

Validated Terminal Review of the UNEP / GEF Project
**“Building core capacity for the implementation,
monitoring, and reporting of Multilateral Environmental
Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable
Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania” (GEF ID 9747)**
2018 – 2023



Climate Change Division
Validation Date: February 2026



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

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Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania
GEF ID 9747
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The consultant extends her sincere gratitude to all individuals consulted during the review, as listed in Annex III. Each stakeholder contributed valuable insights that were instrumental to the success of this evaluation.

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The review consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions, and recommendations presented in this report will contribute to future project phases and to the continuous improvement of similar initiatives in other countries and regions.

BRIEF EXTERNAL CONSULTANT(S) BIOGRAPHY

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Review team

Elaine P. Varela Alberte – Reviewer

ABOUT THE REVIEW

Joint Review: No

Report Language(s): English.

Review Type: Terminal Review

Brief Description: This report is a management-led Terminal Review of a UNEP/GEF project implemented between 2018 and 2023. The project's overall development goal was to strengthen Mauritania's capacity for environmental information and knowledge management for the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs. The review sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency) and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, GEF, and the relevant agencies of the project participating country.

Source(s) of Funding by Country: Mauritania

Source(s) of Funding by Institution Type: GEF Trust Fund

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

Key words¹: Knowledge and information management; Governance; Environment Information System; Ecosystem-based Adaptation; Indicators.

Primary data collection period: 01 April 2025 to 15 July 2025

Field mission dates: Not applicable

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
ABOUT THE REVIEW	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
LIST OF ACRONYMS	4
PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE	6
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	8
I. INTRODUCTION	14
II. REVIEW METHODS	15
III. THE PROJECT	20
A. Context	20
B. Objectives and components	21
C. Stakeholders	22
D. Project implementation structure and partners	23
E. Changes in design during implementation	24
F. Project financing	26
IV. THEORY OF CHANGE AT REVIEW	27
V. REVIEW FINDINGS	32
A. Strategic Relevance	32
B. Quality of Project Design	37
C. Nature of the External Context	39
D. Effectiveness	42
E. Financial Management	66
F. Efficiency	69
G. Monitoring and Reporting	71
H. Sustainability	78
I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues	86
VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	104
A. Conclusions	104
B. Summary of project findings and ratings	106
C. Lessons learned	121
D. Recommendations	129
ANNEX I. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS	135
ANNEX II. REVIEW FRAMEWORK/MATRIX	136
ANNEX III. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW	150
ANNEX IV. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED	151
ANNEX V. REVIEW ITINERARY	154
ANNEX VI. PROJECT BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES	155
ANNEX VII. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	156
ANNEX VIII. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH TOOLS	158
ANNEX IX. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER	192
ANNEX X. REVIEW TORS (WITHOUT ANNEXES)	193
ANNEX XI. GEF PORTAL INPUTS (FOR GEF FUNDED PROJECTS)	198
ANNEX XII. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OF RECOMMENDATIONS	204
ANNEX XIII. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE REVIEW REPORT	216

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AEWA	Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds
BSP	Bali Strategic Plan
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCCD	Cross-Cutting Capacity Development
CEO	Chief Operating Officer
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMS	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
CNOEZA	National Centre for Environmental Observation and Arid Zones
COP	Conference of the Parties
DPCS	Directorate of Planning, Coordination and Statistics
Ea	Expected Accomplishments
EA	Executing Agency
EbA	Ecosystem-based Adaptation
EIP	Environment Information Portal
EIS	Environmental Information System
EOU	Evaluation Office of UNEP
ESERN	Environmental, Social, and Economic Review Note
ESS	Environmental and Social Safeguards
EWAD	Early Warning and Assessment Division
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FMO	Fund Management Officer
GE	Green Economy
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIZ	The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GTEDD	Thematic Group on Environment and Sustainable Development
IA	Implementing Agency
IPLC	Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
IRIS	Indicator Reporting Information System
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MESD	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development
MLTR	Management Led Terminal Review
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid Term Review
MTS	Medium Term Strategy
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NCSA	National Capacity Self-Assessment
NEAP	National Environment Action Plan
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategy

NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategy
OCR	Operational Closure Report
PAGGW	Convention of the Panafrican Agency of the Great Green Wall
PCA	Programme/Project Cooperation Agreement
PEI	Poverty-Environment Initiative
PIRs	Project Implementation Reports
PM	Project Manager
PMU	Project Management Unit
PoW	Programme of Work
PPP	Public-private partnerships
PRC	Project Review Committee
Prodoc	Project document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RC	Review Consultant
ROEZA	Expanded technical coordination panel on environmental information
SCAPP	National Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity
SD	Sustainable Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SNEDD	National Strategy for Sustainable Development
SoER	State of Environment Report
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SP	Sub-programme (UNEP)
S-SC	South-South Cooperation
SSFA	Small Scale Funding Agreement
TM	Task Manager
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

Table 1. Project Identification Table

GEF Project ID/SMA ID ² :	GEF Project ID 9747	SMA ID: 36882	
Implementing Agency (UNEP Division/Branch/Unit):	UNEP EWAD – Early Warning and Assessment Division (formerly Science Division, now Climate Change Division; hereafter referred to as UNEP EWAD) ³	Executing Agency:	Government of Mauritania - Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MESD) / Cellule Nationale de l'Observation Environnementale et des Zones Arides (CNOEZA)
Sources of Funding (Co-finance):	Country ⁴ (ies): Mauritania	Institution ⁵ Name/Type:	GEF/Multilateral
Relevant SDG(s):	SDG 13 (13.2.1, 13.3.1, 13.3.2, 13.b.1); SDG 15 (15.1.1); SDG 16 (16.10.2); and SDG 17 (17.18.1)		
MTS (at approval):	MTS 2018-2021	UNEP approval date:	08 May 2018 ⁶
POW Direct Outcome(s) number/reference <i>(applicable for projects approved from 2022):</i> OR POW Output(s) number/reference <i>(applicable for projects approved pre-2022)</i>	POW Direct Outcome: MTS 2022-2025: 1.1 Policymaking and decision making for climate action are informed by the latest science-based analysis and data generation. 2.7 – Natural assets are valued, monitored and sustainably managed 2.9 – Institutional capacity to adopt and act on national and international commitments is enhanced and accountability frameworks are strengthened 3.13 – Sound science, data and statistics, analysis, information and knowledge are generated and shared	MTS 2025 Outcome(s) number/reference <i>(applicable for projects approved from 2022):</i> OR POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference <i>(applicable for projects approved pre-2022):</i>	MTS 2025 Outcome: MTS 2022-2025: 1B Countries and stakeholders have increased capacity, finance and access to technologies to deliver on the adaptation and mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement. 1C: State and non-State actors adopt the enhanced transparency framework arrangements under the Paris Agreement. 2B: Sustainable management of nature is adopted & implemented in development frameworks
	POW Output: SP (i): MTS 2018-2022: 716. National and regional reporting systems based on shared EIS principles generating open access to information		POW Expected Accomplishment: MTS 2018-2022: SP7 Ea(a): Governments and other stakeholders use quality open environmental data, analyses and participatory processes that strengthen the science- policy interface to generate evidence- based environmental assessments, identify emerging issues and foster policy action.

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

³ The division formerly known as the UNEP Science Division has recently been renamed to the Climate Change Division. However, for consistency and clarity throughout this report, the original designation (UNEP EWAD) will be maintained when referring to the division's role and contributions. This ensures alignment with documentation and stakeholder references used during the review process.

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

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

⁶ UNEP (2023) UNEP GEF PIR Fiscal Year 2023. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania. Reporting from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

Sub-programme:	Previous Sub-programme: SP7: Environment Under Review (MTS 2018-2021) Current Sub-programme: Foundational Science-Policy (MTS 2022-2025)	Programme Coordination Project:	
UNEP approval date:	08 May 2018	GEF approval date:	23 March 2018
GEF Operational Programme #:	Not applicable (GEF-6)	GEF Strategic Priority:	Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD-1 and CCCD-3)
Project type:	Medium Size Project	Focal Area(s):	Multi Focal Areas (MFAS)
Expected start date:	15 May 2018 ⁷	Actual start date:	27 September 2018 ⁸
Planned completion date:	30 May 2022 ⁹	Actual operational completion date:	31 December 2023
Planned total project budget at approval:	1,300,000 ¹⁰	Actual total expenditures reported as of 30 June 2023:	873,894 ¹¹
GEF grant allocation:	950,000	GEF grant expenditures reported as of 30 June 2023:	905,000 ¹²
Expected Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:	Cash: 0 In-kind: 350,000	Secured Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:	Cash: 0 In-kind: 350,000
No. and dates of formal project revisions:	0 (2 no cost extensions)	Date of last approved project revision:	29 May 2023 (2 nd extension)
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	Three (3)	Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	13-15 June 2023
Mid-term Review/Evaluation budgeted:	- At design: Y - At revision: Y	Mid-term Review/Evaluation (actual date):	N/A ¹³
Terminal Evaluation (planned date):	June 2024	Terminal Review (actual date):	April 2025
Coverage - Country(ies):	Mauritania	Coverage - Region(s):	West Africa
Dates of previous project phases:	Not Applicable	Status of future project phases:	Not Applicable

⁷ UNEP (2018). PCA/2018/UNEP-MESD

⁸ Mauritania CCCD Project Inception Workshop General Report: Inception Workshop, held on 27 September 2018 in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

⁹ UNEP (2018). PCA/2018/UNEP-MESD

¹⁰ UNEP (2018). PCA/2018/UNEP-MESD

¹¹ UNEP (2023) UNEP GEF PIR Fiscal Year 2023. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania. Reporting from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

¹² UNEP (2023) UNEP GEF PIR Fiscal Year 2023. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania. Reporting from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

¹³ The MTR was planned for March–September 2022 but was not completed due to the consultant's illness and passing in January 2023. As a partial alternative, UNEP held a knowledge exchange session in Navaisha – Kenya in January 2023. Key achievements, challenges, and lessons were discussed, with findings reflected in the PSC and PIR.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project background

1. The GEF-funded Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania" (GEF Project ID 9747) aimed to strengthen Mauritania's capacity for environmental information and knowledge management for the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs¹⁴.
2. Mauritania, a desert country with high poverty levels and fragile ecosystems, faces severe climate change impacts such as droughts, desertification, and biodiversity loss, exacerbated by unsustainable land use practices. The country is a signatory to several MEAs related to climate change (UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement), biodiversity (CBD, Biosafety, Ramsar, CITES, CMS, AWEA), chemicals (Basel, Stockholm, Rotterdam, Minamata), desertification (UNCCD), and ozone protection (Montreal Protocol). It has also developed national strategies such as the National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS, 2006) and the National Environment Action Plan (NEAP 2017-2021). However, Mauritania continued to face major challenges in implementing these commitments due to fragmented data management, limited institutional capacity, and weak coordination. The National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA), conducted in 2006 and reaffirmed in 2018, identified persistent gaps in technical expertise, institutional roles, and environmental information systems.
3. To address these challenges, the project aimed to strengthen Mauritania's technical and institutional capacities for implementing MEAs and the environmental dimensions of the SDGs. It focused on improving data and knowledge management, raising public awareness, and integrating environmental considerations into national policies. By enhancing environmental monitoring, reporting, and stakeholder engagement, the initiative supported long-term planning and contributed to the country's strategic priority of "Inclusive and Sustainable Growth" under the UNDAF/UNDSF 2018-2022 framework. Aligned with the UNEP Foundational Science-Policy Subprogramme, the project also promoted the synergistic implementation of MEAs and the environmental dimension of SDGs, helping Mauritania meet its international obligations and strengthen environmental governance at all levels.

This Review

4. Following the UNEP Evaluation Policy¹⁵ and the UNEP Programme Manual¹⁶, this report presents the results of a MLTR, which has two primary purposes: (i) provide evidence of the project's results for accountability, and (ii) facilitate learning, feedback exchange, and knowledge sharing among UNEP, the GEF, and stakeholders, to inform future project planning and implementation. It involved several phases, including an initial review of project design and stakeholder analysis, development of a reconstructed Theory of Change at review, desk review, extensive interviewing and survey with a wide range of project actors, data triangulation, and analysis. An MTR was initially planned to assess the project's interim progress. However, due to the consultant's severe health issues and

¹⁴ GEF-UNEP/CCCD/MSP/ GEF ID 9747 (2018). GEF6 Request for Project Approval.

¹⁵ <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/policies-and-strategies>

¹⁶ <https://wecollaborate.unep.org>

subsequent passing, UNEP suspended the contract. Instead of restarting the MTR process, UNEP organized a knowledge exchange session as a practical alternative, considering the associated costs, the advanced stage of the projects, and the fact that MTRs are not mandatory for GEF-funded medium-sized projects.

Key findings

5. The project demonstrated highly satisfactory strategic relevance, being fully aligned with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategies (2018–2021 and 2022–2025), Programmes of Work, and key subprogrammes on environmental governance, data transparency, and science-policy integration. It supported national reporting systems, institutional capacity building, and evidence-based policymaking, while contributing to climate action and MEA commitments such as the UNCCD, CBD, and Paris Agreement. The initiative also aligned with GEF priorities, SDGs 13, 15, 16, and 17, and Mauritania's frameworks including NSDS, SCAPP, and NAPA, addressing systemic barriers to MEA implementation and promoting inclusive governance. Complementarity with other interventions was evident through partnerships with GIZ, universities, and local communities, though opportunities for deeper integration were not fully anticipated during design.
6. The project design was strong in strategic relevance, logical framework, governance, and financial planning but showed weaknesses in learning, communication, sustainability, and replication. Key improvements include developing a comprehensive communication strategy, enhancing stakeholder engagement, integrating a clear ToC with defined long-term impacts, and incorporating a sustainability and exit plan. Gender considerations require systematic integration through formal analysis and indicators to ensure inclusiveness and transformative impact.
7. The external context posed major challenges, with COVID-19 causing significant delays and two timeline extensions, while the dissolution of CNOEZA further disrupted implementation and weakened ownership. Despite these setbacks, the project adapted by revising work plans, prioritizing virtual activities and support for vulnerable communities, and reinforcing governance structures. Two microprojects provided essential socioeconomic assistance, helping maintain food security and community cohesion during the crisis.
8. In terms of effectiveness, all 10 outputs were delivered and contributed to improved environmental governance through integrated information systems and policy coordination. Key achievements included the State of the Environment Report, GIS-based databases, a cloud-based EIS, and capacity-building initiatives with strong community and female participation. While outputs were generally satisfactory, some tools require refinement for full institutional uptake, and delays in EIS finalization limited integration and training. Approximately 80% of planned actions were completed by the end of the project, and stakeholder feedback confirmed relevance and utility. The impact is rated as "Likely," contingent on continued institutional commitment, system integration, and inclusive engagement to ensure long-term sustainability.
9. Financial management was highly satisfactory, with strict adherence to UNEP standards, timely disbursements, and transparent reporting throughout implementation. The project utilized 100% of its allocated resources, passed audits without issues, and required only two no-cost extensions due to COVID-19 and institutional restructuring. Financial documentation was complete and well-organized, with consistent quarterly and annual reporting and clear tracking of co-

financing. Coordination between financial and project teams was exemplary, supported by regular meetings and proactive communication, ensuring smooth implementation and alignment between operational and financial planning.

10. Efficiency was rated moderately satisfactory. The project required two no-cost extensions totaling 19 months due to COVID-19 disruptions and institutional restructuring but delivered all outputs within the revised timeline. Adaptive management, cost-effective strategies such as remote implementation, leveraging existing systems, and partnerships with GIZ supported strong resource use and high output delivery relative to modest funding. Despite challenges like fragmented data and logistical constraints, full budget utilization and innovative approaches such as train-the-trainers and community-led microfinance initiatives enhanced impact and sustainability.
11. Monitoring and reporting were satisfactory, guided by a results-based approach with SMART indicators and a participatory framework. The system tracked 37 indicators and maintained regular reporting with strong team ownership, enabling adaptive management and responsive decision-making. However, reliance on process-focused indicators, broad baselines, and the absence of gender-specific metrics limited its ability to assess long-term institutional change. Despite these gaps, comprehensive documentation, proactive UNEP oversight, and structured PSC engagement ensured transparency and accountability throughout implementation.
12. Sustainability is rated moderately likely. Long-term viability depends on political will, stakeholder ownership, institutional integration, and predictable funding. The project embedded a sustainability strategy validated through consultations and supported by capacity-building, inclusive engagement, and integration of the EIS into MESD structures. However, risks remain due to moderate stakeholder ownership, unclear institutional roles, fragmented data, and reliance on external resources. Financial sustainability is challenged by limited national budget prioritization and absence of detailed mechanisms, despite proposals for innovative financing and cost internalization. Institutional resilience is evident through governance structures and continued use of outputs, but systemic uptake requires legal mandates, formal agreements, and reframing the EIS as a permanent national function. Without structured follow-up and resource mobilization, the project risks reduced functionality and discontinuity, underscoring the need for stronger integration, advocacy, and long-term investment.
13. The factors affecting project performance were rated as 'Satisfactory'. The project demonstrated strong preparation and readiness, with key activities —such as finalizing the PCA, establishing the PMU and PSC, and conducting stakeholder consultations—completed within six months, ensuring readiness for implementation. UNEP provided strong oversight and technical guidance, facilitating compliance with GEF procedures and integration of safeguards, while MESD demonstrated leadership through timely staffing and institutional anchoring despite governance challenges. Adaptive management and inclusive communication enabled smooth operations, though limited PSC engagement and reliance on a single focal point exposed vulnerabilities during institutional transitions. Continued resilience and coordination underscore the need for broader stakeholder involvement and stronger interministerial frameworks to sustain long-term impact. The project adopted an inclusive approach through comprehensive stakeholder analysis, governance mechanisms, and active collaboration across ministries, civil society, academia, and local communities. Ownership was promoted via workshops, training, microprojects, and integration of traditional knowledge, with gender-focused initiatives achieving 62% female participation in microfinance activities.

Knowledge management and communication efforts, including the State of the Environment Report and school-based education, strengthened awareness, though gaps in feedback mechanisms, gender action planning, and PSC's strategic role limited impact. Risk management aligned with UNEP's ESSF and was categorized as low, supported by systematic monitoring and grievance mechanisms, but indirect risks and some mitigation measures were insufficiently addressed. Despite constraints during COVID-19 and coordination gaps, the project catalyzed structural and social change, advanced environmental data integration, and laid a foundation for equity and sustainability, though stronger institutional anchoring and long-term planning remain critical.

Conclusions

14. Based on the findings from this review, the project demonstrates performance at the 'Satisfactory' level (Table 7 found in the Section VI.B Summary of project findings and ratings presents the ratings against all review criteria). The project has demonstrated good performance in the areas of Strategic Relevance, Quality of Project Design, Effectiveness, Financial Management, Monitoring and Reporting, and Factors affecting performance. Areas that would have benefited from further attention are Achievement of Project Outcomes, Sustainability, Efficiency, and Country Ownership and Drivenness.
15. The project strengthened Mauritania's environmental governance by introducing a cloud-based EIS and establishing the National Observatory for the Environment and Coastal Zone, supported by capacity-building, stakeholder engagement, and knowledge-sharing initiatives. It advanced interinstitutional coordination, integrated MEA and SDG principles into national planning, and promoted local ownership through ecosystem-based adaptation and women-led microfinance pilots. However, institutional disruptions, lack of data-sharing frameworks, fragmented data systems, and limited coordination posed risks to sustainability, while COVID-19-related delays, weak digital infrastructure, and reliance on a single focal point further constrained long-term effectiveness.
16. Regarding the first strategic question—what approaches were most effective in encouraging national institutions to use and maintain the EIS¹⁷— the project showed that technical solutions must be paired with institutional integration and inclusive engagement. Success factors included embedding the EIS within key government entities, fostering broad stakeholder participation, and incorporating traditional knowledge. Structured coordination between financial and operational teams improved oversight and alignment, while tailored capacity-building strategies such as train-the-trainers and community-driven pilots strengthened local ownership. UNEP's in-country presence further ensured continuity and institutional commitment.
17. Regarding the second strategic question—how future projects can strengthen adaptive management in fragile or complex contexts¹⁸— the review highlights the need for a solid legal and policy foundation to institutionalize systems like the EIS, supported by formal data-sharing agreements and alignment with MEA obligations. Strong governance structures, consistent Steering Committee engagement, and diversified interlocutors are critical for resilience and continuity. Combining national-

¹⁷ Refers to the Strategic Question: What approaches were most effective in encouraging national institutions to use and maintain the Environmental Information System (EIS), especially in challenging contexts?

¹⁸ Refers to the Strategic Question: How can future projects strengthen adaptive management to respond more effectively to political, security, and institutional disruptions during implementation in fragile or complex contexts?

level training with locally driven initiatives and implementing inclusive communication strategies can enhance capacity and stakeholder engagement, but these must be systematically monitored for relevance and impact. Flexible management practices, hybrid work models, and a robust local presence proved essential for adapting to institutional disruptions and pandemic-related constraints. The project also revealed weaknesses in its monitoring framework, emphasizing the need for outcome-level indicators, baseline data, and a clear Theory of Change. Finally, projects should underscore the importance of systematic gender mainstreaming through early analysis and disaggregated data collection.

Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: Institutional Sustainability of the Environmental Information System Requires Legal Mandates, Clear Roles, and Long-Term Capacity Strategies

Lesson 2: Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement and Integration of Traditional Knowledge Strengthen Ownership and Sustainability in Environmental Governance

Lesson 3: Strengthened Governance Mechanisms and Consistent Steering Committee Engagement Enhance Strategic Oversight and Institutional Continuity

Lesson 4: Direct Access to Local Partners and Diversification of Interlocutors Strengthen Coordination and Institutional Resilience

Lesson 5: Structured and Frequent Coordination Between Financial and Operational Teams Enhances Oversight and Responsiveness

Lesson 6: Tailored Capacity-Building Strategies and Localized Tools Enhance Technical Competence and Policy Engagement Across Stakeholder Groups

Lesson 7: Adaptive Management, Hybrid Work Models, and Strategic In-Country Presence Are Essential for Project Continuity in Times of Crisis and Institutional Transition

Lesson 8: Insufficiently Specific and Impact-Oriented Indicators Limit the Ability to Demonstrate Institutional Change and Long-Term Results

Lesson 9: Strategic and Inclusive Communication Planning Is Essential to Strengthen Engagement, Knowledge Sharing, and Behavioural Change

Lesson 10: Embedding Gender-Responsive Design, Monitoring, and Local Empowerment Mechanisms Enhances Inclusiveness and Sustainability in Environmental Projects

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Strengthening Legal Mechanisms and Institutional Agreements to Ensure Environmental Data Governance and Long-Term Sustainability of the EIS in Mauritania

Recommendation 2: Strengthen the Strategic Role of the Project Steering Committee through Clear Mandates, Regular Engagement, and Structured Documentation to Promote Intersectoral Coordination, Institutional Continuity and Ownership

Recommendation 3: Develop and Implement a National Strategy for Continuous and Monitored Capacity-Building

Recommendation 4: Strengthen existing monitoring mechanisms in future projects by establishing an impact-focused monitoring and evaluation system at project level to measure long-term results and enhance sustainability

Recommendation 5: Integrate inclusive and context-specific communication strategies into project design, with dedicated resources for implementation

Validation

The report has been subject to an independent validation exercise performed by UNEP's Evaluation Office. The performance ratings for the "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania" project, set out in the Conclusions and Recommendations section, have been adjusted as a result. The overall project performance is validated at the '**Satisfactory**' level. Moreover, the Evaluation Office has found the overall quality of the report to be Satisfactory (see Annex XIII).

I. INTRODUCTION

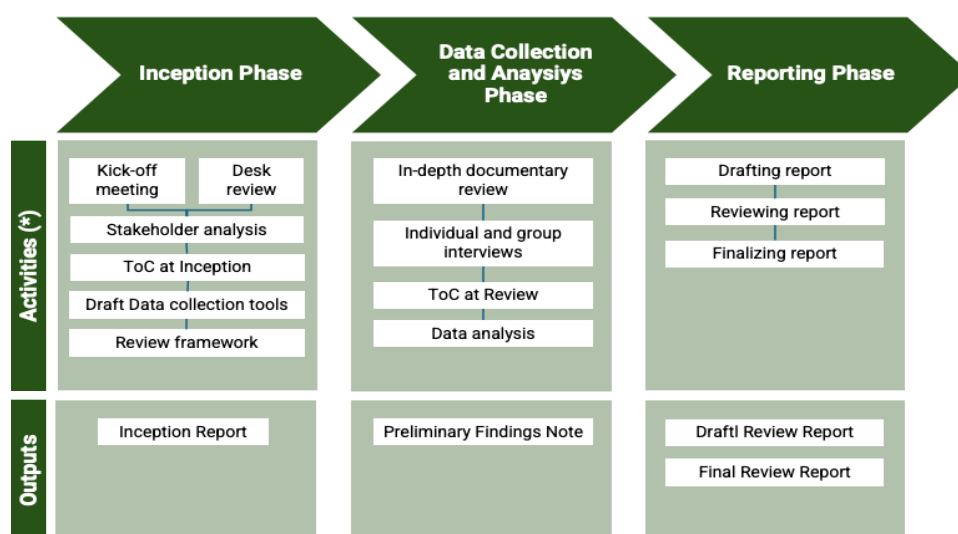
18. This report presents the results and findings of the MLTR of the GEF-funded CCCD) project “Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania” (GEF Project ID 9747), which was carried out between May 2018 and December 2023.
19. Initially approved by UNEP in March 2018, the project was scheduled to run for 36 months. However, it extended to 55 months, with two no-cost extensions: May 2022 and December 2023, granted due to external factors such as COVID-19 disruptions and the need to organize a multi-stakeholder project closure workshop. The approved total project budget was USD 1,300,000, with reported expenditures totalling USD 873,894 as of December 2023, excluding in-kind contributions.
20. The project aimed to strengthen Mauritania’s capacity for environmental information and knowledge management, focusing on the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs¹⁹. This effort integrated these initiatives into national and sub-national policy, planning, legal, and financial frameworks, thereby contributing directly to the global environmental benefits targeted under GEF-6. In doing so, the project would support the country in fulfilling its shared commitments under the Rio Conventions and other related agreements. Mauritania has signed, ratified, or internalized several key MEAs, including those on climate change, biodiversity, chemicals, desertification, and ozone protection. The country has also developed a range of national policies and plans. These commitments, together with the country’s ongoing environmental challenges—including climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, and desertification—underscore the importance of this project.
21. The UNEP Early Warning and Assessment Division (formerly the Science Division, now the Climate Change Division, hereafter referred to as UNEP EWAD) served as the GEF Implementing Agency, overseeing supervision and coordination in accordance with its policies and procedures. The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MESD), through the National Centre for Environmental Observation and Arid Zones (CNOEZA), is the Executing Agency. The project management unit consisted of a national project manager, a procurement and finance specialist, an IT assistant, and a secretary. A steering committee included representatives from the UNEP EWAD, MESD, other ministries, parliament, the University of Nouakchott Alasriya, the Mayors of Mauritania Network, Civil Society Organizations, and/or the private sector.
22. This MLTR was conducted upon the project’s operational completion to evaluate its performance in terms of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency. It also assesses the outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) resulting from the project, focusing on their sustainability. This MLTR has two main objectives: (i) provide evidence of the project’s results for accountability, and (ii) facilitate learning, feedback exchange, and knowledge sharing among UNEP, the GEF, and stakeholders, to inform future project planning and implementation.
23. The main target audiences for the review findings were UNEP project and programme management, UNEP regional offices, various divisions (such as the Evaluation Office), the GEF Secretariat, current and potential donors, national governments, and implementing and technical support partners, including MEA focal points.

¹⁹ GEF-UNEP/CCCD/MSP/ GEF ID 9747 (2018). GEF6 Request for Project Approval.

II. REVIEW METHODS

24. The MLTR was conducted through activities organized across the following phases: Inception Phase, Data Collection and Analysis Phase, and Reporting Phase (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Flowchart of activities



(*) Ongoing communication with the Task Manager and Team will occur throughout all stages to ensure alignment, address any emerging challenges, and facilitate collaboration and timely feedback.

25. This MLTR followed a participatory approach. The Review Consultant (RC), in coordination with the UNEP Task Manager (TM), ensured regular communication with project stakeholders to promote collaboration and ownership of the findings. From the inception phase onward, there was ongoing communication with the TM and project team, providing updates on progress and discussing any challenges.
26. This MLTR upheld integrity, honesty, confidentiality, systematic inquiry, and cultural sensitivity. It strove to represent both mainstream and marginalized groups, ensuring appropriate gender and Indigenous and local community representation. Data collection adhered to ethical standards and human rights, with informed consent obtained for all photos and information. Discussions remained anonymous, and interviewees and survey respondents were treated confidentially. All data were collected and managed following relevant UNEP guidelines and UN standards of conduct. All written outputs were thorough, coherent, and aligned with the UNEP Evaluation guidelines in both substance and style.
27. The MLTR adhered to the review criteria specified by the Evaluation Office and outlined in the Terms of Reference (Annex X).
28. The **Inception Phase** aimed to establish the foundation for the review. This phase involved an initial review of key project documents, including the project documents and reports, and relevant guidelines. Meetings and regular communication with the TM and project team were maintained to clarify details. The quality of the project design was assessed using the Evaluation Office's standard template, with a formal rating of the project's key aspects. A stakeholder analysis was completed. The Theory of Change at Inception was reconstructed based on the project results framework. The main elements of the review framework were established, including draft data collection tools and the review framework itself (Annex II).

