihood of impact is provided in detail. The findings are consistent with those of the 'outputs' and 'outcomes' other sub-criteria. The rating for this sub-criterion is also consistent with findings presented.	6
11. Does the report present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under ***Financial Management*** and include a completed 'financial management' table? Consider how well the report addresses the following: • *adherence* to UNEP's financial policies and procedures • *completeness* of financial information, including the actual project costs and actual co-financing used and explanation of any variances between planned and actual expenditures	The section is complete and covers all the three aspects of financial management in sufficient detail.	5
12. Does the report present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under ***Efficiency***? Consider how well the report presents: • cost-effective or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe • implications of any delays and no cost extensions • discussion of making use, during project implementation, of/building on pre-existing institutions, partnerships and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. • the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.	The section is complete and covers all the main aspects of efficiency in sufficient detail.	5
13. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the project's ***Monitoring and Reporting***? Consider how well the report addresses the following: • the quality of *monitoring of project implementation* (including use of monitoring data for adaptive management) • the quality of *project reporting* (e.g. PIMS and donor reports)	The section is complete and covers the main aspects of monitoring. Section would have benefitted from a more robust assessment of the sub-criterion on monitoring of project implementation to explain the extent to which project monitoring was/wasn't successful in supporting results-based adaptive management	5

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
14. Does the report present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under ***Sustainability*** (i.e. the endurance of benefits achieved at outcome level)? Consider how well the report addresses the following: • socio-political sustainability • financial sustainability • institutional sustainability	The section is complete and covers all three sub-categories of sustainability. The assessment of sustainability includes suitable examples to support the ratings.	6
15. Does the report present a well-evidence analysis of the ***Factors Affecting Performance***, either in this section or in cross-referenced sections? *These factors are not always discussed in stand-alone sections and may be integrated in the other performance criteria as appropriate. However, if not addressed substantively in this section, a cross reference must be given to where the topic is addressed, and that entry must be sufficient to justify the performance rating for these factors.* Consider how well the report addresses the following cross-cutting issues: • quality of project management and supervision[32] • 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	The section is complete. All the factors affecting performance have been discussed in sufficient detail and are consistent with the findings presented in the report.	6
Section F: Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations	Assessment	
16. Do the ***Conclusions*** present a summative assessment of the evaluand as a whole, reflecting on prominent aspects of the project's performance? Consider how well the conclusions: • provide a compelling narrative and integrated assessment of project project's performance (i.e. achievements and limitations) • add deeper insights and analysis beyond the findings under each individual criterion • are derived from the synthesized analysis of evidence gathered during the evaluation process • provide clear and succinct response to the key strategic questions • address the human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention explicitly (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on) • provide lessons that are rooted in real project experiences, describe the context from which they are derived, and do not duplicate recommendations	The section is complete. The conclusion is concise, giving a clear overview of the project's performance. The key strategic questions are explicitly addressed within the conclusions section and provide an in-depth and cross-cutting rundown of the project. Gender dimensions are discussed. A table showing the summary of project ratings by criteria is presented. The lessons learned are anchored on actual findings presented in the report. The contextual background from which they are drawn is included to support the validity of the lessons presented	6
17. Does the report present ***Recommendations*** for specific action to be taken by identified people/position-holders to resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results? Consider how well the recommendations: • are clearly formulated and logically derived from the findings and/or conclusions • are feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when • include at least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions	There are several recommendations given in the evaluation report; most are actionable by UNEP. They comprise of proposals to remedy actual challenges identified by the evaluator and presented in the report. At least one recommendation relates to gender dimension of the intervention.	5