29. **The Data Collection and Analysis Phase** explored how the project's change process has unfolded, focusing, for instance, on progress toward the stated outcome. This phase gathered evidence of results and impacts through primary and secondary methods (in-depth documentary review, individual and/or in-group interviews, and surveys).
30. The in-depth document review focused on identifying evidence of project achievements, challenges, and lessons learned, with a particular emphasis on progress toward outcomes and impact. Documents (Annex IV) were organized, categorized, and evaluated to assess the project's alignment with its original goals and its adaptation to emerging challenges or changes in context.
31. Individual and group interviews were conducted with organizations and individuals listed in Annex III. Interviewees were selected based on their roles in the project, as well as their availability and/or interest in contributing to this MLTR. Efforts were made to engage relevant stakeholders and ensure representation across gender and social groups. A total of 23 individuals were initially contacted to participate in the review process. To accommodate diverse preferences and overcome language barriers, both individual interviews and group discussions were offered, in written and spoken formats. This inclusive approach helped ensure more comprehensive and accessible participation. Ultimately, 10 individuals took part in the interviews, resulting in a response rate of approximately 44%, which is considered a positive outcome given the voluntary nature of participation and the challenges often associated with qualitative data collection. Efforts were made to encourage gender balance among participants. However, the final composition reflects broader cultural and sectoral dynamics within the labor market, where female representation remains limited in certain areas. Among those contacted, approximately 70% identified as male and 30% as female, a proportion that was mirrored in the group of interviewees, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents' Sample

Stakeholder		# entities involved	# entities contacted	# people involved* (M/F)	# people contacted (M/F)	# respondent (M/F)	% respondent
Project team (those with management responsibilities during the project implementation period)	UNEP EWAD (Implementing agency)	01	01	3/3	2/3	2/3	100
	MESD (Executing agency)	01	01	3/1	3/1	2/0	50
Project (implementing/executing) partners (receiving funds from the project)		-	-	-	-	-	-
Project (collaborating/contributing ²⁰) partners (not receiving funds from the project)		13	13	10/3	10/3	3/0	23
Beneficiary**		-	-	-	-	-	-

* People identified

** A significant share of the entities/individuals already included in the respondent's sample are considered direct or indirect beneficiaries; therefore, no entry has been recorded under this item.

²⁰ Contributing partners may be providing resources as either cash or in-kind inputs (e.g. staff time, office space etc.). Line ministries and NGOs are examples of this type of project partners.

32. Interviews used a semi-structured approach with pre-determined open-ended questions and flexibility for deeper exploration based on participant responses. The interview guide, informed by the review framework matrix (Annex II), was tailored to each interviewee/group, averaging ten questions (up to 15) and designed to last under one hour. Questions were shared in advance when requested to help participants prepare, fostering thoughtful responses and respect for their time. Ethical considerations were addressed at the start of each interview, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, and participants' consent for transcription was obtained to accurately capture responses for analysis. The communication strategy with stakeholders was adapted to the most suitable platform, with Microsoft Teams being the primary platform used. In addition to written and spoken meetings (both in-person and virtual), email communication was used to gather further evidence. An adaptive approach was applied during the meetings. The interviewer aimed to build a trusting relationship and make the interviewee feel as comfortable as possible, thereby encouraging the provision of relevant information/evidence for the review.
33. The selection of interviewee respondents for each subject was based on the review framework matrix (Annex II). The goal was to involve stakeholders actively engaged in the project implementation phase and the proposed tool, facilitating an in-depth study of the ToC causality in various relevant scenarios.
34. The decision to exclude field missions from the project review process was primarily informed by the nature and scope of the initiative, which focuses on enhancing the country's capacities for monitoring and reporting on MEAs through an EIS. Virtual and written engagements were selected as a more efficient and strategic approach, allowing for broader stakeholder participation, optimized use of time and resources, and an expanded dataset through a greater number of meetings and interviews. This methodology also contributes to reducing the project's environmental footprint by minimizing air travel, in alignment with sustainability principles.
35. During the Data Collection and Analysis Phase, the ToC at inception, based on the project design document, was refined, reviewed, and validated with the project team. The ToC at Review was then developed, reflecting the causal logic of project implementation actions, and used to assess the project's output delivery, outcome achievement, and likelihood of impact.
36. Data analysis involved transcribing, translating, coding, and organizing findings using a thematic analysis approach. Triangulation of data from all sources provided evidence for the review, identifying what occurred in the project and explaining the underlying issues that influenced performance. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods assessed achievements against expected outputs, outcomes, and impact, considering baseline conditions, trends, and counterfactuals. The analysis was systematic, ensuring that all findings, conclusions, and recommendations were evidence-based. Tools such as a data analysis matrix were used to organize information and data collected from various sources and methodologies.
37. At the end of the data collection and analysis phase, the RC presented preliminary findings to the UNEP project team and stakeholders. This presentation supported the review's participatory approach by confirming that all information sources were accessed and verifying emerging findings. It also enabled the project team to learn from lessons, contribute to recommendations, and take ownership of the results.

38. The **Reporting Phase** involves drafting, revising, and finalizing the report. The final report includes an executive summary, a detailed analysis of findings by review criteria with supporting evidence, lessons learned, recommendations, and an annotated rating table. This phase included multiple reviews, from the initial draft to the final report. The RC submitted the zero draft to the TM, who reviewed it and provided feedback. Based on the TM's input, a first draft was then shared with a broader group of stakeholders for their comments. Stakeholders were able to correct factual errors and provide feedback on the conclusions and recommendations (Annex I). The RC consolidated all feedback and incorporated it into the final report.
39. Some limitations faced during the review process included:
- i. **Delays and Low Response Rate:** There were occasional delays in receiving responses to interview requests, and overall participation levels were lower than anticipated. Several stakeholders were engaged in other professional commitments, and the timing of the review, coinciding with holiday periods, likely contributed to scheduling challenges, postponed meetings, and limited feedback. To mitigate these issues, proactive engagement and relationship-building strategies were implemented to encourage timely participation and maintain momentum throughout the review process.
 - ii. **Language Barriers in Interviews:** Some potential interviewees were not fluent in English, which limited the feasibility of conducting spoken individual interviews. To address this challenge, written interviews were offered as an alternative. This approach enabled participants to respond in their preferred language and at their own pace, promoting broader inclusion and alleviating the pressure of real-time communication. While it helped overcome linguistic barriers and encouraged thoughtful responses, it also presented limitations, such as reduced spontaneity, limited opportunities for follow-up questions, and a potential loss of nuance in interpretation. However, this format enabled participants to reflect more deeply on their experiences and provide more structured and detailed answers. It also encouraged participation from individuals who might otherwise have declined due to language constraints or time limitations.
 - iii. **Language Barriers in Feedback Collection:** Language barriers posed significant limitations on feedback during the Preliminary Findings and Recommendations meeting. To overcome this challenge, presentation slides summarizing the preliminary findings and recommendations were provided in both English and French, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for all stakeholders. This approach enabled stakeholders to review the content asynchronously and submit written feedback during this stage of the process, creating an inclusive channel to capture diverse perspectives and refine recommendations collaboratively.
 - iv. **Group Interviews:** Group interviews were offered to promote flexibility and comfort among participants. Despite limitations, such as reduced speaking time, limited depth of individual contributions, and unequal participation, they fostered a collaborative environment where participants built on each other's ideas and reflections. This format encouraged the sharing of experiences, stimulated collective memory, and generated complementary insights. In many cases, the group dynamic helped surface shared challenges and solutions, enriching the overall quality of the data collected.
 - v. **Time Gap in Project Implementation:** The project was implemented over a five-year period, from 2018 to 2023. As is common with long-term initiatives, some key stakeholders experienced difficulty recalling specific details from earlier stages.

To support their recollection and enhance the quality of responses, participants were provided with contextual information and selected project records. Additionally, the review relied heavily on a detailed analysis of written documentation to reconstruct the project's trajectory and validate the findings.

- vi. **Critical Reflections on Beneficiary Engagement and Project Sustainability / Limited Evidence from Stakeholder Perspectives:** While the review aimed to capture insights on beneficiary engagement and the sustainability of project outcomes, these dimensions were not prominently reflected in the interviews or available documentation. Perspectives on what could have been done differently and the project's long-term impact were only marginally addressed. Although these issues did not emerge strongly during data collection, the review acknowledged their relevance. The review, therefore, sought to incorporate these aspects through contextual analysis and interpretation of observed data, generating recommendations to inform future initiatives.

III. THE PROJECT

A. Context

40. The project aimed to strengthen Mauritania's capacity for environmental information and knowledge management, supporting the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of MEAs and SDGs. It addressed critical challenges linked to the country's geographic and climatic conditions, characterized by high poverty, fragile ecosystems, and a desert climate. Since the 1970s, Mauritania has experienced significant climate variability, including a 15-30% decline in rainfall and a 40-60% reduction in water discharge, leading to severe droughts, desertification, reduced agricultural productivity, and increased food insecurity²¹. Unsustainable land use practices, such as deforestation, urbanization, and pollution from extractive industries, have further degraded biodiversity, while rising sea levels threaten coastal areas, including Nouakchott. In response, the government prioritized the development of a strategy for arid and semi-arid zones in the north, center, and northeast of the country. At the same time, Mauritania faced major obstacles in implementing MEAs due to fragmented data management, limited institutional capacity, inadequate infrastructure, and weak integration between science, policy, and financing. These issues undermined the effectiveness of environmental strategies and the fulfilment of national and international commitments. The NCSA, conducted in 2006 and reaffirmed in 2018, identified persistent gaps in technical skills, institutional coordination, and environmental information systems, which this project aimed to address through targeted capacity-building and strategic indicators.
41. This CCCD project was built on the findings of the NCSA. During the preparation phase, the GEF Capacity Development Scorecard was completed in collaboration with the MESD, providing a baseline and a framework for monitoring progress. The project supported the development of a coordinated environmental knowledge and information management system while also enhancing institutional and technical capacities to mainstream, formulate, and implement policies for the effective realization of the Rio Conventions, other MEAs, and related SDGs. The project aimed to contribute to the following objectives of the GEF CCCD strategy: Integrating global environmental needs into management information systems and monitoring (CCCD-1), and integrating MEAs' provisions within national policy, legislative, and regulatory frameworks (CCCD-3).
42. At inception, Mauritania's environmental governance was hindered by unclear institutional mandates, weak stakeholder coordination, limited engagement, and underdeveloped information systems. Although environmental plans existed, their implementation was constrained by financial and technical limitations. The project aimed to address these foundational issues by reinforcing institutional, technical, and informational capacities essential for effective governance and sustainable development. During implementation, the project encountered external challenges, notably the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted operations across UNEP and national stakeholders, causing delays and requiring timeline adjustments. Additionally, the planned Mid-Term Review (MTR) was not completed due to the consultant's health issues and subsequent passing. Given the project's advanced stage and the non-mandatory nature of MTRs for GEF medium-sized projects,

²¹ GEF-UNEP/CCCD/MSP/ GEF ID 9747 (2018). GEF6 Request for Project Approval.

UNEP opted to organize a knowledge exchange session as a practical alternative to assess progress and share lessons learned.

B. Objectives and components

43. As outlined in the GEF6 Request for Project Approval²² and confirmed in later revisions, the project was structured around two components, each designed to achieve a specific outcome: Outcome 1 and Outcome 2. Outcome 1 includes six specific outputs, while Outcome 2 comprises four, totaling ten outputs across the project. No changes were made to them during project implementation. (Table 2).

Table 2: Project outcome and outputs

Component	Outcome	Output	Description
Component 1: Strengthening of a coordinated environmental knowledge and information management system	Outcome 1: A system for the management of environmental information and knowledge is fully operational for use in decision-making, assessment, planning and reporting	Output 1.1: Analysis of the current environmental information systems, data flows, environmental statistics, and reporting mechanisms related to the Rio Conventions and other MEAs utilized by line ministries and other relevant agencies.	This outcome focuses on establishing an operational environmental information and knowledge management system as a foundation for Outcome 2. This includes a comprehensive stocktaking of existing systems, data flows, and statistics related to MEAs and SDGs, along with legal and institutional analyses. Key outputs involve setting up a technical coordination panel led by CNOEZA, developing an Environmental Information Charter, updating indicator frameworks, and raising awareness among decision-makers. The initiative also includes the creation of the Mauritania Observatory of the Arid Zones, extensive training programs on data management and ecosystem-based adaptation, and the development and implementation of an Environmental Information System (EIS) integrated with national reporting tools. Infrastructure, roles, and responsibilities will be defined, and stakeholders will be trained in strategic assessments, SOER preparation, and the use of geospatial technologies.
		Output 1.2 Agreement among key line ministries and agencies on the streamlining of data collection and sharing to fill data gaps and reduce unnecessary duplication.	
		Output 1.3 Formulation of nationally appropriate environmental indicators based on MEAs, SDGs, Environmental Performance Index (EPI), and other sources for use in different reporting and assessment processes.	
		Output 1.4 Training for national and local data custodian agencies on data collection and management methodologies.	
		Output 1.5 Streamlined indicator-based monitoring and reporting system implemented.	
		Output 1.6 Development of the State of the Environment Report (SOER) based on integrated environmental assessment methodologies, involving the key stakeholders.	
Component 2: Enhancement of institutional coordination and technical capacities to mainstream, develop, and utilize policies for the effective implementation of MEAs and relevant SDGs	Outcome 2: Enhanced capacities to develop and implement policies, plans, and programmes integrating MEAs and related SDGs	Output 2.1 Enhanced consultative and decision-making processes for mainstreaming of obligations under Rio Conventions, other relevant MEAs and related SDGs, including shared environmental information systems, collaborative institutional inter-ministerial and decentralized mechanisms, and collaborative mechanisms with major groups and stakeholders.	This outcome builds upon the foundation laid by Outcome 1, aiming to strengthen national capacities to develop and implement policies, plans, and programs that integrate MEAs and related SDGs. Key outputs include enhancing consultative and decision-making processes through shared environmental information systems and inter-ministerial collaboration, implementing demonstration projects with indigenous communities on natural resource management and microfinance, and promoting public environmental education and awareness. The Atlas of Natural Resources and a study on green economy opportunities will support strategic planning. Training programs will empower stakeholders in project formulation and ecosystem-based adaptation. A sustainability strategy will be developed, informed by studies on financing options and co-financing opportunities, and will include a MEA-dedicated database and collaborative systems led by CNOEZA. The technical coordination panel established under Outcome 1 will be institutionalized to ensure long-term maintenance of the Environmental Information System and continued implementation of MEAs.
		Output 2.2 Demonstration projects of the application of an integrated approach to implement global environmental priorities of different MEAs and SDGs at local levels in key sectors.	
		Output 2.3 Public environmental education for sustainable development and awareness raising activities with a focus on climate change, biodiversity and land degradation.	
		Output 2.4 Sustainability strategy for continued implementation of MEAs and the environmental dimensions of SDGs.	

²² GEF-UNEP/CCCD/MSP/ GEF ID 9747 (2018). GEF6 Request for Project Approval.

44. Section IV, "Theory of Change at review, " describes the causal pathways linking the project's outputs and outcomes to higher-level expected results (intermediate state and impact). Table 3 (Section IV) reformulates results statements, aiming to frame the wording of the expected results in line with the Theory of Change and UNEP Glossary of Results Definitions.

C. Stakeholders

45. The Request for Project Approval (Annex O) includes a detailed stakeholder analysis, identifying key stakeholders, their project-related priorities, and expected roles in implementation, supported by a stakeholder analysis matrix. Building on this, the MLTR produced a stakeholder matrix at inception (Table 3), following the UNEP's Stakeholder Analysis Guidance²³.
46. Stakeholders were categorized considering the project document's classifications, based on their role: implementation stakeholders (IS)²⁴, decision-making stakeholders (DMS)²⁵, support stakeholders²⁶ (SS), and beneficiary stakeholders (BS)²⁷, and by type, including implementing and executing agency, sectorial ministries, partners, government, NGOs and CSOs, academia, private sector, and others.
47. This review identifies implementing and executing agencies, MEAs focal points, and technical expertise as key players, defined as stakeholders with medium to high influence and interest. Regarding implementing and executing agencies, this review highlights the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MESD) / National Centre for Environmental Observation and Arid Zones (CNOEZA) as key players. Regarding sectorial ministries, academia, and the private sector, this review identifies some ministries (eg.; the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Ministry of Oil, Energy and Mines), the University of Nouakchott Alaasriya (UNA), the National Council of Employers of Mauritania, and several other organizations as key players.
48. Other stakeholder groups - such as additional sectorial ministries (e.g., Ministry of Social Affairs, Childhood, and Family), international partners (e.g., United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Bank), Government directorate (e.g., National Meteorological Office (ONM)), local government (Regional Council of Nouakchott and the Association of Mayors of Mauritania (AMM)), civil society individuals and organizations (including International/national NGOs and CSOs, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and youth), and additional academia - are classified as subjects ("show consideration"), meaning they have low influence but medium to high interest in the project's outcomes.

²³ UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 09 TR Stakeholder Analysis Guidance Note.

<https://communities.unep.org/display/EQU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>

²⁴ Individuals or groups directly or indirectly responsible for executing the project, ensuring that it progresses according to plan. This category includes the implementing and executing agencies and its core staff, who manage day-to-day tasks and coordination, and internal partners, such as service contracts and consultancies.

²⁵ Individuals or groups that provided strategic oversight of the project implementation, guiding the project's direction and ensuring alignment with overarching goals and policies. This group includes the Steering Committee, which provides oversight and approves key decisions, as well as donor / funding organizations, which finance the project and influence its priorities.

²⁶ External partners that assist in the project's implementation by providing resources, expertise, or additional capacity without directly managing daily activities. This group is composed by government directorates, sectorial ministries, MEA focal points, international / national NGOs and CSOs, indigenous / women group, academia and research organizations and media..

²⁷ Individuals or groups who directly benefit from the project's outcome. Their needs and feedback are critical to ensuring the project's relevance and effectiveness. This group includes the end users, who directly utilize the project's outputs: national MEA focal points (NFPs), non-governmental organizations, private sector, Indigenous people and local communities, and women and youth.

49. No stakeholders were identified as **context setters** (“meet their needs”), possessing medium to high influence but low interest, or having low influence and low interest concerning the project's outcome (“least important”)

Table 3: TE Stakeholder Matrix

Type	Main stakeholder role				Power (H/M/L)	Interest (H/M/L)
	Implementation	Decision-making	Support	Beneficiary		
Implementing agency	X	X		X	H	H
Executing agency	X	X		X	H	H
Sectorial ministries		X	X	X	L - H	M - H
International partner			X	X	L - M	H
MEA focal points			X	X	M	H
Government directorate		X	X	X	L	H
Local government		X	X	X	L	H
International/national NGOs and CSOs		X	X	X	L	H
Academia and research organizations		X	X	X	L - M	M
Private sector		X	X	X	M	M
Technical expertise		X	X	X	M	M
Indigenous / women group			X	X	L	M

D. Project implementation structure and partners

50. The project was implemented through a structured arrangement involving several key actors (Figure 3):
- Implementing Agency (IA):** UNEP, through its Early Warning and Assessment Division (formerly Science Division), managed the project according to GEF's requirements, reported to GEF, and oversaw overall delivery, providing the technical assistance required to meet the project goals.
 - Executing Agency (EA):** The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MESD), through the National Centre for Environmental Observation and Arid Zones (CNOEZA), was responsible for ensuring the project's implementation aligned with the approved work plan, budget, and reporting requirements. This included maintaining high standards in staffing, procurement, and coordination via a Project Management Unit (PMU), as well as conducting routine monitoring, field visits, and annual audits.
 - Project Steering Committee (PSC):** The PSC met annually or as needed to provide overall supervision of project implementation. It ensured coordination among stakeholders, approved the annual work plan and budget, reviewed semi-annual progress reports and PIRs, and made strategic and corrective decisions. The PSC included representatives from MESD, UNEP EWAD, various sectoral ministries, UNA, the Regional Council of Nouakchott, the National Council of Employers of Mauritania, ANGMV, ENS, the Regional Delegation of the Environment of Inchiri, PNA, ONM, and several NGOs. Its composition could vary from meeting to meeting.
 - Implementing and technical support partners:** The project engaged a broad network of national and international partners to support environmental

governance and strengthen information systems. Key national partners included various departments within the MESD, as well as NGOs and networks of municipalities and community-based organizations. Academic and research institutions such as the University of Nouakchott Al Aasriya (UNA) and the National Meteorological Office (ONM) contributed technical expertise and data. Where needed, national and international consultants were engaged to support specialized tasks such as developing online environmental information systems, reviewing environmental indicators, and producing environmental statistics.

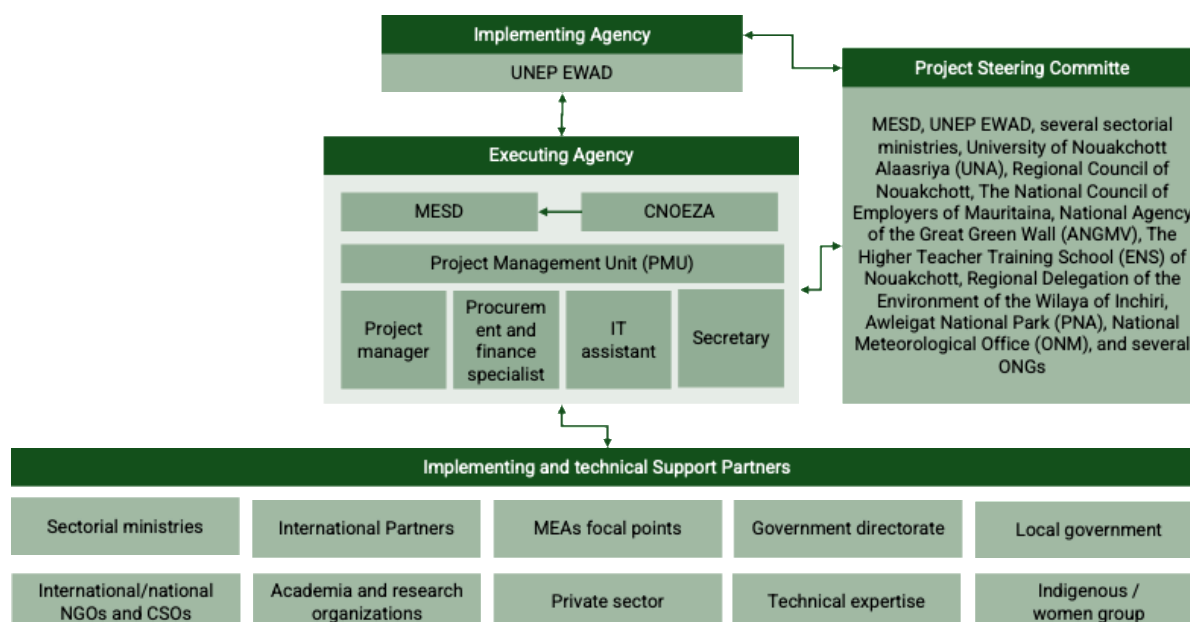


Figure 2: Organigram of the Project with key project stakeholders

E. Changes in design during implementation

51. In March 2018, the GEF approved the medium-sized CCCD project in Mauritania. Shortly after, in April 2018, UNEP organized a project implementation preparation workshop for the project, along with two others for Benin and Botswana²⁸.
52. The project officially launched in September 2018 with an inception workshop held in Nouakchott, Mauritania²⁹. However, implementation activities effectively began in January 2019, as indicated through official communication between MESD and UNEP. This delay followed the inception workshop and the entry into force of the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between UNEP and MESD, which was signed in May 2018. Despite the project document specifying a 36-month implementation period, this review considers May 2022 as the planned end date, in line with the PCA.
53. The project also faced several delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In June 2021, MESD informed UNEP that the pandemic had significantly impacted project

²⁸ UNEP GEF CCCD Portfolio Benin, Botswana & Mauritania Medium Sized Projects (MSPs). Project Implementation Planning Workshop held on 16 – 20 April 2018 in Nouakchott, Mauritania

²⁹ GEF–UNEP Project: Inception Workshop of the Project “Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania” held on 27 September 2018 in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

execution. Consequently, the government requested a revision of the project's timeline and activities to better align with evolving priorities, including a request for an extension of the project until December 2023. In response to the government's extension request, UNEP recommended conducting a Mid-Term Review (MTR) to assess the project's progress, identify challenges, and determine the necessity of an extension. Given the government reorganization, the MTR was seen as a valuable tool to guide corrective actions and help reorient the project toward achieving its intended outcomes.

54. As a result, two no-cost extensions were granted, extending the project timeline to December 2023. No changes were made to the Theory of Change (ToC) or the results framework. Each extension addressed specific circumstances:
 - i. **First Extension (May 2022):** A one-year extension that extended the project to May 2023 to accommodate delays caused by COVID-19 and allow for the completion of delayed activities.
 - ii. **Second Extension (December 2023):** Further extended the project to December 2023 to allow for the completion of a pending project activity – the project closure workshop. This workshop brought together stakeholders, MESD, and UNEP representatives to reflect on lessons learned, showcase achievements, and discuss sustainability.
55. It is important to note that in lieu of the planned MTR, which could not be conducted due to the consultant's health issues and subsequent passing, a knowledge-sharing session was organized in January 2023. This session served as a practical alternative to assess project progress between September 2018 and December 2022, exchange experiences among stakeholders, and capture lessons learned to inform future initiatives

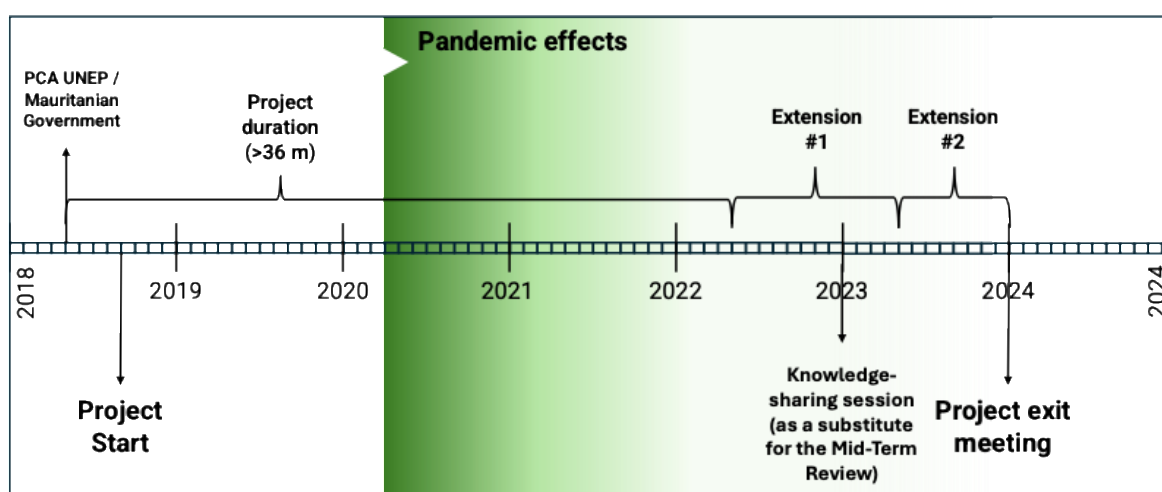


Figure 3: Project Timeline - Key Revisions and Updated Deadlines

F. Project financing

56. According to the UNEP GEF PIR Fiscal Year 2023³⁰, the project reported a total planned funding and contributions of USD 1,300,000. Of this, GEF financing accounted for USD 950,000. Approximately 73% of the secured funding came from cash contributions, nearly all of which originated from extra-budgetary sources. The remaining 27% of the secured funding (USD 350,000) was provided through in-kind co-financing contributions.
57. The estimated project cost at the design stage was USD 1,300,000. As of June 2023, the actual expenditure amounted to USD 905,000.
58. When analyzing the budget distribution by component, including M&E Costs and Project Management Costs (PMC), the GEF project financing at the design stage allocated USD 450,750 to Component 1 / Outcome 1 and USD 499,250 to Component 2 / Outcome 2, representing approximately 47% and 53% of the total GEF budget, respectively. At the output level, Output 2.2 received the largest share of the total financing (18.3%), followed by Output 2.3 (12.5%), and Output 1.4 (10.1%). This distribution reflects the project's strategic emphasis on the integrated implementation of global environmental priorities at the local level through demonstration projects, the promotion of public awareness for sustainable development, and the strengthening of institutional capacities.
59. Annex VI (Project Budget and Expenditures) includes Table 7, which details the project funding sources, and Table 8, which provides a breakdown of expenditures by outcome/output. Annex VII (Financial Management) contains Table 9, presenting an overview of financial management.

³⁰ UNEP. (2023). Project Implementation Review Fiscal Year 2023. UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. ((1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023)).

IV. THEORY OF CHANGE AT REVIEW

60. The Theory of Change (ToC) of the project was described in the logical framework format at the GEF6 Request for Project Approval³¹. The ToC is well defined, outlining the assumptions, outputs, and outcomes. However, the project's impact is not explicitly defined in the document (Annex G). The project would benefit from a ToC diagram explicating an intermediate state, intended impact, detailed key pathways, and stakeholders, aligning as much as possible with UNEP guidelines³².
61. Figure 5 presents the reconstructed ToC at Review of this MLTR, depicting the sequence from outputs to outcomes through the intermediate state and leading to the desired impact. It explains the change process by outlining the major causal pathways throughout the intervention. These changes are mapped as a set of interrelated pathways, illustrating how the required outcomes are logically connected. Table 4 reformulates results statements, aiming to frame the wording of the expected results in line with the Theory of Change and UNEP Glossary of Results Definitions³³.