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

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
• represent a measurable performance target in order that the Evaluation Office can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations. NOTES: **(i)** In cases where the recommendation is addressed to a third party, compliance can only be monitored and assessed where a contractual/legal agreement remains in place. Without such an agreement, the recommendation should be formulated to say that UNEP project staff should pass on the recommendation to the relevant third party in an effective or substantive manner. The effective transmission by UNEP of the recommendation will then be monitored for compliance. **(ii)** Where a new project phase is already under discussion or in preparation with the same third party, a recommendation can be made to address the issue in the next phase.		
Section G: Report Structure and Presentation	Assessment	
18. Is the report ***well-structured and complete***? Does it: • follow the Evaluation Office structure and formatting guidelines • include all required sections and annexes, as applicable • not exceed 50 pages in length from the Executive Summary to the end of the Conclusion Does the report ***present*** information clearly and appropriately? Is it written: • in clear and accessible language • largely free from grammar, spelling and punctuation errors • in an adequate and professional tone • with the use of visual aids, such as maps, graphs tables and photos	The report is well-structured and complete. It is written in clear and professional language. Tables and charts have been used as visual aids. It is largely free of grammatical errors.	6
OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING		**5.7 = Highly Satisfactory**

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

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

Rating the Report Quality Criteria

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

At the end of the evaluation, compliance of the evaluation process against the agreed standard procedures is assessed, based on the table below. *All questions with negative compliance must be explained further in the table below.*

Evaluation Process Quality Criteria	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Consultant's independence:		
1. Were possible conflicts of interest of proposed Evaluation Consultant(s) appraised and addressed in the final selection?	Y	
2. Was the Evaluation Consultant given direct access to identified external stakeholders?	Y	
3. Did the Evaluation Consultant raise any concerns about being unable to work freely and without interference or undue pressure from project staff or the Evaluation Office?		N
4. If Yes to Q3: Were these concerns resolved to the mutual satisfaction of both the Evaluation Consultant and the Evaluation Manager?		
Project's engagement and support:		
5. Did the project make available all required/requested documents?	Y	
6. Did the project make all financial information (and audit reports if applicable) available in a timely	Y	

Evaluation Process Quality Criteria	Compliance	
	Yes	No
manner and to an acceptable level of completeness?		
7. Was adequate support provided by the project to the evaluator(s) in planning and conducting evaluation missions?	Y	
8. Were the project team, relevant UNEP senior staff, partners and interviewed stakeholders given an opportunity to provide comments on key deliverables, as appropriate (e.g. Terms of Reference, Inception Report and Draft Evaluation Report)?	Y	
Quality assurance of key deliverables:		
9. Were the Terms of Reference peer-reviewed?		N
10. Was the inception report peer-reviewed, including the Theory of Change?	Y	
11. Were evaluation preliminary findings presented to the project team in a format allowing discussion, before drafting the report?	Y	
12. Was the draft report peer-reviewed?	Y	
Transparency and commenting:		
13. Was the inception report, including the (reconstructed) TOC, sent to the project team, relevant UNEP senior staff and partners, with a minimum of eight working days to comment?	Y	
14. Was the draft evaluation report sent directly by the Evaluation Consultant to the Evaluation Office?	Y	
15. Were all stakeholder comments to the draft evaluation report sent directly to the Evaluation Office	Y	
16. Did the Evaluation Consultant(s) respond adequately to all factual corrections and comments?	Y	
17. Did the Evaluation Office share substantive comments and Evaluation Consultant responses with those who commented, as appropriate?	Y	
Financial Resources:		
18. Was the evaluation budget approved at project design available for the evaluation? If not, comment in the table below on the sufficiency of the funds made available.	Y	
19. Were the agreed evaluation funds readily available to support the payment of the evaluation contract throughout the payment process? If not, comment in the table below.	Y	
Timeliness:		
20. If a Terminal Evaluation: Was the evaluation initiated within six months after project operational completion and not more than three months prior? (Or, if a Mid Term Evaluation: Was the evaluation initiated within a six-month period prior to the project's mid-point?)	Y	
21. Was the inception report delivered and reviewed/approved prior to commencing any travel?	Y	
22. Were all submission and commenting deadlines met as set by the Evaluation Manager and as far as unforeseen circumstances allowed? If not, comment in the table below on exceptional delays.	Y	

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

Evaluation Process Criterion Number	Evaluation Office Comments