Table 4: Justification for Reformulation of Results Statements

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Review Inception (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
(LONG LASTING) IMPACT		
-	Sustainable development is advanced through informed environmental decision-making and effective implementation of MEAs and SDGs	The original ToC was described in the logical framework format at the GEF6 Request for Project Approval, and it did not specify a long-term impact. Therefore, this impact was defined to reflect the goal of the project—advancing sustainable development by enabling informed environmental decision-making and ensuring effective implementation of MEAs and SDGs. This captures the broader long-term change the project seeks to contribute to.
INTERMEDIATE STATES		
-	Environmental governance is strengthened through integrated information systems and policy coordination at national and local levels	The original project document does not specify an intermediate state. This intermediate state has been defined to capture the crucial transitional phase in which environmental governance is strengthened. This strengthening is achieved through the integration of information systems and enhanced policy coordination at both national and local levels, representing essential steps

³¹ GEF-UNEP/CCCD/MSP/ GEF ID 9747 (2018). GEF6 Request for Project Approval.

³² UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 13 TR Use of Theory of Change in Reviews Guidance Note. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EQU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>

³³ UNEP (2023) Glossary of Results Definitions (version 8)

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Review Inception (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
		toward achieving the project's ultimate impact.
PROJECT OUTCOME		
Outcome 1: A system for the management of environmental information and knowledge is fully operational for use in decision-making, assessment, planning, and reporting.	Same as original	-
Outcome 2: Enhanced capacities to develop and implement policies, plans, and programmes integrating MEAs and related SDGs.	Same as original	-
OUTPUTS		
Output 1.1: Analysis of the current environmental information systems, data flows, environmental statistics, and reporting mechanisms related to the Rio Conventions and other MEAs utilized by line ministries and other relevant agencies.	Same as original	-
Output 1.2 Agreement among key line ministries and agencies on the streamlining of data collection and sharing to fill data gaps and reduce unnecessary duplication.	Same as original	
Output 1.3 Formulation of nationally appropriate environmental indicators based on MEAs, SDGs, Environmental Performance Index (EPI), and other sources for use in different reporting and assessment processes.	Same as original	
Output 1.4 Training for national and local data custodian agencies on data collection and management methodologies.	Same as original	
Output 1.5 Streamlined indicator-based monitoring and reporting system implemented.	Same as original	
Output 1.6 Development of the State of the Environment Report based on integrated environmental assessment methodologies, involving the key stakeholders.	Same as original	
Output 2.1 Enhanced consultative and decision-making processes for mainstreaming of obligations under Rio Conventions, other relevant MEAs and related SDGs, including shared environmental information systems, collaborative institutional inter-ministerial and decentralized mechanisms, and collaborative mechanisms with major groups and stakeholders.	Same as original	
Output 2.2 Demonstration projects of the application of an integrated approach to implement global environmental priorities of different MEAs and SDGs at local levels in key sectors.	Same as original	
Output 2.3 Public environmental education for sustainable development and awareness raising activities with a focus on climate change, biodiversity and land degradation.	Same as original	
Output 2.4 Sustainability strategy for continued implementation of MEAs and the environmental dimensions of SDGs.	Same as original	

62. It was expected that the delivery of 10 outputs (see Section III.B) would lead, during the life of the project, to the achievement of 2 outcomes (see section 2), which in turn would place the process of change in an intermediate state (Environmental governance is strengthened through integrated information systems and policy coordination at national and local levels) towards the desired impact (Sustainable development is advanced through informed environmental decision-making and effective implementation of MEAs and SDGs). These expected changes would be effectively achieved if the five assumptions³⁴ and four drivers³⁵ were met (Table 2). All stakeholder groups were expected to be involved in the change process: implementing stakeholders (IS), decision-making stakeholders (DMS), support stakeholders (SS), and beneficiary stakeholders (BS) – see section III.C.
63. Output 1.1 involves the delivery of a comprehensive analysis of existing environmental information systems, data flows, statistics, and reporting mechanisms related to the Rio Conventions and other MEAs. Output 1.2 seeks to foster agreement among key ministries and agencies to streamline data collection and sharing, addressing gaps and reducing duplication. Output 1.3 aims to develop a nationally relevant set of environmental indicators aligned with MEAs, SDGs, and other frameworks, while Output 1.4 aims to promote targeted training that builds the capacity of national and local data custodians in data collection and management methodologies. Output 1.5 intends to implement an integrated, indicator-based monitoring and reporting system, and Output 1.6 focuses on producing a State of the Environment Report based on inclusive, integrated environmental assessments.
64. The delivery of these five outputs supports Outcome 1, which aims to establish a fully operational system for managing environmental information and knowledge to support evidence-based decision-making, assessment, planning, and reporting. The successful delivery of Outcome 1 depends on institutional and governmental support (Assumption A1), stakeholder commitment and participation (Assumption A2), improved monitoring systems and indicators (Driver D2), and strengthened national technical capacities (Driver D3).
65. Output 2.1 enhances consultative and decision-making processes for mainstreaming obligations under the Rio Conventions, other relevant MEAs, and related SDGs. Output 2.2 promotes demonstration projects that apply integrated approaches to implement global environmental priorities of various MEAs and SDGs at the local level in key sectors. Output 2.3 fosters public environmental education for sustainable development and awareness-raising activities focused on climate change, biodiversity, and land degradation. Finally, Output 2.4 implements a sustainability strategy to ensure the continued implementation of MEAs and the environmental dimensions of the SDGs.
66. The delivery of these four outputs supports Outcome 2, which focuses on enhancing capacities to develop and implement policies, plans, and programmes that integrate MEAs and related SDGs. The effective delivery of Outcome 2 depends on institutional and governmental support (Assumption A1), stakeholder commitment and participation (Assumption A2), adoption and use of the Environmental Information System (Assumption A3), and effective environmental education and outreach (Assumption A4).

³⁴ An assumption is a significant external factor or condition that needs to be present for the realization of the intended results but is beyond the influence of the project and its partners. Assumptions are often positively formulated risks.

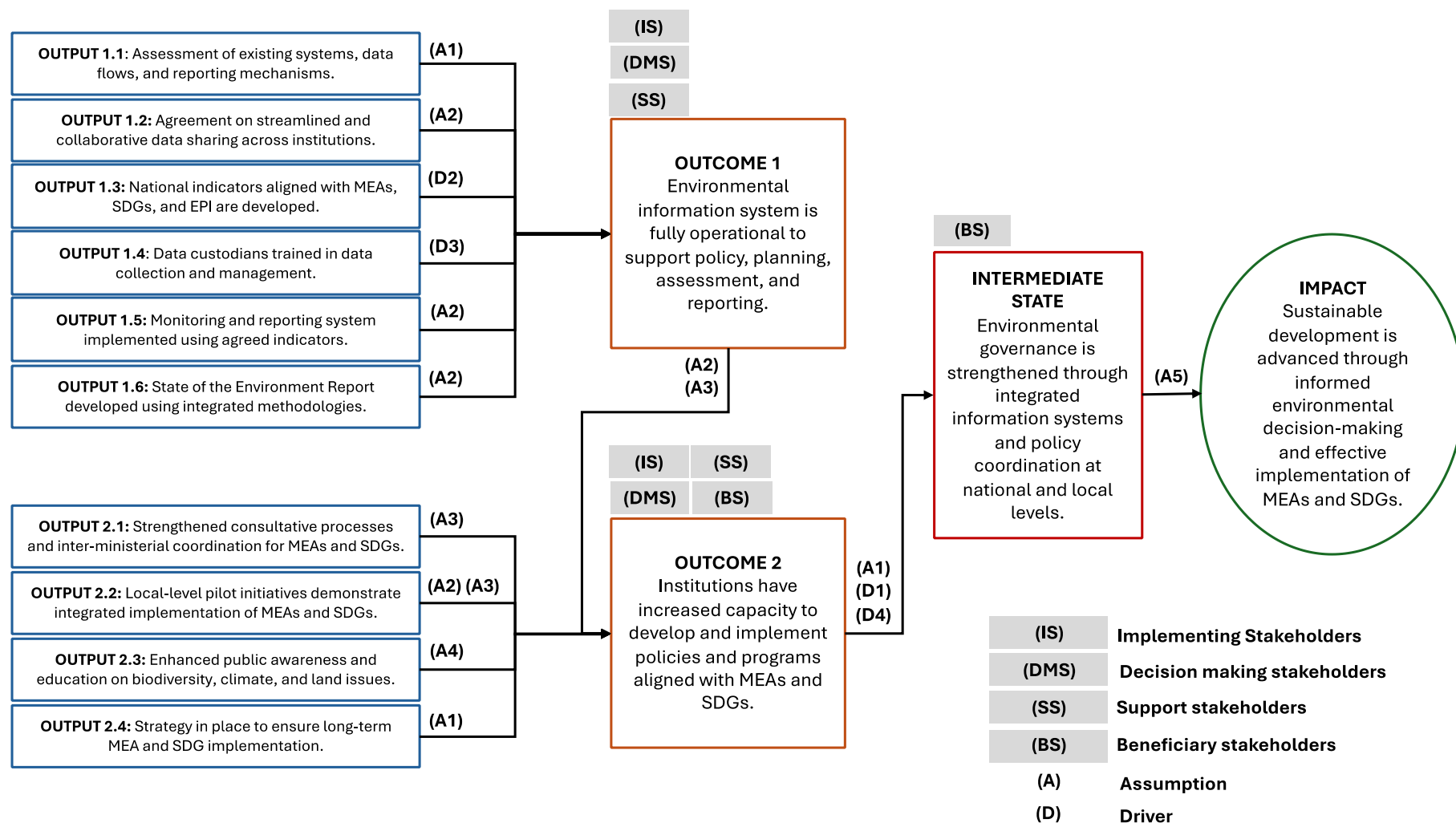
³⁵ A driver is a significant external factor that, if present, is expected to contribute to the realization of the intended results of a project. Drivers can be influenced by the project and its partners.

67. The achievement of the project outcomes was expected to lead to the intermediate state where “Environmental governance is strengthened through integrated information systems and policy coordination at national and local levels.” To reach this intermediate state, three contributing conditions were anticipated: Institutional and Governmental Support (Assumption A1), Active Stakeholder Participation and Collaborative Approach (Driver D1), and Sustainability Strategy Adoption (Driver D2).
68. Ultimately, the overall impact of the project—“Sustainable development is advanced through informed environmental decision-making and effective implementation of MEAs and SDGs”—would be realized through this intermediate state and a Supportive Context for Human Rights, Gender Equality, and Inclusion (Assumption A5).
69. During the review process, it is essential to clarify the specific contributions of IS and DMS across all Outputs and the roles of BS in Outputs under Outcome 2. The validity of assumptions and drivers regarding stakeholder commitment and participation to act should be assessed, along with the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement.
70. It is important to note that indigenous peoples, local communities, youth, and women are identified as beneficiary stakeholders. To ensure equitable project outputs, it is essential for the broader social, political, and institutional context to support the promotion of human rights, gender equality, and the inclusion of Indigenous peoples and local communities (Assumption A5).

Table 5: Drivers and assumptions of the project

DRIVERS		DESCRIPTION
Driver 1	D1	Active Stakeholder Participation and Collaborative Approach: The project’s participatory approach is a key driver of success. Its ability to engage stakeholders actively throughout planning and implementation can be directly supported and strengthened by the project itself.
Driver 2	D2	Improvement of Monitoring Systems and Indicators: The review and streamlining of existing and missing indicators — aiming to establish a manageable and meaningful set for MEA, SDG, and Environmental Performance Index (EPI) reporting — is a process the project can influence directly. Through technical involvement, the project can help ensure these indicators are realistic, nationally relevant, and actionable.
Driver 3	D3	Strengthening of National Technical Capacities: The ongoing development of a needs-based training agenda by the CNOEZA for knowledge management and environmental surveillance presents a key opportunity. This effort can be aligned with and reinforced by the project to build long-term monitoring and technical capacity.
Driver 4	D4	Sustainability Strategy Adoption: Adoption of a national Sustainability Strategy ensures long-term commitment and institutional anchoring for the continued implementation of MEAs and relevant SDGs beyond the project duration.
ASSUMPTIONS		DESCRIPTION
Assumption 1	A1	Institutional and Governmental Support: The project assumes continued political and institutional support, including alignment with national laws and international environmental commitments. Government bodies are expected to remain engaged, comply with planning obligations (SCAPP), and promote ownership through integration of MEAs and SDGs into national frameworks.
Assumption 2	A2	Stakeholder Commitment and Participation: Project success depends on active stakeholder involvement. It assumes that institutions, communities, and other actors are committed to data sharing, collaboration on reports (e.g., SOER), and inclusive engagement, including women and youth.
Assumption 3	A3	Adoption and Use of Environmental Information Systems (EIS): It is assumed that institutions are interested in adopting shared environmental data systems and that decision-makers will use the information for planning. Pilot demonstrations are expected to show the benefits of an integrated approach and encourage replication.
Assumption 4	A4	Environmental Education and Outreach: The education system is assumed to be open to integrating environmental topics through curricula review and student engagement. Schools are expected to support replication of activities and promote ownership among learners.
Assumption 5	A5	Supportive Context for Human Rights, Gender Equality, and Inclusion: The broader social, political, and institutional context supports the promotion of human rights, gender equality, and the inclusion of Indigenous peoples and local communities, enabling these principles to be integrated throughout the project.

Figure 4: Theory of Change



V. REVIEW FINDINGS

A. Strategic Relevance

Alignment to UNEP's UNEP Medium Term Strategy³⁶ (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities

71. The project's implementation strategies and expected contributions were closely aligned with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategies (MTS), Programmes of Work (PoWs), and strategic priorities under which the project was approved. This alignment was achieved by addressing core UNEP objectives in environmental governance and ecosystem management, promoting policy coherence, and strengthening institutional capacities.
72. For MTS 2018-2021, the project implementation reports show that the project contributed directly to the Sub-programme 7 (Environment Under Review), particularly through the following expected accomplishments (Ea) and PoW indicators for 2018-2019³⁷ and 2020-2021³⁸:
- i. SP7 Ea(a): Governments and other stakeholders use quality open environmental data, analyses and participatory processes that strengthen the science-policy interface to generate evidence-based environmental assessments, identify emerging issues and foster policy action.
73. The project was aligned with the following PoW Output under PoW 2018-19 and PoW 2020-2021: National and regional reporting systems based on shared environmental information system principles, generating open access to information.
74. Under MTS 2022-2025, the project sustains its relevance to UNEP's Science-Policy foundational subprogramme, which aims to provide credible data and policy-relevant analysis to strengthen the science-policy interface and support informed environmental decision-making. The project contributed particularly through the following expected accomplishments (Ea):
- i. 1B Countries and stakeholders have increased capacity, finance and access to technologies to deliver on the adaptation and mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement.
 - ii. 1C: State and non-State actors adopt the enhanced transparency framework arrangements under the Paris Agreement.
 - iii. 2B: Sustainable management of nature is adopted & implemented in development frameworks.
75. Under PoW 2022-2023³⁹, the project contributes to the following direct outcomes:
- i. 1.1 Policymaking and decision-making for climate action are informed by the latest science-based analysis and data generation.

³⁶ UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (Eas), of the Sub-programmes. <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents>.

³⁷ Indicators of achievement of Sub-programme 4 Environmental Governance (UNEP PoW 2018-2019) can be found on <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/7707>

³⁸ Indicators of achievement of Sub-programme 4 Environmental Governance (UNEP PoW 2020-2021) can be found on <https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/28411>

³⁹ Indicators of achievement of Science-Policy foundational subprogramme (UNEP PoW 2022-2025) can be found on <https://www.unep.org/resources/unep-programme-work-and-budget-2022-2023-pow-annex-1-people-and-planet>

- ii. 2.7 Natural assets are valued, monitored, and sustainably managed
 - iii. 2.9 Institutional capacity to adopt and act on national and international commitments is enhanced, and accountability frameworks are strengthened
 - iv. 3.13 Sound science, data, statistics, analysis, information, and knowledge are generated and shared.
76. Under PoW 2022-2023⁴⁰, the project also contributes to two key indicators:
- i. SP (i): Number of countries and national, regional, and subnational authorities that, as a result of UNEP support, have strengthened capacity to develop sound environmental data, statistics, scientific assessments and early warning systems.
 - ii. SP (ii): Number of relevant global, regional, and national forums, institutions and Governments using data, statistics, scientific assessments and early warning and foresight systems provided by UNEP for catalysing policymaking and action.
77. The project's strategies— from strengthening environmental information systems to building institutional and technical capacities for effective implementation of the Rio Conventions, other MEAs, and relevant SDGs —were designed to fulfil UNEP's strategic vision for empowering governments and other stakeholders with quality assessments and open access to data and information to deliver the environmental dimension of sustainable development.
78. Although the project does not explicitly reference the Bali Strategic Plan (BSP), it supports its objectives by strengthening national capacity through knowledge and information management systems, including elements of capacity building, technology support, and environmental mainstreaming. Similarly, while South-South cooperation is not explicitly mentioned, the Project Approval Request highlights that experiences from other countries in the region—particularly Botswana and Benin—would inform the project. Project team members would share their experience on MEA implementation, monitoring, and reporting with these countries, fostering knowledge exchange and capacity building. Nonetheless, the document could more clearly emphasize its alignment and relevance with these strategic priorities.
79. Overall, the project's implementation strategies and contributions demonstrated alignment with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities as outlined in the MTS cycles 2018-2021 and 2022-2025, along with their respective PoWs (2018-2019, 2020-2021, and 2022-2023). Alignment with UNEP's Capacity Building BSP and South-South Cooperation (S-SC) policies was evident. Contributions were also identified for PoW indicators (2018-2019, 2020-2021, and 2022-2023).

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

Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities

80. The project demonstrates strong alignment with GEF strategic priorities, national development goals, and the SDGs by addressing systemic barriers common to multiple environmental conventions. Through its focus on enhancing institutional capacities and promoting integrated environmental governance, the project supports the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and

⁴⁰ Indicators of achievement of Science-Policy foundational subprogramme (UNEP PoW 2022-2025) can be found on <https://www.unep.org/resources/unep-programme-work-and-budget-2022-2023-pow-annex-1-people-and-planet>

contributes to global environmental benefits across key focal areas, including biodiversity, land management, and chemicals and waste.

81. As outlined in the project document, the initiative responds to priority capacity needs identified in assessments such as the NCSA and the GEF Development Scorecard. These include building technical competencies and fostering coordinated, cross-sectoral approaches to reduce institutional fragmentation. By addressing these gaps, the project is positioned to deliver broad-based environmental benefits across all GEF focal areas.
82. The project contributes to key objectives of the GEF CCCD strategy, specifically: CCCD-1, which focuses on integrating global environmental needs into monitoring and information systems; and CCCD-3, which focuses on integrating Multilateral Environmental Agreements' provisions within national policy, legislative, and regulatory frameworks.
83. Originally designed to contribute to GEF-6 Core Indicator 6 (Enhance capacity of countries to implement MEAs and mainstream into national and sub-national policy, planning, financial, and legal frameworks) the project was also required, under GEF-7 operational guidance, to report contributions to additional indicators. Accordingly, it aligned with the following GEF-7 core Indicator Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment.
84. Stakeholder feedback confirmed that the project's implementation strategies and expected outcomes were well aligned with donor priorities, and that the project was well designed to achieve these goals.
85. During the design phase, UNEP ensured the project conformed to the GEF CCCD framework, an essential prerequisite for project approval. Project results were primarily communicated to donors through PIRs, which provided regular updates on activities and progress. Additionally, monitoring meetings and missions involving the UNEP EWAD team facilitated the exchange and discussion of project outcomes. In 2023, two key events further enhanced knowledge sharing and stakeholder engagement: In 2023, two key events further supported knowledge sharing and stakeholder engagement: (1) the "UNEP GEF Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) Knowledge Exchange Session" in Kenya, which brought together representatives from Mauritania government and other countries, such as Iraq and Benin, to exchange lessons learned and success stories⁴¹; (2) the PSC meeting and monitoring mission held in June 2023⁴², where national stakeholders convened to discuss project implementation, sustainability strategies, coherent communication and branding, and future steps.
86. It can be affirmed that the project's implementation strategies and delivered contributions are fully aligned with the priorities of donors and partners, as well as the anticipated contributions to the reported results indicators.

Rating for Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities: Highly Satisfactory

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

87. The project demonstrated alignment with global, regional, and national environmental priorities by strengthening capacity to develop sound environmental

⁴¹ UNEP (2023). UNEP GEF Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) Knowledge Exchange Session. Naivasha, Kenya. January 17-19, 2023.

⁴² UNEP (2023) Project Steering Committee (PSC) Session of UNEP GEF-funded Mauritania Crosscutting Capacity Development (CCCD) project and Monitoring Mission. Benichab and Nouakchott, 13-15 June 2023.

data, statistics, scientific assessments, and early warning systems, as outlined in the project documents, PIRs, and feedback from stakeholders.

88. The project documents and PIRs highlighted the project's alignment with the SDGs and Agenda 2030, particularly through indicators SDG 13 (13.3.1⁴³, 13.3.2, and 13.b.1⁴⁴); SDG 15 (15.1.1⁴⁵); SDG 16 (16.10.2⁴⁶); and SDG 17 (17.18.1⁴⁷). These indicators emphasize strengthening climate education and institutional capacity, promoting sustainable land use, ensuring public access to environmental information, and enhancing data availability and statistical capacity for sustainable development.
89. At the national level, the project aimed to establish a foundational framework to strengthen institutional and technical capacities for the effective implementation of the Rio Conventions, other MEAs, and the environmental dimensions of the SDGs. Central to this effort is the development of a coordinated environmental knowledge and information management system to support planning, decision-making, and reporting. Executed by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MESD), the project was structured around two core components: enhanced management of environmental information and knowledge, and strengthened capacities to develop and implement policies, plans, and programmes that integrate MEAs and SDGs.
90. Evidence from the project document, PIF and PIRs confirms that the project also aligns with Mauritania's national strategies and commitments under relevant multilateral environmental agreements. The project addresses key capacity needs identified in the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA), including strengthening the transversal role of the Ministry of Environment, enhancing coordination among MEA focal points, and reinforcing institutional, human, and technical capacities. It is consistent with the National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS, 2006), the National Environment Action Plan (NEAP, 2017–2021), and contributes to the long-term development objectives of the SCAPP. The project also aligned with sectoral strategies in agriculture, mining, oil, and fisheries, and supported national priorities outlined in the following documents: i) Master Plan for Combatting Desertification (1987); ii) National Biodiversity Strategy (1998); iii) Rural Sector Development Strategy (1998 and 2001); iv) Forestry Code (1997); v) Strategic Investment Framework for Sustainable Land Management (2009); vi) Environmental Code; vii) National Gender Strategy (2006); and viii) National Action Plan to Combat Desertification. Furthermore, it responds to several priorities of the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA, 2014), including participatory reforestation, institutional strengthening, and sustainable forest management.
91. By leveraging platforms such as InforMEA, the UNEP Live platform, and the SDGs-MEAs Synergies Portal, the project aimed to foster greater coherence between MEAs and SDGs, while supporting improved environmental governance and the rational use of natural resources, as outlined in Mauritania's UNDAF. The project was also designed to contribute to Mauritania's efforts toward achieving the first strategic priority of the UNDAF/UNDSF 2018–2022: "Inclusive and Sustainable

⁴³ 13.3.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment

⁴⁴ Number of least developed countries and small island developing States with nationally determined contributions, long-term strategies, national adaptation plans and adaptation communications, as reported to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

⁴⁵ Forest area as a proportion of total land area

⁴⁶ 16.10.2 Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information

⁴⁷ 17.18.1 Statistical capacity indicator for Sustainable Development Goal monitoring

Growth.” Specifically, the GEF-funded CCCD project contributes to the 2018–2022 Cooperation Framework for Sustainable Development (CPDD), with most interventions aligned with Outcome 1.3: strengthening the capacity of institutions and communities to sustainably manage natural resources and to anticipate and respond to crises and climate change—under Strategic Priority 1 on inclusive growth.

92. Interview feedback indicates that the project effectively supported the Ministry’s objectives by facilitating multisectoral coordination and strengthening the monitoring and implementation of the SDGs and key MEAs. There was a clear and positive alignment with Mauritania’s national environmental priorities.
93. The project’s strategies and objectives were well aligned with Mauritania’s environmental priorities. The project supported the country’s commitments under key MEAs, including the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Mauritania is also a party to the Convention of the Panafrican Agency of the Great Green Wall (PAGGW). These agreements are considered national priorities due to Mauritania’s dependence on natural resources and the need for consistent environmental reporting. Notably, during the initial design phase, both the Mauritanian government and UNEP made deliberate efforts to ensure this alignment, which served as a foundational element of the project’s design.
94. Therefore, the project’s implementation strategies and contributions aligned with global, regional, sub-regional, and national environmental priorities. Although not explicitly highlighted in the project document, the project’s national context was indirectly aligned with the UN’s “Leave No One Behind” policy by addressing development and human rights and engaging a least-developed country (Mauritania) to foster an inclusive and equitable impact.

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

Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence

95. The intervention design and adjustments made during inception demonstrate full complementarity of results, without duplication, and reflect active engagement with recent UNEP interventions at the time. According to the Project Document, the CCCD project would:
 - i. promoted coordination and alignment with several ongoing initiatives focused on capacity building and strategic support, including GIZ/ProGRN, UNDP & UNEP’s Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI) in Mauritania, and aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2012–2016.
 - ii. established linkages with a wide range of complementary projects implemented by UN agencies and international organizations, such as UNIDO’s enabling activities for the Stockholm Convention, FAO’s pesticide management and ecosystem monitoring programs, IUCN’s climate adaptation and transboundary ecosystem initiatives, and multiple UNDP and UNEP-supported projects related to biodiversity, biosafety, and climate reporting.
 - iii. integrated UNEP’s signature tools and platforms, including the Environment Live Knowledge Platform and the Indicator Reporting Information System (IRIS), to enhance national access to environmental data and support MEA and SDG reporting. The project also planned training and technical support for the use of these tools, based on MESD’s needs.

- iv. fostered regional knowledge exchange, particularly through collaboration with countries such as Botswana and Benin, and supported the role of CNOEZA within MESD as a hub for information sharing and stakeholder coordination. The project also incorporated training on the InforMEA platform to strengthen national capacity for MEA implementation and reporting.
96. Evidence from the desk review and interview feedback highlighted noteworthy efforts undertaken during project implementation:
- i. A parallel project funded by German cooperation (GIZ) was identified, which also operated in environmental statistics and information systems. In response, the project team adopted an adaptive management approach to avoid duplication of efforts. Joint work was promoted, and the environmental information system was ultimately developed with the logos of GEF, UNEP, and GIZ. This collaboration demonstrates that the project not only acknowledged other relevant initiatives but also integrated efforts to ensure efficient use of resources and complementary results.
 - ii. The project also leveraged partnerships with universities, ministries, and local communities to strengthen the delivery of outputs and training activities. This contributed to greater synergy among different stakeholders, for example, the University of Nouakchott Al Asriya and G.I.E Benichab.
97. Overall, the design during inception showed full complementarity (but no duplication) and active knowledge of, or dialogue/engagement with, other recent, ongoing, or planned interventions by UNEP or partner initiatives in the project area. The design does not clearly anticipate any identified benefits of collaboration with other recent, ongoing, or planned interventions. Limited integration was observed during project implementation.

Rating for Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence: Satisfactory

Rating for Strategic Relevance:	Highly Satisfactory
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B. Quality of Project Design

98. The following key sources of information were assessed for reviewing the project design quality: the approved project document⁴⁸, the project results framework, the GEF Review Sheet, and the Theory of Change (ToC) at the project design stage⁴⁹.
99. According to standard UNEP review tools, approaches, and criteria, the project design quality was rated as Satisfactory (Table X). The project was generally well-designed, with major strengths in strategic relevance, logical framework, monitoring, governance and supervision arrangements, partnerships, and financial planning/budgeting.
100. The project was well-grounded in its **strategic relevance**, aligning with UNEP's MTS 2018-2021 and MTS 2022-2025, PoW indicators for 2018-2019, 2020-2021, and 2022-2023, GEF priorities, national plans, and the SDGs, while supporting the Bali Strategic Plan objectives and leveraging regional experiences; its design

⁴⁸ GEF-UNEP/CCCD/MSP/ GEF ID 9747 (2018). GEF6 Request for Project Approval.

⁴⁹ No formal project review was considered in the project design quality (PDQ) assessment, in accordance with the instructions in the Project Quality Table (08 and 08a_Quality_of_Project_Design_Assessment Template) provided by the Evaluation Office. This table states that for Terminal Evaluations/Reviews, if a revised project version is approved based on a Mid-Term Evaluation/Review, the revised design forms the basis of the assessment. The Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the current project was approved in April 2024, and no project revisions were made based on its observations.

demonstrated complementarity with several other initiatives that include a capacity building and strategic support focus and further aligns with the UNDAF 2012-2016 for Mauritania.

101. The **logical framework** provides a coherent structure aligned with the project's objectives, detailing outputs and outcomes evaluated through SMART indicators and time-bound milestones to ensure accountability and progress tracking. While it does not explicitly present long-term impacts, the project document clearly defines monitoring responsibilities in Section C, emphasizing a participatory and consultative approach. It also outlines specific monitoring activities, along with the allocated budget and implementation timeline. Some indicators rely on qualitative baselines, while others lack defined baseline data for assessment.
102. The project document clearly defines **governance and supervision arrangements** and **partnerships**, detailing the structure, roles, and dynamics of the project management unit, project steering committee (PSC), and external stakeholders. Sections A.6 and Annex H outline the responsibilities of the implementing and executing agencies (UNEP and MESD/CNOEZA) ensuring clarity and alignment with each entity's capacity. The PSC, composed of representatives from UNEP, MESD, various ministries, parliament, academia, civil society, and the private sector, is tasked with overseeing project execution and monitoring progress. Overall, the governance framework is well-structured and appropriate for effective project implementation.
103. The **financial planning/budgeting** was streamlined, with detailed cost breakdowns, and the resource mobilization strategy proved realistic, requiring no adjustments during implementation.
104. The sections on Intended Results and Causality, and Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects are generally adequate. However, under **Intended Results and Causality**, the project would be strengthened by including a ToC diagram and clearly defining the intermediate state and intended long-term impact. For **Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects**, although the project document mentions that a sustainability strategy will be developed during implementation, it lacks a clearly defined sustainability strategy and an exit plan at the design stage.
105. Areas with opportunities for enhancement included Project Preparation, Learning, Communication and Outreach, and Identified Project Design Weaknesses/Gaps.
106. The **project preparation** phase lacks evidence of stakeholder consultation during its design and would benefit from the inclusion of a stakeholder matrix to better categorize key groups. Despite the absence of a formal gender analysis, the project incorporates gender-responsive elements, including a results framework with sex-disaggregated indicators and three local initiatives targeting indigenous communities, particularly women.
107. The project document emphasizes **learning, communication, and outreach** primarily through the Terminal review and the replication of local initiatives, aiming to share results and lessons learned. While the stakeholder analysis provides a solid foundation by outlining roles, responsibilities, and expected benefits by output, the project lacks a detailed communication plan to guide effective stakeholder engagement and dissemination of results. Knowledge management is a central focus, with plans for capacity-building, experience sharing, and collaboration among stakeholders. The project also integrates sustainable

development and human rights considerations but would benefit from a more structured approach to communication, particularly to ensure inclusive engagement of minority and gender groups.

108. Finally, the project would have been strengthened by developing a diagram and clearly defining the long-term impact, as well as improving stakeholder communication and including an exit strategy (**Identified Project Design Weaknesses/Gaps**).

Table 6: Overall quality of project design score

SECTION		SELECT RATING	SCORE (1-6)	WEIGHTING	TOTAL (Rating x Weighting/10)
A	Operating Context	Moderately Satisfactory	4	0,4	0,16
B	Project Preparation	Moderately Satisfactory	4	1,2	0,48
C	Strategic Relevance	Highly Satisfactory	6	0,8	0,48
D	Intended Results and Causality	Satisfactory	5	1,6	0,8
E	Logical Framework and Monitoring	Satisfactory	5	0,8	0,4
F	Governance and Supervision Arrangements	Satisfactory	5	0,4	0,2
G	Partnerships	Satisfactory	5	0,8	0,4
H	Learning, Communication and Outreach	Moderately Satisfactory	4	0,4	0,16
I	Financial Planning / Budgeting	Satisfactory	5	0,4	0,2
J	Efficiency	Moderately Satisfactory	4	0,8	0,32
K	Risk identification and Social Safeguards	Moderately Satisfactory	4	0,8	0,32
L	Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects	Satisfactory	5	1,2	0,6
M	Identified Project Design Weaknesses/Gaps	Moderately Satisfactory	4	0,4	0,16
TOTAL SCORE (Sum Totals)					4,68

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

Rating for Project Design: Satisfactory

C. Nature of the External Context

109. Project implementation was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic⁵⁰, which introduced a substantial delay and required two adjustments to timelines and execution strategies.
110. The official inception of the project took place in September 2018, during an inception workshop held in Nouakchott, Mauritania. This followed the signing of the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the GEF Implementing Agency (UNEP) and the Executing Agency (MESD) in May 2018. Prior to that, in April 2018, UNEP's Task Manager and team facilitated a joint planning workshop in Mauritania to support the organization of the inception phase.
111. The COVID-19 pandemic emerged as a challenge in the second quarter of 2020. Its impact on implementation had become evident, resulting in further delays

⁵⁰ The COVID-19 pandemic officially began in December 2019, when the first cases were identified in Wuhan, China. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. While there is no official "end" to the pandemic, many countries began to gain better control in 2021, following mass vaccination campaigns. However, some regions continued to face restrictions in 2022 due to new virus variants and varying vaccination rates.

in the implementation of the GEF-approved work plan. According to the 2020 PIR⁵¹ and other documents:

- i. As with most global projects, implementation was hindered by government-imposed containment measures, which restricted in-person meetings—especially those involving local communities and ministries. Many workshops and events were postponed or canceled, with some adapted into virtual formats. Consultant recruitment was also delayed due to difficulties in forming selection panels.
 - ii. In response to the pandemic's socio-economic impact, the government requested prioritization of activities with direct benefits to vulnerable communities, such as the demonstration projects aimed at supporting livelihoods and accelerating recovery.
 - iii. The project team, including the intersectoral panel and CNOEZA secretariat, transitioned to remote work. Activities requiring field presence, such as monitoring in Benichab, were particularly affected. NGOs leading environmental education efforts were also impacted by school closures.
 - iv. UNEP was unable to travel to Mauritania in 2020 and requested MESD to organize a virtual Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting. However, the next PSC session only occurred in person in December 2021.
 - v. Despite the challenges, activities not severely impacted by the pandemic continued. The management team maintained regular assessments to ensure alignment between the work plan and actual implementation progress.
112. Evidence presented during the UNEP GEF CCCD Knowledge Exchange Session highlighted persistent challenges in conducting field missions and organizing workshops during the latter half of the year, due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. These limitations particularly affected training-related activities.
113. While activities that could be conducted remotely progressed, those requiring in-person engagement faced significant setbacks. According to the PIR 2021⁵², the following key activities were notably impacted:
- i. Activity 1.3.1: In-depth analysis of MEAs and SDGs-related public policies and implementation trends – postponed due to COVID-19.
 - ii. Activity 1.3.3: Stocktaking of available indicators (including those specific to arid zones) and development of a comprehensive indicator framework – delayed due to travel restrictions and cancellation of planned workshops.
 - iii. Activity 1.3.4: Establishment and operation of the Mauritania Observatory of Arid Zones for long-term ecological monitoring – delayed for the same reasons as above.
 - iv. Activity 1.4.3: Training of Trainers for scientists, practitioners, and government staff on Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) – only one of the three planned sessions was conducted during the reporting period due to COVID-19 restrictions.
 - v. Activity 2.1.4: Training of regional and local MESD bodies on mainstreaming MEAs into local decision-making – no progress was made during the 2020 PIR period, as all workshops were canceled.

⁵¹ UNEP. (2020). Project Implementation Review Fiscal Year 2020. UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. (1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020).

⁵² UNEP. (2021). Project Implementation Review Fiscal Year 2020. UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. (July 2020 to June 2021).

- vi. Activity 2.4.3: Study on sustainable financing of MEAs at the local level and co-financing opportunities, including public-private partnerships – postponed due to the unavailability of international consultants and travel restrictions.
 - vii. Activity 2.4.4: Development of the project's sustainability strategy for MEA and SDG implementation and reporting – also postponed for the same reasons.
114. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the government prohibited intercity travel and canceled all workshops, meetings, and conferences. Additionally, public administration staff were reduced to prevent the spread of the virus, creating unfavorable conditions for project implementation.
115. In the 2021 PIR⁵³, the overall project risk was rated as medium, primarily due to the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on implementation activities. This situation was further complicated by institutional changes, including a reorganization within the MESD, which led to the dissolution of the National Centre for Environmental Observation and Arid Zones (CNOEZA). This restructuring disrupted the roles of key partner institutions responsible for data collection and management, weakening ownership and limiting the effectiveness of information-sharing processes.
116. The 2023 PIR⁵⁴ reaffirmed this challenge, emphasizing the consequences of CNOEZA's dissolution following the 2021 government reorganization. With its closure, MESD assumed full responsibility for project implementation. To strengthen governance, the composition of the PSC was revised to include a broader and more relevant group of stakeholders. However, the transition created difficulties in clearly defining and aligning roles and responsibilities, resulting in implementation delays and posing a significant risk to the project's long-term sustainability.
117. As a result, the project was granted two no-cost extensions, with revised completion dates in May 2022 and December 2023. The extensions were justified by: (i) disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic affecting UNEP and stakeholders (first extension), and (ii) the need to organize and hold a project closure workshop that included different stakeholders involved (second extension) (see Section III.E).
118. Interview feedback confirmed that the project operated in a highly challenging external environment, shaped by a combination of structural, political, and operational factors, particularly those stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and the institutional transition following the dissolution of CNOEZA. Despite these setbacks, the project demonstrated adaptability by revising its work plan to address the evolving circumstances. Interviewees highlighted the following key points:
- i. A significant portion of the project's activities focused on technical workshops, which were unfortunately heavily impacted by the restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - ii. These external factors significantly constrained stakeholder mobility in the field and disrupted the project's implementation, preventing adherence to the originally planned timelines."
 - iii. Although COVID-19 caused significant disruptions, the project required only two extensions—an outcome considered commendable, especially when

⁵³ UNEP. (2021). Project Implementation Review Fiscal Year 2020. UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. (July 2020 to June 2021).

⁵⁴ UNEP. (2023). Project Implementation Review Fiscal Year 2023. UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. (July 2022 to June 2023).

compared to similar projects implemented in more stable contexts during the same period.

- iv. The dissolution of CNOEZA also impacted project outcomes, creating challenges for the continuity and ownership of deliverables. Institutional changes are frequently accompanied by staff turnover and role reassignments, which can result in inconsistent oversight of project activities. It required substantial efforts to brief and integrate new leadership into the project. Despite these obstacles, the project team demonstrated resilience and maintained steady progress, showing a strong commitment to achieving the project's objectives.
119. According to the 2023 PIR⁵⁵, the two microprojects implemented on the ground stood out as key activities with clear socioeconomic relevance during the crisis. Despite the severe socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, both the community-based microproject and the women's microfinance initiative helped maintain community cohesion and supported local food production. These interventions enabled communities to remain connected to their land and meet a significant portion of their nutritional needs.
120. In conclusion, COVID-19 and political factors moderately disrupted project operations, affecting staff and partners temporarily and intermittently. Despite these adversities, the project demonstrated adaptive capacity by sustaining core activities, particularly those conducive to remote implementation, and by maintaining coordination through digital platforms (see Section V.I Quality of Project Management and Supervision).

Rating for Nature of the external context: Moderately Unfavourable

D. Effectiveness

Availability of Outputs

121. Effectiveness was assessed against the Theory of Change at Review (Figure 4) and the project results framework⁵⁶. The evaluation of output availability focused on the project's success in delivering planned outputs and achieving milestones based on the original project document, as no formal revisions were undertaken during implementation, only extensions of the implementation timeline. The assessment considered both the quantity and quality of outputs, their relevance and utility to intended beneficiaries, and the timeliness of their delivery. A brief explanation is provided regarding the factors contributing to the project's performance in meeting these criteria.
122. As its basis for evaluation, the analysis considered the two project outcomes⁵⁷ and the intermediate state "Environmental governance is strengthened

⁵⁵ UNEP. (2023). Project Implementation Review Fiscal Year 2023. UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. (July 2022 to June 2023).

⁵⁶ UNEP (2018) GEF-UNEP/CCCD/MSP/ GEF ID 9747. GEF6 Request for Project Approval. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania (Annex A).

⁵⁷ The two project outcomes are:

Outcome 1: A system for the management of environmental information and knowledge is fully operational for use in decision-making, assessment, planning and reporting.

Outcome 2: Enhanced capacities to develop and implement policies, plans, and programmes integrating MEAs and related SDGs.

through integrated information systems and policy coordination at national and local levels”.

123. The project delivered all planned activities within the adjusted timeframes, reflecting the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and institutional reorganizations. All 10 outputs were fully achieved, fulfilling their purpose and contributing to the project's outcomes.⁵⁸ While several milestones were completed later than originally scheduled, the project ultimately met its targets.
124. Evidence from the PIRs, project documents, and interviews indicates that the project successfully delivered all planned outputs, despite operating in a highly challenging environment. Key deliverables included a national State of the Environment Report, a sustainability strategy, workshops, training sessions, capacity-building activities, and demonstration projects.
125. The quality and utility of the project's outputs were assessed as satisfactory. Stakeholders' feedback from interviews and the UNEP GEF CCCD Knowledge Exchange Session highlighted that:
- i. The project successfully delivered its planned activities and outputs, meeting expectations and consistently receiving positive feedback from users. The demonstration projects remain operational. The National Observatory for the Environment and the Coastal Zone, established by the government as a direct response to the mobilization efforts of the CCCD project, continues to utilize the project's results. The EIS developed under the project is currently being used by national institutions under the mandate of the relevant authority. However, while the outputs were generally of acceptable quality and met the needs of end users, some instruments were not developed to an optimal level for full governmental uptake. Stakeholders acknowledged these limitations and noted that efforts are ongoing to elevate the products to more strategic levels.
 - ii. Key project outputs included:
 - Development of GIS-based environmental databases enabled ministries to agree on shared indicators aligned with national development goals and international commitments. In support of this, national databases and GIS files managed by ministries and public institutions were mapped in 2022 to facilitate in-country data consolidation.
 - Migration from paper records to a cloud-based digital system, improving data harmonization and accessibility.
 - Capacity building and awareness-raising among non-state actors and local communities, with strong female leadership—particularly two initiatives led by women in Benichab—demonstrating the use of environmental data for community decision-making.
 - Broad beneficiary engagement through training on multilateral environmental agreements and ecosystem adaptation.
 - Strengthened coordination among ministries, especially regarding the relevance and use of environmental indicators.
 - Core environmental indicators were developed and integrated into national systems. The status of the main environmental long-term surveillance

⁵⁸ UNEP. (2024). Final Report. UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania (February 2024).

(coastline, desertification, biodiversity and climate) was identified and reported. Improved long-term monitoring of desertification, biodiversity, and climate, supporting spatial planning through GIS-based mapping.

- Capacity development initiatives and provision of resources to improve the management and use of environmental data: various capacity-building activities were conducted in Mauritania to enhance local skills and knowledge in environmental data management. In Mauritania, the capacity and awareness of non-state actors and local populations on environmental monitoring were strengthened, and a new, systematic way to look at the data and gaps was provided through the CCCD project.

126. Stakeholder feedback also identified factors that influenced the effectiveness of project outputs:

- i. Although the EIS was successfully delivered, it was finalized late in the project, which was not ideal. This delay limited the time available for testing, capacity building, and full integration into institutional workflows. As a result, some stakeholders had less opportunity to familiarize themselves with the system and optimize its use before the project's conclusion.
- ii. Mauritania's vast geography complicates data collection and consolidation. Lack of digitalized data, fragmented information, and limited access must be addressed early in project planning to improve implementation. Establishing standardized reporting and an environmental sector investment plan linked to the EIS, would help maintain long-term benefits.
- iii. Some interviewees indicated that the project required significant follow-up efforts to ensure the products met expected quality standards. Additionally, language barriers between the implementing and executing agencies posed challenges during implementation. Despite these obstacles, the project's results remained well aligned with its objectives, and user satisfaction was consistently high throughout its execution.

127. The following sub-sections provide a brief analysis of each project output, outlining the products developed and assessing output performance against the established indicators.

Output 1.1) Analysis of the current environmental information systems, data flows, environmental statistics, and reporting mechanisms related to the Rio Conventions and other MEAs utilized by line ministries and other relevant agencies

128. **Output 1.1** included six fully implemented activities: 1.1.1 (Stocktaking and mapping of the existing databases and GIS managed by environment and natural resources involved ministries and public bodies), 1.1.2 (Stocktaking and analytic mapping of the current environmental information systems, data flows and environmental statistics related to the MEAs and SDGs), 1.1.3 (Analysis of the knowledge management needs as reported in the relevant MEAs and SDGs.), 1.1.4 (Analytic study on the amendments to MEAs and legal issues regarding the ratification, the compliance in reporting and the financial contributions to the conventions' funds), 1.1.5 (Analysis of the specific needs of the National Centre for Environmental Observation and Arid Zones (CNOEZA) in terms of thematic environmental information), and 1.1.6 (Summarizing the current status of the main environmental long-term surveillance). Most activities were implemented as planned. However, activity 1.1.6 experienced some delays due to its interlinkage with studies conducted by the World Bank under the WACA project. During this phase of the project, the following key products were developed: a stocktaking and

analytic mapping report of existing environmental information systems, including a proposed architecture for an integrated information management system and a capacity-building plan for its implementation⁵⁹; an analytic report on knowledge management needs⁶⁰; a legal and institutional analysis of MEA amendments, ratification processes, reporting compliance, and financial contributions⁶¹; an assessment of the technical and institutional capacity needs of CNOEZA to act as the national lead agency for environmental data and assessments⁶²; and summary report on the current status of long-term environmental surveillance systems⁶³.

129. Considering the output performance against indicators:

- i. **Number of analyzed thematic environmental information systems (forests, fisheries, water, agriculture, livestock, etc.):** The project set a target of eight thematic environmental information systems to be analyzed. While the final report indicates that the output was completed, no clear data was identified to confirm whether this target was fully met.
- ii. **Analysis report with action plan developed:** The project met this target with the development of a comprehensive analysis report, which was technically cleared, validated, and officially shared with key ministries for application.

Output 1.2) Agreement among key line ministries and agencies on the streamlining of data collection and sharing to fill data gaps and reduce unnecessary duplication

130. **Output 1.2** included five fully implemented activities: 1.2.1 (Undertake a national dialogue to formulate and propose an agreement involving key ministries and agencies on streamlining of data collection and sharing), 1.2.2 (Undertake awareness and advocacy on PEI issues among the relevant decision-makers and stakeholders), 1.2.3 (Setting-up of a crosscutting, extended technical coordination panel on environmental information, led by CNOEZA), 1.2.4 (Establishment of a Secretariat for the Panel within CNOEZA to serve for administration and logistics), and 1.2.5 (Proposal and agreement on an Environmental Information Charter among the involved institutional stakeholders). All activities were implemented as planned. During this phase of the project, the following key products were developed: a report on the national dialogue process for the formulation of an Environmental Information Charter or agreement among key ministries and agencies⁶⁴; a policy brief and related documentation on awareness and advocacy

⁵⁹ Abdallahi, H. O. M. (2019) Inventaire et cartographie des bases de données et des SIG existants gérés par les ministères et les organismes publics impliqués dans la gestion de l'environnement et des ressources naturelles en Mauritanie. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁶⁰ Dah, Abdelfettah (n.d.). Analytic Analysis of the knowledge management needs as reported in the relevant MEAs and SDGs. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁶¹ Taleb, M. S. (2019) Analytic study on the amendments to MEAs and legal issues regarding the ratification, the compliance in reporting and the financial contributions to the conventions' funds. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁶² Taleb, M. S. (n.d.) Analyse des besoins spécifiques de la CNOEZA en termes d'information thématique. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁶³ MESD / CNOEZA (2021) Summarizing the current status of the main environmental long-term surveillance. Rapport de discussion par visio sur une activité. Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁶⁴ Khtour, D. O. (2019) Étude portant sur un dialogue national pour formuler et proposer un accord impliquant les principaux ministères et agences sur la rationalisation de la collecte et du partage des données en Mauritanie. Rapport final. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD

efforts regarding the EPI⁶⁵; a report on the establishment and functioning of a crosscutting technical coordination panel on environmental information⁶⁶; a study with recommendations for the establishment of a Secretariat within CNOEZA⁶⁷; and a final report on the proposal and agreement of an Environmental Information Charter among institutional stakeholders⁶⁸.

131. **Considering the output's performance against its indicators:**

- i. **Number of technical Coordination Panels for environmental information and its Secretariat established:** The project set a target of one technical coordination panel and one Secretariat to be established within CNOEZA. Based on the documentation reviewed, this target was met, with the panel established and operational, and the Secretariat structured to support its functions.
- ii. **Number of Environmental Information Charters developed and signed by data providers:** The project met the target of one signed Charter by all institutional stakeholders (Activity 1.2.5)⁶⁹.

Output 1.3) Formulation of nationally appropriate environmental indicators based on MEAs, SDGs, Environmental Performance Index (EPI), and other sources for use in different reporting and assessment processes

132. **Output 1.3** included four fully implemented activities: 1.3.1 (In-depth analysis of the MEAs and SDGs related public policies and the implementation trends based on the national and overall strategies), 1.3.2 (Awareness campaign for decision makers and advocacy on the EPI issues for a successful implementation of the EPI national action plan), 1.3.3 (Stocktaking of available indicators, including specific indicators on the arid zones, and the development of a comprehensive indicator framework), and 1.3.4 (Setting-up and operation of the Mauritania Observatory of the Arid Zones for the long-term surveillance and monitoring of the arid zones' ecological potential). All activities were implemented as planned. During this phase

MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁶⁵ The activity 1.2.2 produced the following products:

- MESD / Conseiller Technique Charge du Développement Durable (n.d.). Undertake awareness and advocacy on PEI issues among the relevant decision-makers and stakeholders. Note de Politique. Policy Brief. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD).
- MESD (n.d.) L'INDICE DE PERFORMANCE ENVIRONNEMENTALE (IPE) ET SES ENJEUX POUR LA MAURITANIE. Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD).
- République Islamique de Mauritanie (2021) . Revue Nationale Volontaire des Objectifs de Développement Durable.
- MESD / CNOEZA (2021). Undertake awareness and advocacy on PEI issues among the relevant decision-makers and stakeholders. Rapport final. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁶⁶ Elhadj, A. O. (2019). Mise en place d'un groupe de coordination technique élargi transversal sur l'information environnementale dirigé par la CNOEZA / MED. Rapport provisoire. Project Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁶⁷ Abbass, A. S. O. (2019) Establish a secretariat for the panel to serve for administration and logistics. Rapport provisoire. Project Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁶⁸ MESD / CNOEZA (n.d.). Proposal and agreement on an Environmental Information Charter among the involved institutional stakeholders. Rapport final. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁶⁹ MESD / CNOEZA (n.d.). Proposal and agreement on an Environmental Information Charter among the involved institutional stakeholders. Rapport final. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

of the project, the following key products were developed: a final report providing an in-depth analysis of public policies related to MEAs and SDGs and their implementation trends⁷⁰; a final report on the awareness campaign and advocacy efforts for the EPI national action plan⁷¹; a comprehensive indicator framework developed⁷² following a stocktaking of available indicators⁷³; and a report with recommendations for the establishment and operation of the Mauritania Observatory of the Arid Zones⁷⁴.

133. Considering the output's performance against its indicators:

- i. **List of national actionable/prioritised/gender-sensitive environmental indicators defined:** While a complete list of environmental indicators was approved, the indicators did not provide for sex- and age-disaggregated data, which limits full achievement of the indicator⁷⁵
- ii. **Number of comprehensive public policy analysis conducted in consultation with different sectors:** The project met this target with the completion of one public policy analysis, which was presented to the cabinet and approved with an aide-memoire⁷⁶.
- iii. **Number of observatories in the Arid Zones operational:** The project set a target of one operational observatory in the Arid Zones. Based on the documentation reviewed, this target was met, with the observatory established and operational⁷⁷.

Output 1.4) Training for national and local data custodian agencies on data collection and management methodologies

134. **Output 1.4** included four fully implemented activities: 1.4.1 (Train ministries and agencies representatives, experts, practitioners, researchers and technicians on data collection and management methodologies), 1.4.2 (Training CNOEZA experts on the UNEP Live knowledge platform), 1.4.3 (Provide training to trainers,

⁷⁰ MESD / CNOEZA (n.d.). In-depth analysis of the MEAs and SDGs related public policies and the implementation trends based on the national and over-all strategies. Rapport final. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁷¹ MESD / CNOEZA (n.d.). Awareness campaign for decision makers and advocacy on the EPI issues for a successful implementation of the EPI national action plan. Rapport final. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁷² MESD / CNOEZA (n.d.). Note. Relative à l'Indice de Performance Environnementale (IPE). Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁷³ UNEP / GEF / Republique Islamique de Mauritanie (n.d.) Mise en place d'un système d'information environnemental. Inventaire des indicateurs disponibles et élaboration d'un cadre d'indicateurs Complet. Rapport de la mission. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD).

⁷⁴ Elmekky, H. (n.d.). Setting-up and operation of the Mauritania Observatory of the Arid Zones for the long-term surveillance and monitoring of the arid zones ecological potential. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁷⁵ UNEP / GEF / Republique Islamique de Mauritanie (n.d.) Mise en place d'un système d'information environnemental. Inventaire des indicateurs disponibles et élaboration d'un cadre d'indicateurs Complet. Rapport de la mission. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD).

⁷⁶ MESD / CNOEZA (n.d.). *In-depth analysis of the MEAs and SDGs related public policies and the implementation trends based on the national and over-all strategies.* Rapport final. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU)." MESD / CNOEZA.

⁷⁷ Elmekky, H. (n.d.). Setting-up and operation of the Mauritania Observatory of the Arid Zones for the long-term surveillance and monitoring of the arid zones ecological potential. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

scientists, practitioners and government staff in the country, in order to plan, implement and manage ecosystem-based adaptation actions – EBA), and 1.4.4 (Design and support the creation of a demonstration and documentation center under CNOEZA responsibilities). During this phase of the project, the following key products were developed: a training summary report for the ALivE Planning Tool – Adaptation, Livelihoods and Ecosystems⁷⁸; a training of trainers initiative focused on the UNEP Live platform and GE06 as flagship knowledge management tools; a final report on the training for ecosystem-based adaptation actions⁷⁹, indicating 43 participants, and a final report on the design and support for the creation of a demonstration and documentation center under CNOEZA⁸⁰.

135. Considering the output's performance against its indicators:

- i. **Number of training sessions for CNOEZA staff and involved ministries:** The project set a target of six training sessions on data collection, management methodologies, and ecosystem-based adaptation interventions. While the final report indicates that the output was completed, no clear data was identified to confirm whether all six sessions were conducted. According to the 2023 PIR, 90% of the training had been completed by that time, with full completion expected before the end of the year. The final report was to be shared with the relevant stakeholders upon completion.
- ii. **Percentage of trained experts from public bodies and partners (50% men, 50% women):** The project aimed for gender parity in training participation. Available data from one training session indicates that 17 participants attended, of which 15 were male and 2 females⁸¹. No further data was identified to confirm whether the overall target of 50% men and 50% women was met.
- iii. **Number of demonstration and documentation centres established under CNOEZA responsibilities:** The project set a target of one documentation centre to be established under CNOEZA. Based on the documentation reviewed, this target was met⁸².

Output 1.5) Streamlined indicator-based monitoring and reporting system implemented

136. **Output 1.5** included three fully implemented activities: 1.5.1 (Training on the indicator-based monitoring and reporting system for key ministries and government agencies involved in the MEAs and SDGs implementation), 1.5.2

⁷⁸ Lafdal, M. Y. (2020) ALivE Planning Tool - Adaptation, Livelihoods and Ecosystems. Training Course Summary. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁷⁹ UNEP / GEF / République Islamique de Mauritanie (2023) Rapport de formation sur la mise en œuvre et la gestion des actions d'adaptation basées sur les écosystèmes (EBA). Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD).

⁸⁰ Abdoua, S. (2019). Design and support the creation of a demonstration and documentation center under CNOEZA responsibilities. Rapport final. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁸¹ Lafdal, M. Y. (2020) ALivE Planning Tool - Adaptation, Livelihoods and Ecosystems. Training Course Summary. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁸² Abdoua, S. (2019). Design and support the creation of a demonstration and documentation center under CNOEZA responsibilities. Rapport final. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

(Identify the host of the system and determine roles and responsibilities of users), and 1.5.3 (Ensure adequate infrastructure prerequisite for the information system launch and maintenance). All activities were implemented as planned. During this phase of the project, the following key products were developed: a training report documenting the capacity-building efforts for professionals from key ministries and agencies on MEAs and SDGs monitoring and reporting⁸³; the identification of the EIS host and management structure, with the system hosted at the government data center and managed by the Directorate of Planning and Statistics (DPCS), with a pilot launch scheduled for 2024⁸⁴; and technical specifications and infrastructure setup to ensure secure and efficient data sharing through the platform.

137. Considering the output's performance against its indicators:

- i. **Number of indicator-based monitoring and reporting systems in place:** The project set a target of one EIS and an indicator-based monitoring and reporting system to be established. Based on the documentation reviewed, this target was met, with the system hosted at the national data center and managed by DPCS.
- ii. **Percentage of relevant staff (users) trained on the system:** The project aimed to train 95% of relevant staff. While the final report indicates that training was successfully completed, no clear data was identified to confirm whether this percentage was achieved .
- iii. **Number of experts trained on EPI calculation methods:** The project set a target of 30 experts trained on EPI calculation methods. While the final report indicates that the output was completed, no clear data was identified to confirm whether this specific number of experts was trained.

Output 1.6) Development of the State of the Environment Report based on integrated environmental assessment methodologies, involving the key stakeholders

138. **Output 1.6** included three fully implemented activities: 1.6.1 (Training for environmental and other relevant stakeholders—including NGOs and the private sector—on Strategic Environmental Assessments – SEAs – and the preparation of the national State of the Environment Report – SOER), 1.6.2 (Provide training sessions on the use of new tools such as geomatics, GIS, and remote sensing in the field of long-term environmental monitoring), and 1.6.3 (Dissemination of the SOER as an advocacy tool for the general public, indigenous communities, and local stakeholders). All activities were implemented as planned. During this phase of the project, the following key products were developed: a training report on SEAs and SOER preparation as part of the National Training Program in Environmental Assessment⁸⁵; a final report on training in the use of geomatics, GIS, and remote sensing tools for long-term environmental monitoring⁸⁶; and the third national State

⁸³ Nationale des Etudes & Travaux (2023). Formation sur le système de suivi et de rapport basé sur des indicateurs pour les principaux ministères et organismes gouvernementaux impliqués dans la mise en œuvre des AME et des ODD. Rapport de formation. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD)

⁸⁴ MESD / DPCS (2023). *Environmental Information System (EIS) hosting and management structure*. Internal documentation and platform information available at: <https://www.si-medd.mr/>.

⁸⁵ MESD / CNOEZA (2020). Alive. Provide training to trainers, scientists, and practitioners and government staff in the country, in order to plan, implement and manage ecosystem-based adaptation. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁸⁶ MESD (2023) Formation sur l'utilisation de Géomatique, SIG et la télédétection dans le domaine de la surveillance environnementale à long terme. Rapport final. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD).

of the Environment Report, which was finalized and disseminated as a reference document for environmental status in Mauritania⁸⁷.

139. Considering the output's performance against its indicators:

- i. **Number of training sessions for CNOEZA and key stakeholders (including NGOs and private sector):** The project set a target of six training sessions on SEAs, SOER preparation, and recent technologies. However, the final report only indicates that a series of three training sessions were organized as part of the National Training Program on Environmental Assessment.
- ii. **Number of Mauritania SOER produced:** The project met this target with the production and dissemination of one national SOER, which is considered the third report of its kind in Mauritania and serves as the main reference until the next edition⁸⁸.

Output 2.1) Enhanced consultative and decision-making processes for mainstreaming of obligations under Rio Conventions, other relevant MEAs and related SDGs, including shared environmental information systems, collaborative institutional inter-ministerial and decentralized mechanisms, and collaborative mechanisms with major groups and stakeholders

140. **Output 2.1** included five fully implemented activities: 2.1.1 (Analysis of the decision-making processes and the mechanisms of environmental information mainstreaming), 2.1.2 (Development of the national action plan for the promotion of green jobs in Mauritania), 2.1.3 (Production of the Atlas of Natural Resources in Mauritania), 2.1.4 (Training of regional and local MESD bodies on mainstreaming MEAs into their decision-making on locally implemented policies, programmes and projects), and 2.1.5 (Training in conceptualization, drafting, and formulation of projects related to MEAs, SDGs and climate). All activities were implemented as planned. During this phase of the project, the following key products were developed: an analysis report with comprehensive guidelines and consultative recommendations for reviewing MEA/SDG decision-making processes and mechanisms⁸⁹; a national action plan for the promotion of green jobs in Mauritania⁹⁰; the Atlas of Natural Resources in the Arid Zone of Mauritania⁹¹; a training report targeting regional and local MESD bodies and stakeholders involved

⁸⁷ Conseiller Technique Charge du Developpement Durable (2022) 3ème Rapport sur l'état de l'Environnement en Mauritanie. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Developpement Durable (MESD).

⁸⁸ Conseiller Technique Charge du Developpement Durable (2022) 3ème Rapport sur l'état de l'Environnement en Mauritanie. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Developpement Durable (MESD).

⁸⁹ Khtour, D. O. (n.d.) Analyse des processus de prise de décision et des mécanismes de l'intégration de l'information environnementale en Mauritanie. Rapport final. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Developpement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁹⁰ MESD (2023) Rapport final du Plan d'action national de promotion des emplois verts pour la période (2022-2026). Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Developpement Durable (MESD).

⁹¹ MESD / CNOEZA (2020) Atlas Environnemental et des Ressources Naturelles de la Zone Aride De Mauritanie. Rapport final. Ministère de L'environnement et du Developpement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

in ecosystem-based adaptation⁹²; and a training report on project formulation related to MEAs, SDGs and climate⁹³.

141. **Considering the output's performance against its indicators:**

- i. **Number of analysis reports on decision-making processes and mechanisms of environmental information mainstreaming conducted:** The project met this target with the production and approval of one analysis report, including consultative recommendations and engagement with major groups and stakeholders⁹⁴.
- ii. **Number of Atlas of Natural Resources in Mauritania produced:** The project met this target with one national atlas focused on the arid zones⁹⁵.
- iii. **Number of green economy model studies produced:** The project met this target with the release of the national action plan for the promotion of green jobs, which includes a situational analysis and strategic framework for transitioning to environmental sustainability⁹⁶.
- iv. **Percentage of MESD staff trained in mainstreaming MEAs into their decision-making:** The project set a target of training 90% of MESD staff, with gender parity. However, the report indicates that the training workshop targeted 40 participants from the local population involved in EBA concrete interventions, NGOs, the municipality of Benichab, and the DREDD of Inchiri, with no gender-disaggregated data or information on MESD staff numbers to verify the target.

Output 2.2) Demonstration projects of the application of an integrated approach to implement global environmental priorities of different MEAs and SDGs at local levels in key sectors

142. **Output 2.2** included five fully implemented activities: 2.2.1 (Develop and implement two demonstration projects with indigenous populations on natural resources management and innovative technologies), 2.2.2 (Develop and implement a micro prototype project in the field of climate-resilient agriculture), 2.2.3 (Develop and implement a microfinance project for female beneficiaries within indigenous communities), 2.2.4 (Promotion of replication and/or scale-up of successful pilot in other communities), and 2.2.5 (Distribute lessons learnt and best practices of the demonstration projects among the relevant institutional key stakeholders). All activities were implemented as planned. During this phase of the project, the following key products were developed: the implementation of two ecosystem-based adaptation (EBA) demonstration projects in Benichab, focused on sand dune stabilization and reforestation with *Prosopis juliflora* and *Tamarix*

⁹² MESD / CNOEZA (n.d.). Training of regional and local MESD bodies on mainstreaming MEAs into their decision making on locally implemented policies, programmes and projects. Project Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCC MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁹³ UNEP / GEF / République Islamique de Mauritanie (2023) Conceptualisation, rédaction, formulation de projets liés aux AME, aux ODD et au climat. Rapport de formation. Project Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCC MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD).

⁹⁴ Khtour, D. O. (n.d.) Analyse des processus de prise de décision et des mécanismes de l'intégration de l'information environnementale en Mauritanie. Rapport final. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCC MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁹⁵ MESD / CNOEZA (2020) Atlas Environnemental et des Ressources Naturelles de la Zone Aride De Mauritanie. Rapport final. Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

⁹⁶ MESD (2023) Rapport final du Plan d'action national de promotion des emplois verts pour la période (2022-2026). Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCC MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD).

senegal species⁹⁷, including a completed microfinance project for women in indigenous communities; a report on the design and implementation of a micro prototype project in climate-resilient agriculture, including the development of an arboretum in partnership with ENS and the University of Nouakchott⁹⁸; the confirmation of the scale-up of the Benichab pilot project to other communities⁹⁹; and a final report compiling lessons learned and best practices from the demonstration projects¹⁰⁰.

143. **Considering the output's performance against its indicators:**

- i. **Number of demonstration projects implemented:** The project met this target with the development and implementation of two demonstration projects with indigenous populations on natural resources management and innovative technologies.
- ii. **Number of microfinance projects for female beneficiaries within indigenous communities developed and implemented:** The project met this target with the completion of one microfinance project.
- iii. **Number of best-practice reports disseminated:** The project partially met the target of three best-practice reports disseminated to promote replication or scale-up of interventions, with one report about Benichab CCCD sites.

Output 2.3) Public environmental education for sustainable development and awareness raising activities with a focus on climate change, biodiversity and land degradation

144. **Output 2.3** included four fully implemented activities: 2.3.1 (Implementation of small-scale environmental education and awareness activities in primary and secondary schools), 2.3.2 (Support to the Ministry of Education in mainstreaming environmental education into school curricula), 2.3.3 (Undertake awareness activities on environmental issues using popular communication tools tailored to target groups), and 2.3.4 (Design and dissemination of environmental surveillance awareness products). All activities were implemented as planned. During this phase of the project, the following key products were developed: a final report on the design and delivery of environmental education and awareness activities in schools, conducted by the local NGO Action Carbone Solidaire¹⁰¹; a report supporting the Ministry of Education in the preparation of a national strategy for integrating environmental education into school curricula¹⁰²; and a study on the

⁹⁷ MESD / CNOEZA (n.d.). Microprojet Communautaire Pilote Pole Agricole Pilote de Benichab. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD).

⁹⁸ UNEP / GEF / Republique Islamique de Mauritanie (2023) Rapport de Mise en Œuvre du Microprojet Pilote Communautaire D'agriculture Resiliente aux Changements Climatiques Dans la Region du Hodh el Gharbi. Project Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD).

⁹⁹ MESD / CNOEZA (n.d.). Promotion et réplication et mise à l'échelle du projet pilote dans une autre communauté. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

¹⁰⁰ MESD / CNOEZA (n.d.). Distribute lessons learnt and best practices of the demonstration projects among the relevant institutional key stakeholders. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

¹⁰¹ Action Carbone Solidaire (n.d.). Conception et mise en œuvre d'une activité de sensibilisation et d'éducation environnementale à petite échelle au niveau scolaire primaire et secondaire. Rapport final. Project Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale de L'observation Environnementale et des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

¹⁰² MESD / CNOEZA (2019) Appui au Ministère de l'Éducation dans l'intégration de l'éducation environnementale dans les curricula scolaires et la préparation d'une stratégie nationale. Rapport final. Project Building core capacity for the

use of mass media and communication tools for environmental awareness raising and a final report on the design and dissemination of awareness products, including posters and materials used during national environmental events¹⁰³.

145. Considering the output's performance against its indicators:

- iv. **Number of school curricula with integrated environmental education:** The project set a target of one curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education for long-term use. Based on the documentation reviewed, this target was met with the validation of a draft national strategy and proposed mechanisms for integration¹⁰⁴.
- v. **Number of small-scale, gender-sensitive environmental education and awareness activities in primary and secondary schools:** The project set a target of six activities reaching at least 300 students. According to evidence¹⁰⁵, actions were carried out in 11 schools, successfully raising awareness among 12 educators, 12 school directors, 11 parents, and 1,500 primary students about climate change, environmental education, and eco-citizenship, culminating in artistic representations and proposed actions to mitigate climate impacts; however, there is no data indicating that gender-sensitive activities were included.

Output 2.4) Sustainability strategy for continued implementation of MEAs and the environmental dimensions of SDGs

- 146. Output 2.4** included four fully implemented activities: 2.4.1 (Setting-up a MEAs-dedicated database and a collaborative system between focal points, ministries and involved NGOs), 2.4.2 (Inventory and reinforcement of the role of local knowledge at the local and national/sub-regional levels in the context of continued implementation of MEAs, including transboundary aspects), 2.4.3 (Undertaking a study on the sustainable financing of MEAs at the local level in Mauritania and co-financing opportunities, including public-private partnerships), and 2.4.4 (Development of the project's sustainability strategy for the implementation and reporting on MEAs and SDGs). All activities were implemented as planned. During this phase of the project, the following key products were developed: a final report reviewing existing environmental data systems and proposing a structured national sustainability strategy and a design framework for an online environmental database, which led to the development of the National Environmental Information System¹⁰⁶; a study on the inventory and reinforcement

implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale de L'observation Environnementale et des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

¹⁰³ CEM Consultants (2022) Etude pour la conception et la diffusion de produits de sensibilisation à la surveillance environnementale. Rapport provisoire. Rapport final. Project Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD).

¹⁰⁴ Action Carbone Solidaire (n.d.). Conception et mise en œuvre d'une activité de sensibilisation et d'éducation environnementale à petite échelle au niveau scolaire primaire et secondaire. Rapport final. Project Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale de L'observation Environnementale et des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

¹⁰⁵ Action Carbone Solidaire (n.d.). Conception et mise en œuvre d'une activité de sensibilisation et d'éducation environnementale à petite échelle au niveau scolaire primaire et secondaire. Rapport final. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale de L'observation Environnementale et des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

¹⁰⁶ Solog Info (n.d.) Conception d'une base de données dédiée aux accords multilatéraux sur l'environnement et d'un système collaboratif entre les points focaux, les ministères concernés et les ONGs. Rapport final. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de

of local knowledge in MEA implementation, including transboundary considerations¹⁰⁷; a study on sustainable financing and co-financing opportunities for MEAs, developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and the national SDG Task Force¹⁰⁸; and a validated sustainability strategy document addressing ownership, financing, institutional frameworks, and cross-sectoral synergies¹⁰⁹.

147. The performance of this output was measured by the number of sustainability strategies developed. The project met this target with the development and validation of one sustainability strategy document¹¹⁰, finalized in 2021 and discussed with stakeholders during the final project meeting in December 2023¹¹¹.

148. Overall, most of the programmed outputs were successfully delivered to the intended beneficiaries, with the most critical ones made available on time. These key outputs were generally considered to be of good quality and utility by users and reviewers. However, some instruments were not developed to an optimal level for full governmental uptake, highlighting the need for improvements in strategic integration and institutional capacity to fully leverage the products. Despite these limitations, user ownership was strong, with key stakeholders actively utilizing the outputs. The project's demonstration activities remain operational, and institutions such as the National Observatory for the Environment and the Coastal Zone continue to use project results, including the EIS.

Rating for Availability of Outputs: Satisfactory

Achievement of Project Outcomes

149. The achievement of the two project outcomes¹¹² was assessed as performance against the outcome as defined in the reconstructed Theory of Change at Review. These outcomes were intended to be achieved by the end of the project timeframe and within the project's resource envelope. This MLTR also analyzed to what extent the assumptions for progress from project outputs to outcomes were held, and the drivers to support the transition from outputs to outcomes were in place.

150. An overview of outcome progress indicates that the project progressed steadily from its inception in 2018 through 2023, achieving key milestones at

L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale de L'observation Environnementale et des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

¹⁰⁷ MESD / CNOEZA (n.d.) Etude sur l'inventaire et le renforcement du rôle des savoir locaux aux niveaux local et national dans le contexte de la mise en œuvre continue des AMEs of MEAs et tenant en compte les aspects transfrontaliers. Rapport final. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale de L'observation Environnementale et des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

¹⁰⁸ MESD / CNOEZA (n.d.) Undertaking a study on the sustainable financing of the MEAs at the local level in Mauritania and co-financing opportunities, including public private partnerships. Project Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale de L'observation Environnementale et des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

¹⁰⁹ Dah, H. (n.d.) Development of the project's sustainability strategy for the implementation and reporting on MEAs and SDGs. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale de L'observation Environnementale et des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

¹¹⁰ Dah, H. (n.d.) Development of the project's sustainability strategy for the implementation and reporting on MEAs and SDGs. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale de L'observation Environnementale et des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

¹¹¹ Conseiller Technique Chargé du Développement Durable. *Procès-verbal de la réunion de clôture du projet "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU)".* Ministère de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD), Mauritanie, 19 décembre 2023.

¹¹² An outcome is a change at the institutional level, or changes in behaviors, attitudes or conditions achieved from the use (i.e., uptake, adoption, application) of outputs by intended beneficiaries.

various stages. It is important to note that delays related to the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted initial deliverables, requiring a deadline extension.

151. Throughout its implementation period, the project made significant progress toward achieving **Outcome 1: Enhanced management of environmental information and knowledge for use in decision-making, planning, and reporting**, as evidenced in the PIRs. In 2020, key preliminary studies were initiated and completed, including the analysis of existing environmental information systems and data flows, which informed the design of the proposed EIS. The operationalization of CNOEZA and the establishment of a technical coordination panel marked important institutional milestones. In 2021, the Ministry developed a clear roadmap and established a dedicated Directorate for Data and Statistics, which began playing a central role in implementing the EIS within the CCCD project framework. Despite institutional challenges due to government restructuring, baseline studies and policy briefs helped align stakeholders and strengthen environmental governance. In 2022, with strong involvement from the Directorate for Programming, Coordination and Statistics (DPCS), the project advanced in mapping existing systems, analyzing available data, and building capacities among institutional and non-governmental actors, particularly for SDG and MEA reporting. By 2023, the integration of DPCS enabled better alignment between project deliverables and the national vision for launching the EIS, including database mapping, GIS structuring, technical hosting options, and stakeholder agreements. Reports from the December 2023 exit meeting emphasized the strategic role of the DPCS in sustaining project outcomes. The DPCS currently hosts Mauritania's EIS, a key achievement made possible through the tools, products, and support provided under Component 1 of the project.

152. The project also made steady progress toward achieving **Outcome 2: Enhanced capacities to develop and implement policies, plans and programmes integrating MEAs and related SDGs**. According to the PIRs:

- i. In 2020, foundational activities were completed, including the production of the Natural Resources Atlas of Mauritania, training of regional and local MESD bodies on MEA mainstreaming, and the development of a public environmental education strategy. An analysis of decision-making processes and a draft sustainability strategy for MEA implementation were also finalized.
- ii. In 2021, despite delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, several institutions, including the meteorological office, oceanographic institute, and water resources sector, successfully developed public-private partnerships integrating MEAs.
- iii. Capacity-building activities resumed in 2022, with streamlined monitoring and data collection processes established, and a decade's worth of data compiled for integration into the system. The CCCD project also contributed to national SDG reporting and supported the evaluation of the SCAPP strategy, reinforcing MESD's role in sustainable development planning.
- iv. In 2023, the project's contributions under Outcome 2 were widely recognized and appreciated by stakeholders, including ministries, academic institutions, and NGOs. Training sessions and technical activities continued to strengthen institutional capacities.

153. According to the 2023 PIR, the implementation of activities under Outcome 1 was rated as moderately satisfactory, while those under Outcome 2 were rated satisfactory. Component 2 had a greater impact than Component 1, primarily due to the institutional reorganization that led to the dissolution of CNOEZA and positioned

the DPCS at the center of national EIS management. Approximately 80% of the planned actions had successfully completed by that time. The remaining 20% of milestones were yet to be achieved, mainly due to the need to finalize and compile all studies related to the vision, as well as to begin implementing the proposed schemes and technical scenarios. Another contributing factor was the expected acquisition of equipment and materials, which was still pending under the budget allocated to the Directorate of Planning.

154. The project measured achievement of the two project outcomes using some outcome-level indicators per outcome, as defined in the GEF-6 Request for Approval. Below is a brief analysis of each outcome, based on performance against these indicators:

i. **Outcome 1. Enhanced management of environmental information and knowledge for use in decision-making, planning, and reporting**

Indicator “Quality MEA reports compiled by end of project”: The project partially met its target. The project supported the collection and analysis of environmental data, strengthened institutional capacities, and improved coordination mechanisms. While interview feedback indicated that the EIS is being utilized, there is no explicit mention of finalized or submitted MEA reports in the PIRs. Although the improved baseline and data systems likely contributed to enhanced reporting, the quality and completeness of MEA reports cannot be directly confirmed.

Indicator “Operational EIS with complete, correct, and updated data entry, including gender data, launched”: The project partially met its target of developing an established system, including the list of priority indicators, enabling users to produce better MEA and SDG reports, and to identify and close data gaps. By 2023, significant progress was made in mapping databases, structuring GIS systems, and defining technical hosting options. The EIS was in an advanced stage of operationalization, but there is no clear confirmation that it was fully launched with complete and updated data, including gender-disaggregated data. Interview feedback indicated that some instruments were not sufficiently developed to enable full governmental uptake. This suggests a need for further refinement to ensure alignment with institutional requirements and long-term sustainability.

Indicator “% of required MEA reports submitted”: The project partially met its target of five MEAs covered by the EIS, and 100% of reporting requirements met. While the project contributed to improved data systems and institutional capacity for MEA reporting, there is no evidence that five MEAs were fully covered by the EIS or that 100% of reporting requirements were met. The groundwork was laid, but full coverage and submission are not confirmed.

Indicator “% of ministries that use the EIS in decision making, planning, and reporting”: The project partially met its target of 100% of relevant ministries using the EIS in decision making, planning, and reporting. Several ministries and institutions (e.g., the meteorological office, the oceanographic institute, and the water resources sector) were actively involved and began integrating MEA considerations into their planning. However, there is no quantitative data confirming that all relevant ministries (100%) were using the EIS for decision-making by the end of the project.

Indicator “Number of MEAs that are covered by the information system”: The project stated as a mid-point target the preparatory work and roadmap for MEAs in place. This goal was achieved. The project developed a roadmap for

the EIS and conducted preparatory work, including institutional coordination, data mapping, and technical planning. These efforts align with the mid-point target, even if full MEA integration was not yet complete.

ii. **Outcome 2. Improved regular environmental monitoring by directorates of environment in the governorates and other relevant agencies to integrate MEAs and relevant SDGs into the data collection and reporting procedures and system**

Indicator “# of government state institutions that are capable of developing and implementing PPPs integrating MEAs and related SDGs”: The project partially met its target: The goal was to have eight government institutions capable of developing and implementing public policies and programs (PPPs) that integrate MEAs and SDGs. According to the 2021 PIR, at least four institutions (the national meteorological office, the national oceanographic institute, the water resources sector, and the national agricultural research center) developed PPPs that incorporate MEAs. While this shows progress, no formal evidence confirms that eight government institutions had the capacity to implement MEA- and SDG-aligned policies by the project’s end.

Indicator “% of new PPPs that integrate MEAs and relevant SDGs and their gender dimensions”: The project partially met its target of ensuring that 70% of new PPPs integrate MEAs, relevant SDGs, and gender considerations. Although the PIRs highlight that several institutions developed PPPs incorporating MEAs and SDGs, there is no quantitative data confirming the percentage of new PPPs that also addressed gender dimensions. The available evidence suggests that integration efforts were underway, but the extent to which gender considerations were systematically included remains unclear.

Indicator “% of decisions made by CNOEZA that have taken major groups’ contributions into account”: The project did not provide sufficient evidence to confirm achievement of this target. The goal was for 100% of decisions made by CNOEZA to be inclusive of major groups’ voices, particularly those of women. While the PIRs mention the operationalization of CNOEZA and its role in coordinating environmental information, there is no specific information on the inclusiveness of its decision-making processes or the extent to which major groups, including women, were actively involved. As such, this indicator cannot be verified based on the available documentation.

155. According to interview evidence, all outputs were delivered with quality and within the adjusted timeframes, and feedback, particularly from the MESD, was generally positive. A comprehensive analysis of the interviews suggests the following:

- i. The project achieved its intended outcomes to a satisfactory to moderately satisfactory degree, with several key results demonstrating impact at both institutional and community levels. It delivered tangible results in environmental data management and capacity building, with strong signs of adoption and use. However, sustaining and scaling these outcomes will require improvements to some of the products developed.
- ii. Outcome 1 was achieved, especially considering that the expected result referred to making a fully functional system available for use, rather than ensuring its widespread adoption at this stage. The project successfully developed environmental databases and GIS-based systems, enabling harmonized data management across ministries. A major milestone was the consensus reached among ministries on environmental indicators, which now

support national development frameworks and MEAs. The migration from paper-based records to a cloud-based digital system marked a significant advancement in data accessibility and integration. The EIS is now operational, housed within the MESD, and stakeholders confirmed its active use for environmental reporting, territorial planning, and resource mapping. Its continued use by institutions such as the National Observatory for the Environment and the Coastal Zone, created as a direct result of the project's mobilization efforts, demonstrates strong institutional uptake and sustainability.

- iii. Outcome 2 was also achieved. The project strengthened capacity to engage with the Rio Conventions (MEAs), from coordinating focal points to using data for local-level involvement. Interview feedback highlighted the project's capacity-building efforts from government institutions to local communities as a key strength. Government bodies were trained to design and implement small GEF projects aligned with MEAs and the SDGs, supported by the presence of an operational GEF focal point. Numerous trainings contributed to this enhanced capacity. The project fostered coordination among focal points and promoted the use of environmental data to support policy engagement, including at the local level. Notably, the project strengthened awareness and capacity among non-state actors and local communities, including women-led initiatives in Benichab. These communities applied environmental conventions, particularly the UNCCD, in practical decision-making, showcasing the project's reach beyond institutional boundaries.
- iv. However, despite these achievements, some instruments were not developed to an optimal level for full governmental uptake. Interviewees noted that while the system is functional, its strategic integration and long-term sustainability depend on future projects and continued institutional support. External factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, administrative turnover, and the dissolution of the CNOEZA unit also affected the depth of implementation and ownership.
- v. During the project's exit meeting, it was highlighted as a key lesson learned that the studies conducted throughout the implementation clearly revealed the extent of national shortcomings, institutional gaps, and technical limitations affecting environmental management. This finding underscores the need for more targeted and evidence-based actions, as well as continuous diagnostics to support effective public policy.

156. The four assumptions related to outcomes outlined in the project were partially held throughout its implementation, with each playing a pivotal role in achieving the desired outcome:

- i. **Assumption 1 (Institutional and Governmental Support):** This assumption primarily relates to Output 1.1 and 2.4, and Outcome 2. It was only upheld with limitations. Despite the governmental reorganization that led to the dissolution of CNOEZA in 2021, the MESD fully assumed responsibility for project implementation. The revision of the work plan and the restructuring of the PSC, including the addition of new ministerial bodies, demonstrated efforts to maintain institutional alignment. However, challenges faced by the PMU, such as the lack of technical assistance and a small team, limited its ability to fully respond to project demands. As a result, institutional support was maintained, but operational constraints affected the ideal execution of activities.
- ii. **Assumption 2 (Stakeholder Commitment and Participation):** This assumption primarily relates to Output 1.2, 1.5, 1.6, and 2.2, and Outcome 1. It was upheld. Evidence shows a strong and growing commitment from both institutional and

community stakeholders. Institutional partners demonstrated ownership of project activities, shared reports, and participated in review processes. Despite COVID-19, ministries, NGOs, and community organizations actively participated, especially in pilot projects. Field missions and workshops revealed a high level of engagement, particularly in the Benichab microproject. There was direct involvement of local communities, women, and youth. At the institutional level, stakeholders appointed focal points who actively participated in project activities and disseminated results within their respective organizations. Engagement was particularly strong under Component 2, with several institutions receiving training and contributing to the implementation of national strategies such as SNEDD and SCAPP.

- iii. **Assumption 3 (Adoption and Use of Environmental Information Systems):** This assumption primarily relates to Output 2.1 and 2.2, and Outcome 1. It was upheld. The project made significant progress in the technical structuring of the EIS, with active involvement from the Directorate for Programming, Coordination and Statistics (DPCS), which assumed a central role in environmental data governance. Partner institutions appointed focal points and actively participated in system-related activities, demonstrating interest and ownership. Interview feedback highlighted that the EIS supported report production, was used to assess opportunities such as green job potential, and continues to be utilized by the National Observatory for the Environment and the Coastal Zone.
- iv. **Assumption 4 (Environmental Education and Outreach):** This assumption primarily relates to Output 2.3. It was upheld. The project demonstrated significant progress in promoting environmental education and public awareness. Activities—including initiatives in primary and secondary schools, support to the Ministry of Education for integrating environmental education into school curricula, the use of communication tools tailored to target audiences, and the dissemination of awareness materials—were successfully implemented. The target of integrating environmental education into at least one school curriculum was achieved with the validation of a national strategy and proposed mechanisms for implementation. Additionally, awareness activities reached a much larger audience than expected: more than 1,500 students in 11 schools participated in educational activities on climate change and eco-citizenship. The education system demonstrated openness and collaboration, and the results in terms of reach and institutionalization were positive. Interview feedback highlighted activities with schoolchildren that introduced environmental themes and multilateral agreements, as well as university involvement in supporting consultant-led deliverables such as trainings. However, there is no evidence that these activities were gender-sensitive, as required by the indicator, which limits the inclusiveness of the outreach efforts.

157. The three drivers were partially held throughout the project's implementation, with each playing a crucial role in achieving the intended outcomes:

- i. **Driver 1 (Active Stakeholder Participation and Collaborative Approach):** This driver, linked to Outcome 2, was clearly a key enabler of project progress and ownership and was partially upheld. The project consistently demonstrated a strong participatory and collaborative approach. The expansion of the PSC to include new and relevant institutional actors, the designation of focal points by partner institutions, and the active involvement of stakeholders in both planning and implementation phases are clear indicators of this. Field missions and workshops, particularly those related to the Benichab microproject,

showed high levels of engagement from local communities, including women and youth. Stakeholders also contributed to the dissemination of results and supported the alignment of project activities with national strategies such as SNEDD and SCAPP. However, evidence suggests that the PSC's engagement was relatively limited, functioning more as a formal structure than an active space for strategic oversight. This dynamic represented a missed opportunity to strengthen coordination across components and enhance meaningful stakeholder participation.

- ii. **Driver 2 (Improvement of Monitoring Systems and Indicators):** This driver, primarily related to Output 1.3, was upheld with limitations. The project made substantial progress in improving national monitoring systems and developing environmental indicators aligned with MEAs, SDGs, and the EPI. Key achievements included: an in-depth analysis of public policies related to MEAs and SDGs and their implementation trends; an awareness and advocacy campaign targeting decision-makers to support the EPI national action plan; a stocktaking exercise of existing indicators, including those specific to arid zones, which led to the development of a comprehensive indicator framework; and the establishment and operationalization of the Mauritania Observatory of the Arid Zones for long-term ecological monitoring. Interview feedback indicated that the project enhanced environmental monitoring in Mauritania, with a focus on desertification and arid zones. Communities used ecological data to identify groundwater and successfully cultivate crops like dates and melons. GIS maps also revealed invasive species such as Typha grass in the Senegal River, drawing investment interest due to its potential use in construction. However, while a list of national environmental indicators was developed and approved, it did not include sex- and age-disaggregated data. This limits the system's utility for inclusive and gender-responsive reporting and affects the comprehensiveness and equity of monitoring, particularly in relation to SDG targets emphasizing gender and social inclusion.
- iii. **Driver 3 (Strengthening of National Technical Capacities):** This driver, primarily linked to Output 1.4, was partially upheld. The project made notable contributions to strengthening national technical capacities, particularly in environmental data collection, management, and ecosystem-based adaptation. Activities included: training of ministry and agency representatives, experts, researchers, and technicians on data collection and management methodologies; capacity building for CNOEZA experts on the UNEP Live knowledge platform; a "training of trainers" initiative focused on UNEP Live and GE06 as flagship tools for environmental knowledge management; and the design and support for a demonstration and documentation center under CNOEZA's responsibility. These efforts clearly contributed to building technical knowledge and institutional capacity. However, there were notable limitations. While the project aimed to deliver six training sessions and achieve gender parity among participants, documentation does not confirm whether all sessions were conducted, and available data shows a significant gender imbalance. Additionally, the dissolution of CNOEZA in 2021 disrupted the continuity of a structured national training agenda, weakening long-term institutional capacity development. Although DPCS assumed a central role and training continued under Component 2, the absence of a centralized, long-term capacity development strategy limited the full potential of this driver.
- iv. **Driver 4 (Sustainability Strategy Adoption):** This driver, linked to Outcome 2, was partially upheld. The project aligned its activities with national development and sustainability strategies, such as SCAPP and SNEDD, and

contributed to their implementation. It also supported the Ministry of Education in developing a national strategy for integrating environmental education into school curricula. Under Output 2.4, the project developed a sustainability strategy for the continued implementation and reporting on MEAs and SDGs. This strategy, finalized in 2021 and discussed with stakeholders in December 2023, addressed key dimensions such as ownership, financing, institutional frameworks, and cross-sectoral synergies. Interview feedback indicated that the EIS was officially handed over to the ministry, with IT staff taking over its management. As part of the sustainability strategy, the project also transferred the web domain to the Mauritanian government, making it publicly accessible. The strategy included additional recommendations to support long-term impact. However, while the strategy was validated and shared with stakeholders, there is no clear evidence of its official adoption at the national policy level. Institutional ownership is needed to ensure long-term sustainability, which limits the full realization of the driver's intent.

158. Based on the achievement of indicators, interview feedback, and the fact that the assumptions and drivers were partially validated, it can be concluded that the project partially strengthened Mauritania's capacity for environmental information and knowledge management for the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs.
159. The analysis of the indicators used for Outcomes 1 and 2 reveals that, although they are conceptually aligned with the project's objectives, many lack specificity, clear measurement criteria, and a precise distinction between outputs and outcomes. Most indicators are predominantly quantitative and focus on immediate deliverables, without adequately capturing the institutional, behavioral, or systemic changes the project aimed to promote. For example, the indicators "Quality MEA reports compiled by end of project" and "Number of government institutions capable of developing and implementing PPPs integrating MEAs and SDGs" could be improved to "Percentage of MEA reports submitted that meet predefined quality criteria (e.g., completeness, accuracy, timeliness, gender-disaggregated data)" and "Percentage of targeted institutions that have implemented at least one policy or program with evidence of MEA and SDG integration," respectively, thus incorporating a practical and measurable application dimension. Similarly, the indicator "Operational EIS with complete, correct and updated data entry, including gender data launched" is an example of a well-formulated outcome indicator, as it is clearly linked to the intended system-level change and reflects the transition from system design to operational use. However, even this indicator could be strengthened by introducing more objective criteria for what constitutes "complete, correct, and updated" data, and how gender data is integrated. For instance, "Environmental Information System launched and operational, with at least 80% of priority indicators populated with current, validated, and gender-disaggregated data" adds specific thresholds and improves measurability.
160. Finally, it is important to emphasize that refining certain indicators does not mean the project lacked positive results and impact. On the contrary, the project achieved many relevant results, especially considering its issues with the pandemic and political instability. Having better indicators could have clearly highlighted the project's key successes and provided clearer direction for future initiatives.
161. Thus, it can be stated that the achievement of the project outcome was moderately satisfactory. The project outcomes most important for reaching the intermediate state were partially achieved. Assumptions for progress from project outputs to project outcomes were partially held, and drivers to support the transition from outputs to outcomes were partially in place.

Rating for Achievement of Project Outcomes: Moderately Satisfactory

Likelihood of Impact

162. The likelihood of the intended impacts of the project becoming a reality was assessed based on the articulation of longer-term effects in the reconstructed ToC, specifically from outcome, through the intermediate state, to impact. As outlined in the ToR for this review, the Excel-based flow chart, "Likelihood of Impact Assessment Decision Tree," guided the review process. This approach follows the 'Likelihood Tree' from output to impact, considering whether the assumptions and drivers identified in the reconstructed ToC were upheld.
163. The intermediate state, which envisions "Environmental governance is strengthened through integrated information systems and policy coordination at national and local levels," was expected to be achieved by realizing the two project outcomes.
164. The project achieved significant progress in implementing key components under both outcomes:
- i. Foundational studies were initiated and completed, including an analysis of existing environmental information systems and data flows, which informed the delivery of the EIS.
 - ii. Four institutions, including the meteorological office and the oceanographic institute, successfully developed public-private partnerships (PPPs) that integrated MEAs.
 - iii. The project delivered the Natural Resources Atlas of Mauritania, provided training to MESD bodies on MEA mainstreaming, and developed a national public environmental education strategy.
 - iv. With strong engagement from the Directorate for Programming, Coordination and Statistics (DPCS), the project advanced in mapping existing systems, analyzing available data, and strengthening institutional and non-governmental capacities, particularly for SDG and MEA reporting.
 - v. Capacity-building activities resumed, monitoring and data collection processes were streamlined, and a decade's worth of data was compiled for integration. The project also contributed to national SDG reporting and supported the evaluation of the SCAPP strategy.
 - vi. The project significantly improved environmental monitoring systems and indicators, focusing on desertification in Mauritania. It included long-term monitoring and ecological potential assessments in arid zones, which, although not the main goal, brought tangible benefits to local communities. For instance, access to environmental data enabled communities to identify groundwater and begin cultivating crops like dates and watermelons. GIS-developed maps revealed invasive species such as Typha grass in the Senegal River, attracting investment interest due to its potential use as insulation material in construction within arid regions. These examples highlight the practical value of the environmental data generated by the project.
 - vii. Additionally, the project piloted a green microfinance initiative benefiting a women's group, testing a revolving fund model inspired by regional experiences. This effort strengthened the capacities of non-state actors and local communities
165. Interview feedback highlighted the following achievements of the project:

- i. Development of a centralized and cloud-based EIS, enabling harmonized data management and digital migration from paper-based records.
 - ii. Establishment of consensus among ministries on environmental indicators to support national development frameworks and MEAs.
 - iii. Strengthening of institutional and technical capacities within government entities through targeted training on UN rules, budgeting, reporting, and project management.
 - iv. Empowerment of local communities, including women-led initiatives, through demonstration projects in arid regions such as Benichab, showcasing practical applications of environmental conventions like UNCCD.
 - v. Creation of the National Observatory for the Environment and Coastal Zone.
 - vi. Enhanced coordination among MEA focal points, facilitating improved reporting and collaboration.
 - vii. Strengthened awareness and engagement of non-state actors and local populations in environmental monitoring and decision-making.
166. However, to assess whether the intermediate state has been achieved, it is essential to verify the regular and documented use of the EIS by national institutions; the extent to which EIS-generated data informs environmental policy, national planning, and MEA/SDG reporting; the availability of trained staff; the existence of clear operational procedures and effective inter-institutional coordination mechanisms; the application of the sustainability strategy, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; the allocation of institutional budgets to ensure the long-term maintenance and institutionalization of the system; as well as the effectiveness and replicability of the project's community-level initiatives.
167. On one hand, evidence from the December 2023 exit meeting reaffirmed the lasting impact of the project, with participants recognizing the continued relevance of its deliverables as catalysts for high-level advocacy. These outputs have laid a strong foundation for advancing environmental governance and scientific knowledge, creating momentum for future initiatives and partnerships that build on the project's achievements.
168. On the other hand, available evidence suggests potential obstacles to achieving the intermediate state in the near term. Interview feedback identified the following risks and limitations that may hinder progress:
- i. Institutional and Leadership changes: Leadership changes and staff turnover within the MESD disrupted continuity and weakened institutional memory. These dynamics may continue to affect the ministry's ability to maintain momentum, ensure ownership, and implement long-term strategies aligned with the intermediate state.
 - ii. Limited Institutional Capacity and Influence: The actual ministry's limited capacity to appropriate and operationalize technical outputs raises concerns about their sustained use. Without stronger institutional positioning and cross-sectoral influence, the integration of these tools into national decision-making may remain constrained.
 - iii. Sustainability and Strategic Continuity: The absence of a stronger post-project strategy poses a significant risk to the sustainability of community-level initiatives and technical deliverables. Uncertainty regarding continued

donor engagement (e.g., World Bank) further limits the potential for scaling successful practices and maintaining progress toward the intermediate state.

- iv. Environmental Information Management: There is a recognized need for a coordinated and operational system for managing environmental knowledge and information. Although several initiatives have been undertaken, including one led by DPCS/MESD with GIZ support, data integration remains a challenge in Mauritania, both within and across ministries.

169. Assumption 5 (Supportive Context for Human Rights, Gender Equality, and Inclusion), which was primarily linked to the intermediate state, was only partially upheld. The project demonstrated a growing commitment to promoting gender equality, social inclusion, and capacity building for vulnerable groups. The implementation of the women-focused microfinance pilot project in Benichab had a positive impact on empowerment, resilience, and local ownership, and was recognized as a good practice in gender integration. Women also participated in training and practical activities, and institutional partners were sensitized to the importance of their inclusion in decentralization and decision-making processes. However, the proportion of women participating in project activities was insufficient to ensure gender balance, and no specific gender evaluation was conducted during the implementation period. The absence of disaggregated data and targeted strategies to ensure equitable participation limits the effectiveness of the inclusive approach. This suggests that, although the overall context was generally supportive and the intention to promote inclusion was clear, the practical application of gender equality principles was limited in terms of reach and representation.

170. Interview feedback indicated that the likelihood of the intended impact becoming a reality is generally viewed as positive, but with varying degrees of optimism among respondents. According to interview feedback:

- i. Several respondents expressed confidence that the project has laid a solid foundation for informed environmental decision-making and alignment with MEAs and SDGs. The EIS is operational and maintained by the Ministry of Environment, with continued use of the portal and environmental reports cited as evidence of institutional uptake. The creation of the National Observatory for the Environment and Coastal Zone was highlighted as a direct and tangible outcome of the project, reinforcing its strategic relevance and long-term potential.
- ii. The likelihood of achieving the intended impact is considered high by some, especially due to the project's alignment with national priorities and its contribution to cross-sectoral planning (e.g., desertification and economic development). The Ministry of Environment is actively coordinating multi-sectoral efforts to align national development policies with the SDGs, which supports the intended impact pathway.
- iii. Effective data management and monitoring systems are contributing to improved governance, though continued political and financial support will be essential to maintain progress.
- iv. While the system and tools developed are seen as useful and relevant, some interviewees noted that concrete evidence of strengthened environmental governance is still limited. The sustainability of community-level initiatives and

broader policy influence remains uncertain, particularly in the absence of structured follow-up mechanisms or confirmed donor support.

- v. There are concerns related to data collection and system maintenance. These activities involve costs that are not always accounted for in institutional budgets. As a result, while the system may operate effectively during project-supported phases, there is a risk that its functionality could be compromised once external support ends.
171. During the UNEP-GEF CCCD Knowledge Exchange Session, some challenges affecting the effective implementation of the project's outcomes were highlighted. COVID-19-related restrictions significantly disrupted field missions and in-person workshops, particularly impacting training activities. Additionally, Mauritania's vast geographic expanse created difficulties in accessing and centralizing data, underscoring ongoing challenges related to data availability and the need for context-specific information.
172. Additionally, evidence noted that the project faced internal management challenges, including a lack of technical assistance to support the PMU in developing terms of reference for key activities, and an understaffed team unable to adequately cover essential functions such as monitoring and evaluation or communication. Delays in conducting necessary project revisions hindered timely adjustments needed to steer the project toward its intended objectives.
173. The project did not produce any significant unintended negative effects. According to key stakeholders interviewed, there were no known adverse outcomes, as the project focused primarily on data management and intergovernmental capacity building—areas generally considered to carry minimal risk. On the contrary, the 2023 PIR highlighted the potential for replication in countries facing similar environmental challenges. The interest expressed by organizations working in environmental and community development suggests promising opportunities for resource mobilization and strategic partnerships. The project's flexible design allows for adaptation to different institutional contexts, which enhances its appeal to a diverse range of funders and increases the likelihood of securing both external and institutional support.
174. Nonetheless, one potential risk noted by a respondent relates to the possibility of interministerial tensions. In contexts where mandates and responsibilities across ministries overlap, projects that promote institutional strengthening may inadvertently surface or exacerbate latent conflicts. While no such issues were reported during the implementation of this project, this observation underscores the importance of fostering clear coordination mechanisms among stakeholders to mitigate risks and ensure smooth collaboration.
175. Notably, the 2023 PIR also highlighted that, on the positive side, the CCCD project left a significant and constructive footprint in two key areas: sustainable land management and social wellbeing. The project's contributions in these domains were well received, with no recorded complaints from stakeholders or communities.
176. Based on the "Likelihood of Impact Assessment Decision Tree" flow chart used by the Evaluation Office, the likelihood of achieving the intended impact was rated as "Likely." It can be stated that the aspects of the project outcome that were most crucial for attaining the intermediate state were achieved. Other aspects of the project outcomes were still in progress by the time of the project's conclusion. As noted in previous sections, assumptions and drivers to support the transition

from outputs to project outcomes were partially in place, and the intermediate state had been partially achieved. Assumptions for the change process from the intermediate state to the impact are still valid.

Achievement of Likelihood of Impact: Likely

Rating for Effectiveness: Satisfactory

E. Financial Management

Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures

177. The project demonstrated good application of financial management standards and adherence to UNEP's financial management policies. Evidence from project documentation and financial reports (including budget, co-financing, and expenditure reports), indicated that expenditures were aligned with the project's financial planning:
- i. The approval and disbursement of cash advances to project partners occurred in a timely manner. The project received a total of US\$950,000 from the GEF Trust Fund. According to reports and Amendment 2 of the PCA¹¹³, signed in May 2023, the first instalment to the Executing Agency was made in July 2018, followed by subsequent cash advances in June 2019, May/July 2020, and June 2022.
 - ii. Expenditure reports were submitted on a quarterly and annual basis, demonstrating a good level of financial transparency and accountability. There is evidence of regular analysis comparing actual expenditures with the approved budget and work plan, which supports effective financial oversight. All quarterly expenditure reports, duly signed and dated, were identified from July 2018 to December 2023.
 - iii. Project expenditures remained within the approved annual budget, and no formal budget revisions were deemed necessary. Instead, no-cost extensions were granted to accommodate delays resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and governmental reorganization in 2021.
178. No significant financial issues were reported that adversely affected the timely delivery or overall quality of project performance. The project demonstrated good financial governance, evidenced by regular budget reviews and timely adjustments, which reflect a responsive and adaptive management approach. This ensured sound financial management throughout the project. While delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges, the project's ability to manage resources effectively and revise timelines accordingly underscores its strong financial oversight.
179. Feedback from interviews highlighted that:
- i. The project coordinator was also the GEF focal point and had prior experience managing adaptation projects under UNEP, which facilitated understanding and implementation of financial procedures, including reporting. Even after a

¹¹³ Amendment No. (2.0) to the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Mauritania and The United Nations Environment Programme on UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania (May 2023)

change in leadership, the former coordinator continued to support the new one, ensuring continuity and effective financial management.

- ii. The project used 100% of its allocated resources and consistently submitted financial reports on time, indicating strong alignment with financial planning and execution standards.
 - iii. Audit reports were completed without issues, reflecting compliance with financial regulations and transparency.
 - iv. The ministry adhered to the PCA, which legally requires quarterly expense reports and CLE audit reports, demonstrating institutional commitment to financial accountability.
 - v. The ministry regularly notified UNEP of pending activities and submitted budget revision requests and PCA extension communications promptly, showing proactive financial oversight.
180. In summary, all the time, there was evidence of key financial management practices, such as timely disbursements, regular reporting, and consistent monitoring against the budget.
181. A detailed financial summary is provided in Annex VI (Project Budget and Expenditures). This includes Table 7, which outlines the Project Funding Sources, and Table 8, which presents a disaggregated breakdown of Expenditures by Outcome and Output. Further financial management details are included in Annex VII (Financial Management), specifically in Table 9, which offers a comprehensive overview of the project's financial administration.

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

Completeness of Financial Information

182. The financial documentation for the project was complete, accurate, and accessible, as evidenced by the financial reports (including budget, co-financing, and expenditure reports):
- i. Co-financing and project costs were clearly presented during the design phase. The project provided high-level budgets with breakdowns by funding type (cash or in-kind), funding source, and at the output, outcome, and component levels. Co-financing reports properly covered the period from July 2018 to June 2022. These details were reflected in the financial documentation, offering transparency regarding financial commitments.
 - ii. Evidence for cash statements was properly identified. The project received a total of US\$950,000 from the GEF Trust Fund. According to cash advance records, the first installment to the Executing Agency was made in July 2018, followed by additional disbursements in June 2019, May/July 2020, and June 2022.
 - iii. Audit reports for the Executing Agency were identified for each year of the project's duration, covering the period from 2018 to 2023. The audit reports confirmed the receipt and disbursement of USD 873,894 during the reporting period.
 - iv. Project expenditure reports were prepared regularly on a quarterly and annual basis, with summary budgets at the component level. All quarterly expenditure reports, duly signed and dated, were identified from July 2018 to December 2023.

- v. Project budgets were detailed by budget line for the two no-cost extensions. Project expenditures remained within the approved annual allocations, and no formal budget revisions were required for these time extensions.
 - vi. Several legal agreements related to project implementation were identified—one PCA and two amendments—demonstrating due diligence in financial documentation management. Overall, these documents appear to be complete and accurate.
183. The project document included a detailed budget aligned with secured funds, structured at the results level (outcomes and outputs). In-kind contributions were reported through the PCA.
184. Interview feedback confirmed that the project maintained strong financial information management, with timely and complete reporting, full budget utilization, and proactive communication. Advance funding requests were submitted on time, and although there were minor delays (e.g., equipment transfers), they did not affect the accuracy or completeness of financial data. The team consistently responded to information requests and managed budget revisions and PCA extensions effectively, demonstrating solid financial oversight. The focal point's extensive experience in GEF projects was key to ensuring complete and timely financial reporting. Even after his replacement, he continued guiding the team, reinforcing the importance of following procedures and maintaining accurate records. The team showed strong commitment to compliance, motivated by their interest in future UNEP projects. Their seriousness was evident in their proactive follow-ups and consistent efforts to meet reporting requirements.
185. In summary, there is sufficient evidence to confirm that the project's financial documentation was generally complete and accurate, although only a portion was made available to this review. Documents reviewed include detailed project budgets, disbursement records, expenditure reports, in-kind contribution records, and partner legal agreements and amendments.
186. A financial summary is provided in Annex VI (Project Budget and Expenditures), which includes Table 7 (Project Funding Sources) and Table 8 (Expenditures by Outcome/Output). Annex VII (Financial Management) includes Table 9, which outlines financial management requirements and the availability of documentation.

Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: Highly satisfactory

Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff

187. The level of communication between the PM, TM, and the FMO was exemplary and significantly contributed to the effective delivery of the project while supporting a responsive and adaptive management approach. Interviews provided clear evidence of the FMO's strong awareness of the project's financial status, complemented by regular, proactive communication with the project management staff.
188. Feedback from interviews indicated that the combination of regular meetings, direct access to stakeholders, and a proactive approach to problem-solving contributed to smooth project implementation and strong coordination between financial and operational teams. Co-location of teams in the same office facilitated direct, informal interactions, allowing issues to be discussed and resolved quickly. Weekly internal meetings provided a structured space to raise concerns, which were typically addressed within the same week depending on urgency. In addition

to internal coordination, quarterly meetings with implementing partners ensured regular updates and progress tracking, with increased frequency—monthly or more—when challenges arose. The team also maintained direct communication channels with the ministry, avoiding delays caused by intermediary systems. This open and responsive communication environment was further supported by UNEP’s accessible organizational culture, where hierarchy did not hinder collaboration.

189. Overall, evidence indicates strong financial and project management, with the project manager and FMO demonstrating clear awareness of financial status and project progress. Regular communication between them ensures proactive resolution of financial issues. Reports are jointly reviewed by the finance and project teams. The strong communication between the TM and FMO positively influenced project implementation, enabling the effective delivery of the planned project within budget.

Rating for Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff: Highly Satisfactory

Rating for Financial Management: Highly Satisfactory

F. Efficiency

190. The project received two no-cost extensions totaling 19 months, with a revised completion date of December 2023. These extensions were well-justified and did not alter the Theory of Change or the Results Framework. The main reasons were:
 - i. COVID-19 Pandemic (12-month extension): This extension was primarily due to delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and a reorganization within the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MESD). Beginning in Q2 2020, the pandemic significantly disrupted project implementation, necessitating adjustments to both the timeline and execution strategies. Key impacts included: restricted in-person engagement due to government-imposed containment measures, particularly with local communities and ministries; postponement, cancellation, or virtualization of workshops and events; delays in consultant recruitment due to the inability to convene selection panels; transition to remote work by the project team, including the intersectoral panel and the CNOEZA secretariat, which hindered field-based activities such as monitoring in Benichab; travel restrictions that prevented UNEP from visiting Mauritania. Additionally, in 2021, MESD underwent a reorganization that led to the dissolution of CNOEZA. This institutional change disrupted data collection and management processes, limiting information sharing and reducing institutional ownership.
 - ii. Closure Event (7-month extension): This extension was granted to allow the organization of a final project activity, a closure workshop with stakeholders. The event aimed to share lessons learned, highlight achievements, and finalize discussions on sustainability.
191. Despite the delays, the project progressed by adapting to pandemic-related restrictions. The management team conducted regular assessments to ensure alignment between the work plan and actual progress. Activities not directly affected by the pandemic continued, with a focus on initiatives that directly benefited vulnerable communities, such as demonstration projects supporting socio-economic recovery. The shift to remote work enabled the continuation of

several activities and helped reduce operational costs. However, key actions such as policy analysis, indicator development, in-person training, and studies on sustainable financing were postponed or rescheduled. The inability to mobilize international consultants and travel restrictions further impacted implementation. Nevertheless, the project demonstrated resilience and adaptability in a challenging context.

192. Extensions were a necessary and pragmatic response. However, the project would have benefited from a more robust, context-specific communication strategy, a clear definition of the long-term impact, and a detailed exit strategy.
193. The project document emphasized coordination with other capacity-building and strategic support initiatives (e.g., GIZ/ProGRN, UNDP & UNEP PEI Mauritania) and alignment with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2012–2017 for Mauritania. Evidence of partnerships was identified for the following institutions: University of Nouakchott Al Asriya; Ecole Normale Supérieure; Higher Institute of Technological Studies; National Office of Meteorology; Ministry of Economy; Ministry of Rural Development; Ministry of Habitat; Ministry of Oil and Energy; the Action Carbone Solidaire NGO; Mauritanian Organization for Sustainable Development; NGOs at the local level; the National Council of Employers of Mauritania; and the Association of Mayors of Mauritania.
194. Although the project document did not explicitly outline value-for-money strategies, it highlighted partnerships with organizations and initiatives that promoted co-benefits. The project was hosted by a government agency (CNOEZA/MESD) with expertise in data collection, analysis, information systems, and long-term ecological monitoring.
195. According to evidence shared during the UNEP GEF CCCD Knowledge Exchange Session, the project in Mauritania demonstrated several efficiency-enhancing practices. Notably, the adoption of a “train-the-trainers” approach in capacity-building activities proved to be a cost-effective strategy, enabling broader dissemination of knowledge while reducing reliance on continuous external training. Additionally, the implementation of women-led micro-finance pilot projects in the drylands of Inchiri illustrated how localized, community-driven initiatives can leverage environmental data for decision-making, aligning with the Rio Convention principles and optimizing resource use. However, certain challenges negatively impacted efficiency. The fragmentation and lack of digitalized environmental data required additional time and resources for consolidation, while the vast and remote geography of the country increased logistical costs and hindered timely data collection.
196. Regarding efficiency, interview feedback highlighted that:
 - i. The project's efficient use of limited resources, delivering a high number of outputs despite a modest budget. This was considered one of the most efficient projects observed, particularly in terms of financial execution. While there were some delays due to COVID-19 and institutional changes, these did not significantly hinder overall delivery. The team's ability to maximize impact with scarce resources was seen as a clear indicator of operational efficiency.
 - ii. The project collaborated with a GIZ-funded initiative focused on environmental statistics and information systems, avoiding duplication through adaptive management and joint branding of the final EIS with GEF, UNEP, and GIZ logos.

- iii. Financially, it was considered extremely efficient, with 100% of the total budget utilized, and no reported waste, an indicator of strong financial planning and execution. Only two minor PCA extensions were needed, both processed without delay: one to finalize activities and another for a lessons-learned meeting. The team demonstrated transparency and good resource management by allowing site visits to demonstration projects.
 - iv. Efficiency was further strengthened through strategic use of existing institutions and partnerships, involving not only the MESD but also other key ministries like the statistics department, which played a vital role in the EIS. The team's proactive approach, including timely recognition of limitations and prompt communication, reinforced trust with implementing partners and donors. This high execution rate and collaborative approach were seen as strong foundations for future project opportunities in Mauritania.
197. Overall, the project's efficiency is rated as Moderately Satisfactory. The project had one no-cost extension (7-month extension) that was individually justified. The initial 12-month extension due to COVID-19 was part of a broader GEF policy response and not counted as an individual project decision. Also, evidence suggests that the application of cost-effective approaches strongly supported achieving project activities and events were frequently sequenced efficiently, and the project operated within existing roles, mechanisms, or institutions, expanding them in an effective and efficient manner when necessary.

Rating for Efficiency: Moderately satisfactory

G. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring Design and Budgeting

198. The GEF-6 Request for Project Approval (Item C) included a Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) plan based on a results-based management approach, incorporating SMART indicators for both outputs and outcomes. Annex G of the project document detailed the M&R activities, responsibilities, budget, and timeline.
199. The plan emphasized a participatory and consultative approach to ensure the delivery of project outputs and the achievement of defined targets. The review focused primarily on implementation status, gap identification, impact assessment, and the success of best practice application.
200. The project document also includes the GEF Focal Area Tracking Tool (Capacity Development Scorecard) (Annex J). During the design phase, the Scorecard was completed in collaboration with the MESD, providing a framework for using capacity development indicators to establish baselines and, in the future, to monitor progress. The tool indicated on the project document that, in essence, Mauritania's capacity gaps in these areas in 2018 remain similar to those identified in the 2006 NCSA. The capacity for engagement with the Mauritanian government was rated relatively low.
201. M&R activities included organizing meetings and producing reports (inception, progress, Project Steering Committee, and implementation), measuring indicators (outcome, progress, and performance indicators, plus GEF tracking tools) at the national level, and publishing lessons learned and other project documents. Although it was a three-year implementation plan, the M&R plan also

scheduled a mid-term review and a terminal evaluation, under the responsibility of UNEP.

202. Data collection, guided by the logical framework's means of verification, tracked progress against outputs, milestones, deliverables, and indicators (Annex A of the project document). Roles and responsibilities were clearly defined, with MESD holding overall responsibility for project execution.
203. Throughout implementation, the indicator system was maintained through project revisions to reflect changes in scope and ambition. Interview feedback suggested that the project team had a strong sense of ownership over the monitoring plan.
204. This review identified some weaknesses in the project's logical framework, particularly in the formulation of output- and outcome-related indicators. Some of these indicators can be classified as process indicators, which monitor the execution of activities (e.g., organizing events, producing materials) and provide data on implementation, but not on the results or changes generated. Given the project's objectives, it would have been more appropriate to include impact-focused indicators, those that assess long-term effects and the extent to which the intended objectives were achieved, including tangible social, economic, or environmental improvements. Unlike process-focused indicators, which focus on operational delivery, impact-focused indicators evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of the changes promoted at the indicator level.
205. Regarding the output-related indicators, there is a clear predominance of process-focused metrics, reflecting the project's emphasis on delivering products, conducting activities, and establishing institutional structures. While these indicators are aligned with the project's operational milestones, many of them fail to capture institutional, behavioral, or systemic changes. Most measure completed activities, such as training sessions, report production, or the establishment of observatories and systems, without assessing whether these outputs were effectively used or led to meaningful transformation. For instance, the indicator "Number of training sessions for CNOEZA staff and involved ministries" tracks the delivery of training but does not assess whether participants applied the knowledge gained. Similarly, "Number of Environmental Information Charter developed and signed by data providers" marks an important institutional milestone but does not indicate whether the charter influenced data-sharing practices.
206. Nevertheless, a few indicators demonstrate potential for impact, such as "Number of demonstration projects implemented" and "Number of microfinance projects for female beneficiaries", which point to interventions capable of generating practical and measurable changes in communities. Even so, these indicators could be strengthened by incorporating result-oriented criteria, such as the level of adoption of sustainable practices or improvements in beneficiaries' income.
207. The outcome-related indicators show a generally sound conceptual foundation, with clear intentions to measure institutional capacity, data system functionality, and policy integration. However, some lack specificity, objective measurement criteria, and a clear distinction between outputs and outcomes, which limits their ability to track genuine outcome-level change. For example, indicators under Outcome 1 reflect progress in EIS development and MEA reporting, but require operational definitions for terms like "quality," "use," and "completeness" to ensure consistent and meaningful assessment. The indicator "Quality MEA reports compiled by end of project" could be reformulated as

“Percentage of MEA reports submitted that meet predefined quality criteria (e.g., completeness, accuracy, timeliness, gender-disaggregated data)” to enhance clarity and measurability.

208. Similarly, Outcome 2 indicators aim to capture improvements in institutional and policy capacities but rely on subjective terms such as “capable” and lack mechanisms to verify the actual implementation and integration of MEAs, SDGs, and gender considerations. For instance, “Number of government institutions capable of developing and implementing PPPs integrating MEAs and SDGs” could be strengthened by specifying measurable outcomes, such as “Percentage of targeted institutions that have implemented at least one policy or program with evidence of MEA and SDG integration.”
209. Additionally, while some indicators, such as “Operational EIS with complete, correct and updated data entry, including gender data launched”, are conceptually strong and aligned with system-level change, they would benefit from the inclusion of objective thresholds. For example, “Environmental Information System launched and operational, with at least 80% of priority indicators populated with current, validated, and gender-disaggregated data” introduces a quantifiable benchmark that enhances both measurability and accountability.
210. These findings highlight the need for more precise and relevant indicators. The lack of clear attribution and focus on tangible results made it difficult to assess project progress accurately.
211. It is important to note that the project was designed to collect and report on GEF Core Indicators, contributing specifically to the sixth core indicator under the GEF-6 replenishment targets: (1) Development and sectoral planning frameworks integrate measurable targets drawn from the MEAs in at least (1) country, (2) Functional environmental information systems are established to support decision-making in at least (1) country.
212. The project reported on the following indicators:
- i. Terrestrial Protected Areas Created or Under Improved Management (hectares): This indicator reflected the areas impacted by the project's micro pilot initiatives in Benichab. As of June 30, 2023, a total of 112 hectares were placed under improved management.
 - ii. Number of Direct Beneficiaries Disaggregated by Gender as a Co-benefit of GEF Investment: This indicator captured the reach of the project's training sessions, knowledge management tools, and the adoption and scaling of demonstration micro pilot projects. As of June 30, 2023, the estimated number of direct beneficiaries was 3,885, including 1,745 males and 2,140 females who participated in various project activities.
213. These indicators were generally strong in terms of relevance, clarity, and measurability, effectively aligning with GEF-6 goals. The terrestrial protected areas indicator provided a clear, quantifiable measure of environmental impact, while the beneficiary count, disaggregated by gender, highlighted social inclusion.
214. The following sections discuss monitoring within the scope defined in the project framework. Despite the challenges, the M&R plan was generally robust. According to the GEF6 Request for Project Approval and the PIRs, the project tracked 37 indicators, four for the objective/impact, eight for outcomes, and 25 for outputs. These indicators measured the delivery of mechanisms, tools, reports, information, and capacity-building activities. However, the M&R plan did not include any gender-specific indicators to ensure inclusivity.

215. Overall, while the indicators could have been refined to improve attribution and outcome measurement (see “Availability of Outputs” and “Achievement of Outcome”), the M&R plan aligned with results-based management principles and allowed for adaptive implementation. It covered essential components such as indicator coverage, data collection methods, frequency, and a dedicated monitoring budget, but lacked gender-disaggregated data, except for the GEF Core Indicators.

Rating for Monitoring Design and Budgeting: Moderately satisfactory

Monitoring of Project Implementation

216. The assessment of the monitoring system during project implementation indicates that it was generally functional and enabled the timely tracking of results and progress toward project objectives. As outlined in the GEF6 Request for Project Approval, half-year progress reports, project implementation reports (PIRs), and the final report, a detailed monitoring plan was in place. This plan appropriately tracked outputs, milestones, deliverables, and indicators as defined in the logical framework. It also specified data collection methods and established appropriate frequencies for data gathering, in line with the plan’s requirements. Evidence from the project document and PIRs showed that a work plan, broken down by outputs and outcomes, was created and updated regularly throughout the project’s implementation. Although the project timeline was adjusted, there was no need to revise the plan’s scope or structure.
217. Project expenditure reports indicate that funds were specifically allocated to monitoring activities.
218. Baseline data were collected during project design for each output and outcome. However, the baselines tended to be broad and general, aligned more with the indicators’ focus on processes than on specific conditions. For example, the baseline for Outcome 2 was: “The governmental decision-making process shows little integration of environmental issues due to poor communication and understanding of major environmental threats.” This description, while relevant, lacked the precision typically associated with well-defined baselines.
219. This review also highlights that the project included the Capacity Development Scorecard (Annex J of GEF6 request for project approval) as a tool to track institutional progress. However, the Scorecard had not been updated to reflect the progress achieved during project implementation. During implementation, progress was reported as a percentage of completion for each output or outcome at the reporting date. In the final report, outputs and outcomes were simply marked as “completed,” without additional detail on actual results or changes achieved.
220. The absence of collecting indicators focused on tangible outcomes hindered the project’s ability to systematically monitor and demonstrate real-world change. Additionally, the indicators defined in the project design lacked the quality and specificity needed for a comprehensive evaluation of the project’s long-term impact .
221. In summary, a basic monitoring system was implemented, and it successfully tracked progress toward outputs. Monitoring data were collected and reported regularly, offering a useful overview of project performance. Thus, although areas for improvement were identified in the construction of indicators (see “Monitoring Design and Budgeting”), the data collected were generally complete and useful, but only partially relevant for tracking progress toward intended results.

222. The project did not disaggregate data by vulnerable or marginalized groups, which limited its ability to assess the inclusiveness of participation. One exception was found in the GEF Core Indicators, where data on direct beneficiaries were disaggregated by gender. According to the 2023 PIR, the project reached 3,885 beneficiaries (2,140 women and 1,745 men). However, despite the project's stated commitment to supporting female participation, this intention was not reflected in the logical framework through dedicated indicators. For instance, no gender-specific indicator was used to track the number of women benefiting from capacity-building activities, which weakened the project's ability to effectively monitor and report on gender-related outcomes.
223. Evidence suggests that tools and methodologies tailored to different stakeholder groups were used during implementation. The monitoring plan incorporated a range of instruments, including inception workshops and reports, quarterly and annual review reports, mid-term and terminal evaluations, and qualitative discussions during PSC meetings. A post-workshop survey was also conducted after the training on the implementation and management of ecosystem-based adaptation actions held in October 2023¹¹⁴. Project stakeholders participating in the "UNEP GEF Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) Knowledge Exchange Session"¹¹⁵ provided key updates, shared implementation challenges, and reflected on lessons learned.
224. Interview feedback indicated that:
- i. The project established a solid and adaptive monitoring system that supported continuous oversight and informed decision-making. A monitoring plan was developed early on, with indicators aligned to the logical framework, guiding progress tracking and identifying implementation bottlenecks.
 - ii. Monitoring was conducted in close collaboration with national partners. Regular updates were shared, enhancing transparency and alignment. One area for improvement noted was the need for better quantitative data collection by national partners.
 - iii. Quarterly meetings were held with the FMO, during which narrative and financial data were gathered to strengthen project follow-up.
 - iv. The collected information (both indicators and data) was used to inform decisions within steering committees and contributed to the adjustment of strategic actions. Evidence was presented to advise the committee based on project progress and challenges.
 - v. An in-person monitoring mission was conducted, which proved particularly valuable following the transition of the focal point, helping to ensure continuity and strategic alignment.
225. It is important to acknowledge a key moment that shaped the MTR process. The initiative faced an unexpected and deeply unfortunate challenge with the passing of the consultant responsible for leading the review. Although the review process began as planned, with the submission of a work plan, stakeholder interviews, and a stakeholder mapping analysis, the main report could not be completed. In response to this unforeseen situation, the project management team

¹¹⁴ UNEP / GEF / Republique Islamique de Mauritanie (2023) Rapport de formation sur la mise en œuvre et la gestion des actions d'adaptation basées sur les écosystèmes (EBA). Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD).

¹¹⁵ UNEP (2023). UNEP GEF Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) Knowledge Exchange Session. Naivasha, Kenya. January 17-19, 2023.

adopted an adaptive and proactive approach, reorganizing efforts to ensure that the core objectives of the review were at least partially met. As an alternative, a three-day knowledge exchange session was held in Naivasha, Kenya, in January 2023. During this session, project members shared achievements, challenges, and lessons learned, effectively conducting a qualitative Mid-Term Review. This agile and collaborative response demonstrated the project's capacity for adaptive management, ensuring that, despite limitations and the delayed timing, strategic reflections and relevant recommendations could still be generated to support the project's continued progress.

226. Overall, evidence indicates that a monitoring plan and a completed work plan were in place. Tools and methodologies responsive to the needs of different stakeholder groups were employed, and funds allocated for monitoring appear to have been appropriately spent. However, baseline data collection was limited, and no disaggregated data were gathered for vulnerable or marginalized groups, including by gender. Of the baseline data collected, only some was relevant and useful for tracking progress. Some of the data collected during project implementation could have benefited from greater detail to enable deeper analysis. However, overall, the data was of good quality and evidence indicate that they were used to support the review and generate adequate project insights.

Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation: Satisfactory

Project Reporting

227. The project demonstrated substantial documentation of progress throughout its lifecycle:
- i. UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. Documents Repository. (2018-2023). Project reports (Inception Report, Quarterly Expenditure Reports, Half Yearly Progress Reports, Half-Yearly Expenditures Reports, Project Implementation Reviews, Technical reports, Workshop/ training reports, presentations, and notes), including six-month progress and financial reports, and progress reports.
 - ii. UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. Deliverables. (2018-2023). Reports, presentations, recommendations, and publications (Components 1 and 2).
228. The review was able to access and analyze half-year progress reports for the periods July to December in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022, as well as PIRs for 2020 through 2023, covering the periods of July 2019–June 2020, July 2020–June 2021, and July 2021–June 2022, and July 2022–June 2023. The PIRs were thorough and informative, including gender-disaggregated data on beneficiaries reached, along with detailed accounts of project activities, challenges encountered, and risks identified. It is worth noting, however, that the inclusion of gender-disaggregated data was not explicitly defined in the monitoring plan outlined during the project design phase (See “Monitoring Design and Budgeting”).
229. Evidence and interview feedback suggested that:
- i. UNEP played a key role in ensuring compliance with technical, financial, and monitoring and reporting requirements. UNEP ensured that MESD submitted all required reports under the PCA, including Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) and Half-Yearly Progress Reports (HYPRs), as stipulated in clause 34. Additionally, UNEP organized several training sessions for the PMU leadership to enhance the quality of GEF project reporting. UNEP consistently followed up with project managers through reminders and emails until all pending reports were duly submitted. It also

ensured that MESD produced and submitted qualified audit reports in accordance with clauses 36–38 of the PCA. Whenever MESD requested revisions to approved workplans, such as in response to COVID-19, UNEP provided timely and appropriate guidance.

- ii. The documentation of project progress was thorough and of high quality, with monitoring and reporting consistently completed on time and in line with established templates and procedures. Reports to donors were submitted regularly and without interruption. The annual PIRs, submitted to the GEF, served as the official progress report for the project.
 - iii. These reports were used to track indicator progress, document success stories, and highlight contributions to SDGs. Reporting exercises were conducted regularly—typically in June and December—and served as key moments for reflection and planning.
 - iv. UNEP maintained regular and constructive communication with the project team, project managers (PM), task manager (TM), and UNEP colleagues. UNEP organized at least one virtual quarterly project update call with MESD’s PMU leadership, ensuring consistent project oversight and information flow. The UNEP GEF team remained available for ad hoc meetings upon request from the PMU leadership, demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness. These efforts aligned with UNEP’s oversight responsibilities as outlined in the GEF-approved project supervision plan.
 - v. The Project Steering Committee convened three times during the project cycle, providing a platform for sharing updates and receiving strategic feedback. However, the meeting minutes were not as detailed as they could have been and could have contributed more to knowledge management by systematically capturing lessons learned and showcasing achievements, going beyond technical outputs.
 - vi. The use of Umoja, the UN’s enterprise resource planning system, ensured transparency and certified financial reporting throughout the project.
230. Project reporting supported the monitoring of project performance; however, due to the absence of more relevant and specific indicators and methodologies, reporting was limited in its ability to capture and reflect outcome-level results or broader impacts.
231. Overall, evidence indicates that substantial documentation of project progress was available, with strong collaboration and communication among colleagues. Donor reporting was consistent and timely, with no identified gaps. Reports submitted through PIMS and to donors accurately reflected the project’s scope of work, and their content aligned with supporting evidence. Monitoring reports were either gender-neutral—equally reflecting the experiences of all gender groups—or, where appropriate, gender-sensitive, capturing differentiated experiences. However, disaggregation of data by vulnerable and marginalized groups, including gender, was only partially achieved.

Rating for Project Reporting: Satisfactory

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting:	Satisfactory
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H. Sustainability

Socio-political Sustainability

232. The sustainability and further development of project outcomes depend heavily on political will and stakeholder ownership. Continued interest and commitment from government representatives and stakeholders to use the tool and knowledge promoted by the project are essential. They must clearly demonstrate their utility in enhancing institutional coordination and technical capacities to mainstream, develop, and utilize policies for the effective implementation of MEAs and relevant SDGs.
233. According to the GEF-6 Request for Approval and the final report, the project demonstrated socio-political sustainability through its inclusive, multi-stakeholder approach to environmental information management. By engaging national and sub-national government entities, NGOs, and other actors, the project aimed to foster broad ownership and commitment to its outcomes. The establishment of an interministerial consultative mechanism was intended to strengthen political coordination and alignment with international environmental agreements. Additionally, the dissemination of environmental data for public awareness and education was designed to enhance social engagement and support long-term behavioral change aligned with sustainable development goals. The development of the national action plan for green jobs included a situational analysis that considered national priorities and involved various stakeholders, aligning employment strategies with environmental sustainability. The validation of the sustainability strategy through stakeholder discussions and feedback during the final project meeting in December 2023 further reflected strong ownership and commitment. These efforts aimed to ensure that project outcomes were socially embedded and politically supported, increasing the likelihood of long-term adoption and replication.
234. Evidence from the 2023 PIR confirmed strong socio-political engagement throughout the project, with active participation from stakeholders across components. Ministries and directorates appointed focal points who played key roles in implementation, and stakeholders helped disseminate project results within their respective institutions. The exit workshop, which brought together all relevant actors, reinforced ownership and collective reflection, helping align future actions and strengthen commitment to sustainability. However, the report also highlighted a significant challenge: the transition of CNOEZA led to misalignment in roles and responsibilities, causing disruptions in implementation. If not addressed effectively, this issue could pose a substantial risk to the sustainability of the project's results.
235. The 2023 PIR further highlights that, since its inception, the project has demonstrated a strong commitment to socio-political sustainability, even in the face of challenges such as staff turnover, the COVID-19 pandemic, and changes in government. This commitment is reflected in several key areas:
- i. Stakeholder engagement: The project emphasized active involvement of stakeholders and cross-ministerial initiatives, which helped build political and social support while promoting a participatory approach sensitive to local contexts.
 - ii. Integration of local and traditional knowledge: The incorporation of traditional and community-based knowledge into environmental practices has enhanced the project's cultural and social legitimacy.

- iii. Adaptation to national contexts: The PIR underscores the importance of aligning activities with the specific characteristics and needs of each country, reinforcing the project's socio-political viability across diverse settings.
236. During the December 2023 exit meeting, participants identified as a key lesson learned that the participatory approach was instrumental in meeting deadlines, fostering active beneficiary engagement, and streamlining the definition and prioritization of their needs.
237. Interview feedback indicated that the project's sustainability is closely tied to social and political dimensions, with several key elements highlighted:
- i. The sustainability strategy was embedded into the project design, which was not standard practice at the time. Its inclusion reflects a deliberate effort to promote ownership and alignment across sectors. The strategy incorporated recommendations for transition and proposed mechanisms to coordinate efforts among stakeholders, particularly in relation to MEAs and SDGs. Its participatory validation further reinforces the project's commitment to inclusive and context-sensitive sustainability.
 - ii. The project invested in strengthening the capacities of actors involved in environmental data collection and management. This contributed to local engagement and ownership, reinforcing the socio-political sustainability of the project. Continued training efforts, particularly those linked to SDG monitoring, demonstrate ongoing commitment to maintaining these capacities.
 - iii. At the local level, the project acted as a catalyst for community engagement, particularly by empowering women and communities to initiate their own environmentally focused activities, such as agricultural monitoring. This reflects the project's ability to promote ownership and leadership among non-state actors, a key indicator of socio-political sustainability. By encouraging these local actors to take initiative, the project laid the foundation for community-based environmental management.
 - iv. Beneficiaries' responses, indicating coordination with other donors, suggest local mobilization and interest in maintaining activities, a positive sign of ownership. Importantly, according to interview feedback, the demonstration projects are still ongoing in the territories, which reinforces the continuity of actions initiated during the project and strengthens the outlook for socio-political sustainability. The persistence of these initiatives indicates that local ownership was achieved and that results are being maintained even after the formal conclusion of the project.
 - v. Nevertheless, the long-term sustainability of these actions depends on stronger links with structured programs and continued institutional support. The mention of a potential follow-up project by the World Bank suggests that efforts were made to build on good practices, although the lack of clarity regarding its implementation reveals a gap that needs to be monitored. This scenario highlights both the strengths and vulnerabilities of socio-political sustainability at the community level, pointing to the need to reinforce support mechanisms and interinstitutional coordination to ensure these initiatives are consolidated and expanded over time.
 - vi. Finally, although partner interest suggests openness to maintaining political and social engagement, some interviews indicate that ownership by

stakeholders is seen as moderately satisfactory, with a need for ongoing advocacy to ensure the value of project outputs is fully recognized. The sensitization process is still underway, indicating that socio-political sustainability is under development. Evidence shows that the government continues to work on overcoming limitations and improving the sustainability and ownership of the various products and instruments developed throughout the project.

238. The sustainability strategy developed by the project promotes the integration of environmental management with objectives such as poverty reduction, rural job creation, and the promotion of sustainable economic activities like agroforestry, ecotourism, and responsible fishing. The participatory approach and the emphasis on natural capital as a source of inclusive growth strengthen the social dimension. However, there is a clear dependence on behavioral changes and community engagement. Urban demographic pressure, combined with a lack of planning, may affect the effectiveness of the proposed measures. Additionally, population vulnerability to climate impacts requires continuous investments that may not keep pace with growing needs.
239. Regarding the project's socio-political sustainability, evidence shared during the UNEP GEF CCCD Knowledge Exchange Session highlighted that:
- i. The project involved a wide range of stakeholders, from government ministries to local communities, in both design and implementation. One key lesson learned was the importance of aligning project objectives with global frameworks such as the MEAs and SDGs, which helped ensure relevance and policy coherence. A particularly impactful example was the pilot of women-led microfinance initiatives in Inchiri, which not only addressed local socio-economic needs but also illustrated how global environmental conventions like the UNCCD can be applied in a culturally sensitive and community-driven way. This approach fostered ownership, built trust, and empowered local actors to use environmental information for decision-making, reinforcing the project's long-term social and political viability.
 - ii. Fostering cross-sectoral collaboration and stakeholder ownership in the development and implementation of EIS is an important action. Participants emphasized that EIS should be designed to meet the needs of various ministries and sectors, enabling them to track progress on national and international commitments such as the SDGs. Ensuring that the system was open, user-friendly, and accessible to all relevant stakeholders could help build institutional capacity, promote data sharing, and distribute benefits across government entities. Moreover, aligning the EIS with the interests and mandates of different ministries could have enhanced political buy-in and long-term engagement, which are essential for the system's sustainability and impact.
 - iii. Ensuring the sociopolitical sustainability of the EIS requires more than technical robustness, it demands responsiveness to evolving national and regional priorities. They highlighted the importance of actively seeking intelligence, innovation, and foresight to keep the system aligned with current environmental concerns and policy debates. This proactive approach, described as "keeping an ear to the ground", can help position the EIS as a dynamic and relevant tool, capable of informing timely decisions and maintaining its legitimacy and utility over time.
240. In conclusion, the sustainability of the project outcomes shows a high degree of dependency on social and political factors. Evidence points to relatively strong

ownership and commitment from the government and key stakeholders. Despite commendable efforts to promote local ownership, accountability, and stakeholder engagement, systemic challenges persist. Ownership, interest, and commitment are present among government actors and other stakeholders, but they do not yet reach the levels necessary to fully sustain the project's outcomes over time. However, the project established a solid and inclusive mechanism to adapt to changes in the socio-political context. To ensure socio-political sustainability moving forward, it will be essential to strengthen country ownership, maintain ongoing advocacy to reinforce the value of project outputs, and clearly assign responsibilities across institutions and actors.

Rating for Socio-political Sustainability: Moderately Likely

Financial Sustainability

241. The maintenance and development of project outcomes are partially reliant on future funding. Key activities requiring ongoing financial support include EIS maintenance, continuous capacity building, and stakeholder engagement. Regular updates, technical improvements, and integration with national systems are essential to keep EIS relevant. Long-term financial sustainability remains uncertain as continued funding will depend on sustained country commitment, demonstrated utility, and strategic planning.
242. According to the GEF-6 Request for Approval, the project addressed financial sustainability through a dedicated strategy aimed at ensuring continued funding for the implementation of MEAs. The project design promoted cost-efficiency by collecting data once and using it for multiple purposes, including reporting, analysis, and public communication. This approach was intended to reduce duplication and operational costs. The inclusion of financial sustainability as a formal project output (Output 2.4) reflected a proactive effort to secure resources and sustain project activities beyond the initial funding cycle.
243. The final report highlighted that the sustainability strategy developed under Activity 2.4.4 included proposals for financing mechanisms to support the ongoing implementation of MEAs and SDGs. By identifying synergies with the private sector and civil society, the project created opportunities for diversified funding sources beyond traditional donor support. This forward-looking approach to financial planning aimed to ensure that the systems and initiatives established by the project could be maintained and scaled after the initial funding period.
244. The sustainability strategy developed by the project proposes innovative mechanisms such as eco-taxes, payment for ecosystem services, and diversification of funding sources, along with the creation of economic instruments linked to natural capital. This demonstrates a long-term vision for internalizing environmental costs. However, there is a strong reliance on external resources and local mobilization capacity, which may be limited in a fragile economic context. The absence of guarantees regarding fund operationalization and the lack of clarity on the long-term sustainability of revenues pose significant risks to financial viability.
245. The 2023 PIR noted that specific financial mechanisms were not detailed. Despite this, stakeholders demonstrated strong commitment to sustaining demonstration activities, suggesting a solid foundation for continued support. The exit workshop served as a platform to consolidate the sustainability strategy, which likely included financial considerations to ensure the long-term viability of project outcomes.

246. Participants in the UNEP GEF CCCD Knowledge Exchange Session highlighted that environmental issues are often not prioritized in national budgets, which can limit the financial sustainability of systems like the EIS. To address this, participants recommended demonstrating the economic and non-economic value of environmental data.
247. Interview feedback indicated that the project's sustainability is partially tied to financial dimensions, with several key elements highlighted:
- i. Some interviewees noted that no additional resources are needed to maintain certain project outputs, particularly studies and demonstration projects. This suggests a relatively stable financial sustainability for these components.
 - ii. Once the EIS was implemented, the focus shifted to training users and ensuring engagement across ministries. Since this phase relies more on coordination and capacity building than on new financial inputs, it is seen as a positive step toward sustainability.
 - iii. The MESD's commitment to financing the portal domain, along with discussions around funding mechanisms, reflects proactive financial planning. Integration with potential World Bank initiatives also suggests strategic synergies that could strengthen financial sustainability.
 - iv. Evidence also pointed to interest in expanding demonstration projects to other regions. The search for additional donors and plans to scale pilot initiatives indicate a strategy of diversifying funding sources, which contributes to long-term financial viability.
 - v. Continued partner support for capacity-building activities shows that external resources are still being mobilized, reinforcing the financial sustainability of ongoing efforts.
 - vi. However, other interviewees emphasized that maintaining the system requires an annual budget and dedicated personnel, which was acknowledged as essential. The entire governance process demands financial resources, and it is necessary to ensure consistent budget allocation.
 - vii. In addition, long-term sustainability of the system depends on identifying durable financial mechanisms that can capitalize on the project's results. Data collection and processing involve recurring costs that are often not reflected in institutional budgets. Without predictable and dedicated funding, there is a risk that the system's functionality may decline once external support ends. Ensuring consistent budget allocation is essential to maintain operations and preserve the value of technical outputs.
 - viii. The project made notable progress through pilot initiatives, laying a strong foundation for future expansion. However, some interviewees emphasized that a second phase project could be a great opportunity to consolidate gains, scale up effective practices, and ensure lasting institutional impact beyond the project's implementation period.
 - ix. Thus, despite these positive signs, long-term financial sustainability is still in progress. While the existence of a sustainability strategy is a positive step, its implementation is still ongoing and requires continuous effort. Continued funding will depend on sustained government commitment, the demonstrated utility of project outputs, and strategic planning to ensure

that essential systems and processes, particularly those requiring annual budgets and dedicated staff, are maintained over time.

248. Overall, the sustainability and long-term success of the project outcomes are moderately dependent on the availability of future funding and consistent financial support. While some financial needs have already been addressed, such as the MESD's commitment to financing the portal domain and the continued support from partners for capacity-building activities, it remains important to establish a clear and comprehensive financial plan to ensure long-term resource mobilization. An exit strategy with a financial component was developed, which represents a positive step. However, its effectiveness in guiding sustained financial planning is still evolving and requires ongoing attention and implementation efforts.

Rating for Financial Sustainability: Moderately Likely

Institutional Sustainability

249. The sustainability of project outcomes is highly dependent on institutional frameworks and governance structures. Institutional support mechanisms provided a robust framework to sustain and institutionalize some projects' results.
250. According to the GEF-6 Request for Approval, institutional sustainability was to be reinforced by embedding the project within the MESD, ensuring alignment with national governance structures. The establishment of a Project Management Unit (PMU) within MESD, responsible for daily operations and coordination, served as a practical example of institutional anchoring. Furthermore, the creation of an interministerial consultative mechanism to coordinate the implementation of the Rio Conventions and other MEAs aimed to ensure cross-sectoral collaboration. The project also planned to link its activities with other GEF-funded initiatives (e.g., UNDP's mini-grid program, FAO's pesticide management efforts), which could strengthen institutional networks and promote integrated environmental governance.
251. The final report indicated that institutional sustainability was reinforced through the establishment of collaborative systems and structured frameworks. The creation of a MEA-dedicated database and a knowledge management platform under Activity 2.4.1 promoted coordination among focal points, ministries, and NGOs, enhancing institutional capacity for environmental governance. The recommendation and implementation of a structured national sustainability strategy further institutionalized the project's outcomes, ensuring alignment with national policies and long-term integration into government systems. These measures strengthened the institutional foundation necessary for the continued implementation and monitoring of environmental commitments.
252. Evidence from the 2023 PIR highlighted that institutional sustainability was challenged by the transition of CNOEZA, which caused misalignments in roles and responsibilities. However, MESD maintained its leadership role. The identification of focal points across institutions helped stabilize implementation. Training provided to key institutions and collaborative efforts across project components also reinforced institutional capacity and ownership of project results.
253. Insights from the December 2023 exit meeting highlighted the crucial role of the Directorate of Planning, Coordination, and Statistics (DPCS) in ensuring the institutional sustainability of the project. The DPCS now acts as the custodian of Mauritania's EIS, a significant achievement made possible through the resources, tools, and technical support provided by the project. Integrating the EIS within this national institution represents a key step toward guaranteeing long-term

sustainability and strengthening national ownership of environmental data management.

254. Nevertheless, while the narrative suggests alignment with institutional priorities, the reports provide limited verifiable evidence, such as indicators demonstrating formal policy changes, dedicated budgetary allocations, or updates to institutional mandates, that would confirm systemic adoption or integration during the project's operational period. Thus, although the potential for institutional sustainability is acknowledged, the extent to which it was achieved remains uncertain in the absence of supporting data or validated indicators.
255. Institutional capacity-building efforts under the project, including Training of Trainers (ToT) activities (Outputs 1.4 and 1.6), enhanced the skills and knowledge of key individuals and organizations, increasing the likelihood of sustained support. Stakeholders involved in these activities were, in principle, equipped with the necessary competencies to maintain and effectively utilize the knowledge provided on data collection, methodologies, tools, and mechanisms. These individuals, given their expected retention in relevant positions, were well-positioned to continue contributing to the project's outcomes.
256. Interview feedback highlighted that institutional sustainability mechanisms were among the project's strongest aspects, supported by capacity building, comprehensive documentation, and integration into existing government structures.
- i. The implementation of the EIS, combined with a strong focus on capacity building and coordination among ministries, reflects deliberate efforts to institutionalize practices and ensure continued use without relying exclusively on new financial resources. Once the EIS was in place, the emphasis shifted to training users and securing engagement across various ministries, reinforcing institutional ownership.
 - ii. MESD regularly organized training sessions, demonstrating a commitment to institutionalizing practices and sustaining project outcomes. The continuity of use and the capacity-building efforts indicate solid institutional appropriation, although currently limited to certain structures. The project supported multiple training sessions and strengthened the representation of the Ministry of Environment at the local level. These capacities are considered key achievements and should be scaled up to benefit more staff within the ministry and other institutions involved in data management and SDG-related issues.
 - iii. The official transfer of the EIS to the MESD, the training of the IT team, and the incorporation of recommendations into the sustainability strategy are clear signs of institutionalization. The strategy itself included proposals for institutional frameworks and cross-sectoral synergies to ensure continuity, as well as sections addressing private sector engagement and cross-cutting issues. The sustainability strategy report was finalized in 2021 and discussed with stakeholders, with all feedback incorporated and validated during the project's final meeting in December 2023.
 - iv. The National Observatory for the Environment and Coastal Zone was cited as a direct result of the project. It continues to use and build upon the documents, reports, and studies related to the EIS and the institutional framework developed during the project. While not the only institution benefiting from the project, the Observatory has a clear focus and is

- expected to continue using and benefiting from these products, particularly in terms of capacity strengthening.
- v. The dissolution of CNOEZA and its impact on the project's implementation illustrate the importance of institutional structures. However, the fact that the project continued despite this change suggests that it operates within an environment of growing institutional sustainability.
257. Additional interview evidence emphasized that data governance is a critical issue for institutional sustainability:
- i. The lack of clearly defined responsibilities among institutions can lead to inconsistencies, duplication, and conflicting data. Institutional sustainability depends not only on technical capacity but also on legal mandates and effective interinstitutional coordination. It is essential that the government demonstrates political will to maintain the project. Without legally binding agreements and clearly defined institutional mandates, sustaining the EIS, especially as the national platform for environmental reporting and decision-making, can be extremely difficult. Institutions must adopt not only the system itself but also the associated data governance processes. Collaboration among agencies is crucial, and roles must be clearly defined. For example, if the Ministry of Agriculture is designated to provide agricultural indicators, those data should be considered official, even if other sources exist. Without such clarity, conflicting data from different institutions can undermine credibility. Therefore, it is vital to legally define which institution holds the mandate for each type of data.
 - ii. Institutional sustainability also requires stable and well-trained personnel to ensure continuity and effective use of the system. In the Mauritanian context, although environmental data exists, it is often poorly archived and rarely shared. Much of the data is produced through externally funded projects, but is not systematically capitalized or institutionalized once those projects conclude. These challenges highlight the need to embed data management and capacity-building efforts into long-term institutional strategies, supported by human resource planning and strong interministerial coordination.
258. The sustainability strategy developed by the project stands out for its clear governance structure, with bodies such as CNEDD, CTEDD, and CREDD, as well as mechanisms for intersectoral coordination and decentralization to involve local actors. This architecture strengthens legitimacy and the integration of environmental policies. However, there are risks of overlapping competencies, the need for complex institutional reforms, and dependence on technical capacities that must be maintained and improved. Effective implementation requires strong coordination between ministries and partners, which may be hindered by administrative limitations and a shortage of qualified human resources.
259. Regarding the project's institutional sustainability, the UNEP GEF CCCD Knowledge Exchange Session underscored the need for a strong legal and policy framework to support the establishment and long-term maintenance of EIS. Participants noted that formal agreements, such as MoUs between ministries, are critical to ensuring the regular provision of high-quality data. Integrating the EIS into formal government structures and processes can enhance its visibility, legitimacy, and operational effectiveness. Additionally, continuous capacity development, including a train-the-trainers model, was an interesting approach to mitigate risks related to staff turnover and ensure long-term system functionality. Challenges such as fragmented data and limited access were proactively

addressed, and sustainability mechanisms, like standardized reporting and integration into formal government systems, were put in place to secure the EIS's long-term impact and institutional resilience.

260. Participants in the UNEP GEF CCCD Knowledge Exchange Session also noted that branding the EIS as a time-bound “project” may unintentionally weaken its institutional sustainability. To address this, they recommended reframing the project’s tools and mechanisms as permanent national functions, embedded within government structures and supported by domestic systems. This shift in perception—from a donor-funded initiative to a nationally owned platform—is essential to foster long-term commitment, institutional integration, and continuity beyond the project cycle.

261. In conclusion, the sustainability of project outcomes was highly dependent on institutional support. A robust mechanism was in place to support the institutionalization of project outcomes. However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms relies on continued government commitment, clear legal mandates, and interinstitutional coordination. The capacity of relevant individuals was enhanced, and they are likely to remain in positions where they can sustain these outcomes. Additionally, an exit strategy with an institutional component was developed to guide the transition and ensure the continuation of project benefits.

Rating for Institutional Sustainability: Moderately Likely

Rating for Sustainability (Likelihood):	Moderately Likely
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I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

Preparation and Readiness

262. The inception and mobilization phase of the project spanned from March 2018 (CCCD project approval) to July 2018¹¹⁶ (first disbursement). During this period, the PCA between UNEP EWAD and MESD¹¹⁷ was operationalized. UNEP actively engaged MESD for input during the drafting process, culminating in the signing of the agreement in May 2018. The PCA outlined the framework for project implementation, including its purpose, areas of cooperation, financial arrangements, and the respective roles and responsibilities of UNEP and MESD as the executing agency.

263. No significant measures were taken to strengthen the project design, address known weaknesses, or adapt to changes between the approval and fund disbursement stages, apart from incorporating the PCR recommendations during the design phase¹¹⁸.

264. Evidence indicates the following key actions were undertaken:

- i. In April 2018, UNEP coordinated and facilitated a joint planning workshop in Nouakchott, Mauritania, for the GEF CCCD projects of Mauritania, Benin, and Botswana. The workshop covered key topics, including an overview of the global CCCD programme, the roles of UNEP and MESD, PCA-related

¹¹⁶ Amendment No. (2.0) to the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Mauritania and The United Nations Environment Programme on UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania (May 2023).

¹¹⁷ UNEP (2018). PCA/2018/UNEP-MESD

¹¹⁸ GEF-UNEP/CCCD/MSP/ GEF ID 9747 (2018). GEF6 Request for Project Approval. Annex B: Response to Project Reviews (GEF-6 GEF Secretariat Review for Full-sized/Medium-sized Project)

- technical and financial obligations, GEF fiduciary standards, and PPG closure procedures.
- ii. UNEP ensured MESD established both a Project Steering Committee (PSC) and a Project Management Unit (PMU), in line with the GEF-approved project document.
 - iii. Subsequently, UNEP organized a Project Inception Workshop, held on 27 September 2018 in Nouakchott, officially launching the CCCD Mauritania project. Attended by the UNEP Project Task Manager, the workshop introduced its objectives and structure, and announced the creation of CNOEZA and the ROEZA coordination panel. The CNOEZA (National Cell for Environmental Observation and Arid Zones) was established to catalyse the implementation of the CCCD project and to strengthen national ownership. The expanded technical coordination panel on environmental information (ROEZA), led by CNOEZA, was instituted as a permanent institutional mechanism to oversee and coordinate the various activities of CCCD projects.
 - iv. As a result of the workshop, two project assistants were recruited, the Steering Committee was established, and ten initial activities were launched for Q4 2018, focusing on data systems, education, microfinance, and institutional coordination. The UNEP Task Manager followed up to ensure the implementation of key action points from the inception workshop, including MESD's preparation of the workshop report, establishment of the PSC, and staffing of the PMU.
 - v. The first Steering Committee "prise de contact" session took place in December 2018, introducing the project to its members and establishing initial engagement. Organized by MESD/CNOEZA, it also marked the completion and submission of the Project Procedures Manual to UN Environment in February 2019.
 - vi. A ROEZA Network meeting was convened by MESD/CNOEZA in January 2019 in Nouakchott.
265. An annual costed work plan was developed with sufficient detail, consistent with the financial management provisions described in Section E (Financial Management) of this report.
266. Several spreadsheets included in the project documentation were identified as part of a detailed procurement plan. This plan outlined the procedures for acquiring goods, services, or works required for project implementation, thereby ensuring timely, efficient, and cost-effective procurement aligned with budgetary and policy frameworks.
267. The project included a UNEP Environmental, Social, and Economic Review Note (ESERN), which served as an Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) assessment (Annex M of the GEF6 Request for Project Approval). Stakeholder consultations during project design contributed to the development of the Theory of Change (ToC) by UNEP and Mauritanian representatives. However, there is no direct evidence indicating stakeholder participation specifically in the ESS assessment process.
268. The project document included a comprehensive stakeholder analysis, identifying key actors such as government ministries, agencies, focal points, and research institutions involved in environmental and natural resource management, MEAs, and SDGs. No evidence was found of its subsequent review or update. The

analysis confirmed partners' capacities and clearly defined their roles and responsibilities, as outlined in Sections A.3, A.6, and Annex H of the GEF-6 Request for Project Approval.

269. Governance arrangements were generally adequate. A Steering Committee was established with representation from UNEP (implementing agency), MESD (executing agency), relevant line ministries (e.g., Economy and Finance, Higher Education), parliament, universities, local government, civil society organizations, and the private sector, as outlined in Annex H of the GEF-6 Request for Project Approval. However, the Committee convened only three times during the project's lifespan. According to 2018 HYPR, an additional introductory meeting ("prise de contact") was also held in December 2018 in Nouakchott to present the project to its members and initiate engagement.
270. Nevertheless, during the December 2023 exit meeting, participants noted that one of the challenges encountered during project implementation was the administrative delays in establishing the Steering Committee. This bottleneck affected the timely coordination and oversight of activities, underscoring the need for more efficient institutional processes in future initiatives.
271. The period between project approval and the initial disbursement of funds was six months or less, indicating an efficient early-stage timeline. Staffing mobilization was conducted promptly, and the project team demonstrated effective management of personnel transitions, minimizing disruptions to project execution.
272. In conclusion, the period between project approval and the first disbursement (less than 6 months) was marked by effective preparatory actions and institutional arrangements that laid a good foundation for implementation. Key processes, including the inception meeting, development of a costed annual work plan, preparation of a compliant procurement plan, and establishment of a well-represented Steering Committee, were carried out. The project also ensured the timely completion of legal agreements, Environmental and social safeguards assessments, stakeholder analyses, confirmation of partner capacities, and the establishment of appropriate governance structures. Staffing mobilization occurred without delay, and all relevant recommendations from the PRC, as well as contextual changes, were addressed in a timely and good-quality manner.

Rating for Preparation and Readiness: Satisfactory

Quality of Project Management and Supervision

273. In general, project management and supervision (UNEP Implementing Agency; Executing Agency) demonstrated overall effectiveness in guiding the project towards achieving its planned outcomes, managing team structures, fostering productive partner relationships, and ensuring adaptability to changing external and strategic contexts.
274. The Steering Committee played an important role in providing oversight and strategic guidance throughout the project. However, during the December 2023 exit meeting, stakeholders noted that delays in establishing the PSC posed a significant administrative challenge throughout project implementation. And it is also noteworthy that only three Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings were convened since the project's inception. These meetings took place in October 2019, December 2021, and June 2023 in Nouakchott. The meeting agendas confirm that relevant topics were discussed, and key decisions were made. The

agenda content indicated that the PSC was consulted on key issues, including implementation budgets, procurement approaches, and subsequent steps:

- i. October 2019: PSC reviewed the progress and strategic direction of the CCCD Mauritania project and the CNOEZA unit, approved the 2020 work plan and budget, and discussed the operational framework of the ROEZA network to strengthen environmental data management and long-term ecological monitoring in arid zones.
 - ii. December 2021: PSC reviewed and unanimously approved the 2022 Annual Work Plan and budget for the CCCD Mauritania project, discussed UNEP's role in project monitoring, and emphasized aligning activities with the calendar year while strengthening coordination and prioritization across sectors.
 - iii. June 2023: PSC reviewed the progress of the CCCD Mauritania project, addressed delays in activity implementation, agreed to carry forward unfinished and additional activities into the 2023 work plan, and confirmed the importance of a final stakeholder workshop to consolidate lessons learned and sustainability strategies.
275. The roles and responsibilities of the implementing and executing partners were clearly defined and generally well understood. UNEP, through UNEP EWAD, acted as the implementing agency on behalf of GEF. Its primary role was to ensure project oversight and compliance with GEF and UNEP standards: technical, fiduciary, and related to monitoring and evaluation. UNEP EWAD also provided targeted technical support, organized the mid-term and final evaluations, and reviewed key project documents, including progress reports, budget revisions, and expenditure statements. These responsibilities were carried out by the UNEP Task Manager, who also participated in PSC meetings and ensured alignment with UNEP policies and procedures throughout the project lifecycle.
276. MESD, through the newly created CNOEZA by the time, served as the executing agency on behalf of the Government of Mauritania. MESD was responsible for overseeing the day-to-day implementation of the project via the PMU, which it hosted and supported. The PMU was tasked with executing technical and administrative activities, managing project outcomes and outputs, coordinating with partners, and ensuring timely and high-quality reporting. It also served as the Secretariat to the PSC. The PMU team included a Project Manager, a Procurement and Finance Specialist, an IT Assistant, and a Secretary. MESD ensured that all personnel met high professional standards and that recruitment followed GEF guidelines. Additionally, MESD was responsible for procurement, field monitoring, and annual audits, safeguarding transparency, efficiency, and accountability in line with international best practices.
277. Implementing and executing teams were managed effectively, with a constructive and productive working relationship between the task and project managers and project partners. Evidence indicated that UNEP maintained strong collaboration and communication with MESD through joint planning and strategic engagement. UNEP facilitated the regional planning workshop in Nouakchott, involving projects from Mauritania, Benin, and Botswana, to foster cross-country coordination¹¹⁹. It supported and participated in the project inception workshop

¹¹⁹ UNEP / GEF (2018). Project Implementation Planning Workshop Summary Report. Building core Capacity for the Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Benin, Botswana and Mauritania held on April 2018 in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

held in Nouakchott in October 2018¹²⁰ and attended all PSC meetings. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNEP encouraged MESD to convene an official PSC session in Q4 2020 to review the 2020 PIR report, assess the pandemic-related impacts, and discuss proposed revisions to the work plan.

278. Staff turnover at implementing agency was managed with minimal disruption due to systematic and thorough handover processes supported by documentation and information exchange. Moreover, all staff demonstrated the necessary capacity to meet project requirements and were strategically located to ensure efficient implementation.
279. Staff turnover at executing agency because the dissolution of CNOEZA, did affect the project. However, these transitions were managed well, supported by documentation and structured information exchange. Despite the institutional shift, the project was able to maintain momentum and continue implementation, demonstrating resilience and adaptability within an environment of growing institutional sustainability.
280. During the exit meeting held in December 2023, reports indicated that the transition phase of project coordination was characterized by a high level of synergy with the previous coordinator, as well as the involvement of new key stakeholders, such as the Directorate of Planning, Coordination, and Statistics (DPCS).
281. Communication and collaboration among the project team, TM, PM, colleagues, and implementing partners were generally regular, to the extent possible given the context, and were constructive in fostering alignment on project objectives and activities. Adaptive management was a defining feature of the project's implementation approach, as reflected in the timely and effective responses to operational challenges, financial constraints, and external disruptions, notably the COVID-19 pandemic. The project management team demonstrated good prioritization and strategic resource allocation to sustain implementation progress, while ensuring accountability and compliance with institutional requirements. In particular, the team demonstrated adequate agility in responding to pandemic-related disruptions, which affected field operations, delayed planned engagements, and required modifications to the implementation strategy. Using virtual meetings and remote capacity development modalities, the project partially mitigated delays and maintained implementation momentum. Although the overall implementation timeline experienced some adjustments due to these external factors, such delays did not significantly compromise the achievement of the project's objectives.
282. Interview feedback indicated that project management and supervision (UNEP/Implementing Agency; Partner/Executing Agency) had positive aspects, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and institutional transitions:
 - i. Some interviewees highlighted a positive experience with the team involved in project management and supervision. The first project manager's prior familiarity with UNEP and the GEF process contributed to a smoother interface with the implementing agency, reinforcing perceptions of professionalism and technical excellence. Beyond operational arrangements, the human dimension was especially appreciated, with

¹²⁰ MESD / CNOEZA / GEF / UNEP (2018). Inception Workshop. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania" held on October 2018 in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

references to the team's receptiveness, courtesy, and responsiveness on both sides.

- ii. The leadership transition within the ministry brought natural adaptation challenges, particularly due to the need for additional training and language barriers, as the new coordinator was more fluent in French. Despite these circumstances, his adaptation demonstrated commitment and integration capacity, which helped resume project activities efficiently.
 - iii. Following the leadership change, proposals emerged to revise components that had been defined at the project's outset. While this led to some back-and-forth discussions, it also highlighted the team's ability to remain focused on core objectives, balancing flexibility with firmness. This collaborative stance was essential to preserving the project's coherence, even in the face of new perspectives.
 - iv. Communication between the FMO, the task manager, and the project team was fluid and well-structured. Regular meetings, both internal and with the partner, and the willingness to hold additional sessions during critical moments reflected a collaborative and responsive approach. The absence of hierarchical barriers and direct access to the ministry were facilitating factors that contributed to effective supervision.
 - v. However, despite the project manager was recognized for his motivation and technical competence, certain aspects related to strategic communication and engagement with the PSC could have been strengthened. This highlights opportunities for enhancing integration between technical leadership and institutional oversight, aiming for improved alignment and synergy across management levels. Limited ownership from the PSC in strategic decision-making processes suggests the need for stronger leadership engagement to ensure institutional continuity and long-term impact.
 - vi. Additionally, excessive reliance on a single focal point in the region exposes the project to risks in coordination, particularly during institutional transitions. While centralizing communication around the project manager may have facilitated early coordination, it also created vulnerabilities. This approach limited the resilience of project management and underscored the need to diversify communication channels and build a broader network of interlocutors. Interview feedback reflects an awareness of the importance of adopting a more diplomatic and proactive approach to engage other national team members, thereby strengthening governance and mitigating risks associated with staff turnover.
283. Overall, the project demonstrated strong leadership, coordination, and adaptive management, with well-managed teams and constructive collaboration among partners. Staff had the required capacities and were well-positioned, with smooth handovers ensuring continuity. Regular information exchange and responsive management enabled timely adjustments to challenges and financial constraints, contributing to steady progress toward project outcomes. However, while the PSC played a role in oversight, interview feedback highlighted areas for improvement, including the need for stronger strategic engagement from the PSC and a reduced reliance on a single focal point, which posed risks during institutional transitions. Diversifying communication channels and expanding stakeholder engagement were identified as key to enhancing resilience and long-term sustainability.

Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision: Satisfactory

Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

284. Stakeholder participation and cooperation in the project were generally effective, resulting in overall positive and satisfactory outcomes, while also highlighting a few areas that require further improvement.
285. Stakeholder engagement encompassed a broad spectrum of participants (all those who are affected by or could affect this project), including project partners, duty bearers, target users of outputs, and external collaborators. Implementation began with a thorough analysis of stakeholder groups. The project's governance and management structure was clearly defined, with roles and responsibilities articulated in key documents such as Sections A.3, A.6, and Annex H of the Project Approval Request. The Project Steering Committee, comprising representatives from UNEP EWAD, MESD, key ministries, research institutions, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders, provided oversight and monitored the execution. The roles of external partners were well-aligned with their capacities, and a formal stakeholder analysis ensured the inclusion of relevant actors across the government, private sector, civil society, and academia at both national and subnational levels.
286. The Project Team made strong efforts to promote stakeholder ownership of the process and outcomes. According to the Final Report, a robust knowledge-sharing approach was employed throughout the project, with the wide dissemination of reports, studies, and briefs via electronic platforms. This strategy was crucial in promoting informed and collaborative decision-making, particularly in achieving consensus on a national environmental system. The appreciation of local and traditional knowledge emerged as a key element, being incorporated into pilot projects in Benichab and Hodh el Gharbi. Strategic partnerships with national academic and scientific institutions reinforced the project's technical and institutional foundation, enhancing its legitimacy and reach. The Final Report highlighted that the project established strong partnerships with the following organizations: Université de Nouakchott Al Asriya (UNA), Institut Supérieur de l'Enseignement Technologique (ISET), Ecole Nationale de la Vulgarisation et de la Formation Agricole (ENVFA), Institut Mauritanien de Recherche Océanographique et des Pêches (IMROP), Centre National de Recherche sur les Ressources en Eau (CNRE), Centre National pour l'Élevage et la Recherche Vétérinaire (CNERV), Office Mauritanien de Recherche Géologique (OMRG), and Office National de la Météorologie (ONM).
287. According to the 2022 PIR, despite the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as restrictions on field missions and the organization of workshops, the project was able to move forward by establishing a new shared vision and a work plan aligned with national priorities. Field missions conducted in Benichab revealed increasing commitment from local stakeholders, particularly from the Benichab Economic Interest Group (G.I.E), an associative entity that represents the main community structure in the region and serves as a strategic partner in project implementation. Preliminary agreements between the project and G.I.E Benichab helped to structure mutual commitments, strengthening the execution of the action plan and promoting community representation. The 2023 PIR update confirms that stakeholders showed a high level of commitment and synergy with the project. Under Component 1, ministries and directorates appointed focal points who actively contributed to implementation and helped disseminate results within their institutions. Component 2 also saw strong engagement, with key institutions receiving training. Project partners

demonstrated dedication to ensuring sustainability and ownership of activities, especially in the demonstration projects. The Ministry of Environment maintained its effective leadership, reinforcing the project's integration into national sustainable development and inclusive growth strategies. The team provided good support for collaboration, particularly through sharing plans, pooling resources, and exchanging expertise. Communication with stakeholders was mostly effective, thanks to the promotion of PSC meetings and capacity-building workshops. However, it was occasionally irregular or poorly timed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Steering Committee, composed of key stakeholders, served as a central platform for participation and strategic guidance. Three meetings were identified and analyzed, revealing a progressive decline in attendance and engagement—from 30 participants in the first meeting to 19 in both the second and third. While the attendees of the second and third meetings remained largely consistent, they differed significantly from those present at the first meeting. According to the 2022 PIR, improvements in the composition of the Steering Committee led to stronger stakeholder engagement. These meetings primarily functioned as forums for information exchange, coordination, strategic direction, and refinement of the project design.

288. Substantial consideration was given to the sustainability of livelihoods, particularly through demonstration projects targeting vulnerable communities, such as two ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) demonstration projects in Benichab and a climate-resilient community agriculture pilot micro-project in Hodh el Gharbi. Equity of opportunity was promoted through gender-focused initiatives, including a microfinance project for women in indigenous communities, which had 62% female beneficiaries, and educational activities targeting children and schools. Human rights protection was implicitly addressed by ensuring community representation (via G.I.E. Benichab), valuing local and traditional knowledge, and integrating stakeholders into strategic decision-making processes. The actions were well-planned and timely, supported by field missions, capacity-building efforts, and institutional partnerships that reinforced the project's commitment to sustainable and inclusive development.
289. Regarding feedback from stakeholders:
 - i. On one hand, evidence indicated that stakeholder participation was highly satisfactory. The national execution of the project in Mauritania was seen as a key factor in fostering a strong sense of ownership. The project required a collaborative structure and synergy, which was successfully implemented in 2021. Despite the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic during this period, stakeholder engagement and collaboration were genuine and effective. The team actively promoted ownership among local and national governments, and there was meaningful collaboration among stakeholder groups, including joint planning, knowledge exchange, and institutional support. Examples include the involvement of universities, NGOs, and communities in trainings and project deliverables. The awareness campaign targeting decision-makers was cited as an effective action for stakeholder engagement.
 - ii. On the other hand, evidence indicated that the PSC played a formal oversight role, but its strategic engagement could have been more effective. While all relevant stakeholders were represented on the committee, their involvement appeared limited in practice. This may have constrained opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration and reduced the

level of interest from some represented sectors in the project's progress. These observations point to opportunities to strengthen institutional ownership and promote more active participation in guiding long-term sustainability.

290. Reports from the December 2023 exit meeting identified key lessons learned, including (1) the strong enthusiasm shown by stakeholders toward the initiative; (2) their voluntarism, boldness in personal initiatives, and dedication in overcoming administrative, structural, contextual, technical, and financial challenges; (3) a participatory approach ensured timely delivery, active stakeholder involvement, and more effective prioritization of needs.
291. In conclusion, the project commenced with a thorough stakeholder analysis and consistently engaged stakeholders throughout its implementation. Ownership was actively promoted through discussions, workshops, training, demonstration projects, and meetings. While communication and consultation were generally strong, they were occasionally irregular or constrained by reliance on online platforms. The project fostered meaningful collaboration through shared planning, resource pooling, and knowledge exchange. Importantly, linkages to poverty alleviation and economic livelihoods were effectively addressed through well-timed and inclusive interventions, with mechanisms in place to assess livelihood sustainability, equity of opportunities, and the protection of human rights for affected populations. However, interview feedback suggested that the Project Steering Committee's engagement was more formal than strategic, indicating room to strengthen its role in supporting institutional ownership and long-term sustainability.

Rating for Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation: Satisfactory

Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

292. The project effectively addressed inequalities, vulnerabilities, and the role of disadvantaged groups in environmental management. There is clear evidence that human rights and gender considerations were integrated into the project's design, implementation, and expenditure, with only minor limitations affecting the overall impact.
293. The project design promoted responsiveness to human rights and gender equality by:
- i. integrating sex- and age-disaggregated indicators into MEA and SDG frameworks, enabling better analysis of environmental impacts on women and girls. The project intended to establish an EIS that systematically collects both environmental and socio-economic data, including gender-specific insights. A new indicator framework would also ensure that disaggregated data by gender and social stratum are integrated into the EIS to support more inclusive and informed environmental assessments.
 - ii. Looking for gender-equitable capacity building in Mauritania through inclusive training and awareness activities.
 - iii. Promoting a microfinance initiative that targeted indigenous women to strengthen livelihoods, with lessons shared for broader policy influence.
 - iv. Committing to gender balance in its team and activities, ensuring active female participation across all components, including schools and demonstration projects.

294. Human rights considerations were addressed in Section A.4 of the Project Approval Request and further supported by the Environmental, Social, and Economic Sustainability (ESES) Principles and Safeguard Checklist (Annex M).
295. The project document did not include a gender marker rating, and no gender action plan was identified, although such a plan was not required during the project's design phase.
296. The commitments made during project design were partially realized during implementation. According to PIRs and interview feedback, regarding project implementation, interpretation of results, and project expenditure:
- i. The project demonstrated a strong commitment to gender equality and responsiveness to human rights. It played a catalytic role in promoting women's leadership and community empowerment, particularly in Benichab, where women and local communities were encouraged to initiate their own environmentally focused activities, such as agricultural monitoring. These efforts reflect a rights-based and gender-sensitive approach, creating spaces for autonomy and agency among historically underrepresented groups. A pilot microfinance initiative for women further enhanced their resilience, adaptive capacity, and environmental awareness under challenging socio-economic conditions. This was a key driver of interest, reinforcing the practical relevance of gender mainstreaming in natural resource protection and sustainable development.
 - ii. The project was designed between 2017 and 2018, a period when gender-sensitive planning was not yet a standard requirement. Although no formal gender evaluation was conducted, the project's activities aligned with global gender mainstreaming goals. It emphasized the integration of gender and decentralization approaches, engaging regional structures and local officials. Awareness was raised among partners about the importance of including women and youth in decision-making processes. The project showed progress in gender sensitivity, with efforts to include men and women more equitably and to collect sex-disaggregated data. Within the limitations of its original design, the project adapted well and implemented actions that reflect a positive evolution in integrating human rights and gender equality.
 - iii. Gender balance in meetings, trainings, and within the national project team could not be fully achieved due to persistent gender disparities in certain professional sectors in Mauritania. While women did participate in steering committees, representation was not equal. The project encouraged inclusive participation but lacked the mandate and capacity to transform deeply rooted social structures.
 - iv. Interview reflections suggest that equity should be contextualized. Meaningful participation can occur in various forms and spaces. Even if representation in formal governance bodies was limited, women's involvement in other project activities was significant. These contributions demonstrate that, despite the absence of a fully structured gender strategy, the project had a positive impact on gender inclusion.
297. Overall, the project made a significant contribution to promoting gender equality and raising awareness of human rights at the national level. Its efforts to integrate gender considerations into environmental policies and institutional frameworks, while not exhaustive, represent a positive move toward greater inclusivity. Evidence shows that gender and human rights aspects were considered

throughout project implementation, result interpretation, and resource allocation. Although structural challenges limited the full achievement of gender balance, the outcomes reflect meaningful progress within the constraints of the national context.

Rating for Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality: Satisfactory

Environmental and Social Safeguards

298. The project demonstrated a well-considered approach to risk management during both the design and implementation phases. However, certain aspects could have been strengthened to ensure closer alignment with UNEP's safeguarding standards and environmental objectives.
299. The project document includes a relevant risk analysis and mitigation measures (Section A.5). Annex M contains a completed Safeguards Checklist (UNEP ESERN – Environmental, Social and Economic Review Note), classifying the project as low risk, with no activities expected to cause significant environmental or social impacts. Given its focus on policy development and capacity building, the project aligns well with UNEP's environmental and social safeguards. No significant physical interventions were planned that could pollute, degrade ecosystems, or harm wildlife, reinforcing the appropriateness of the safeguards approach.
300. However, it is important to note that when implementing initiatives such as ecosystem-based adaptation or women-led microfinance pilots, the project should assess not only socio-economic benefits but also direct and indirect environmental impacts. Pilot projects of this nature are experimental and can serve as catalysts for sustainable practices, but they may also pose risks if not planned with a holistic perspective, if scaled up without adequate controls, or if technologies are introduced without long-term evaluation.
301. The 2022 PIR confirms that ESERN identified all potential environmental risks and outlined mitigation measures. The project was classified as low risk across all safeguard categories (SS1–SS9), including biodiversity, pollution, resettlement, indigenous peoples, labour, cultural heritage, gender equity, and economic sustainability. No mitigation plans were required.
302. Despite its low-risk classification, the 2022 and 2023 PIRs confirm that UNEP's Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework (ESSF) guiding principles—resilience, human rights, gender equality, accountability, and inclusion—were applied throughout implementation. Grievance mechanisms were established, and complaints from partners and communities were addressed in a timely manner. Special attention was given to marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as women's associations and rural indigenous communities involved in demonstration projects.
303. This review acknowledges that the project did not present major environmental or social risks, given its focus on capacity building and the absence of activities likely to pollute or degrade the environment or physically disrupt ecosystems, wildlife, or other life forms. Nonetheless, environmental and social considerations remained relevant throughout the implementation process. Greater attention could have been given to potential indirect risks associated with activities planned under pilot projects. Evidence from the 2023 PIR indicates that during the reporting period, field activities were monitored to ensure no environmental or

social harm occurred, as noted in paragraph 300. However, the reports' content¹²¹ suggests that monitoring was broad and could have been enhanced by a more systematic methodology with indicators.

304. The 2023 PIR also includes a comprehensive project management risk table and a risk log (Section 4), which documents the systematic risk monitoring carried out throughout the implementation. The risk log appropriately analyzes risks identified at CEO endorsement, as well as those noted in previous and current PIRs. A medium-level risk was recorded for the management structure, primarily due to the transition of CNOEZA, which caused misalignment of roles and responsibilities and temporarily disrupted implementation.
305. Evidence suggests that some mitigation measures outlined in Section A.5 of the CEO Approval were not fully implemented. For example, high staff turnover was assessed as a low risk, with mitigation involving the appointment of both primary and secondary focal points by the host agency to ensure continuity. In practice, government restructuring (including the transition of CNOEZA) affected implementation, and only one focal point was typically designated throughout the project. Although the project ultimately progressed well, the absence of a backup focal point reduced institutional resilience, exposed the project to avoidable risks, and represented a missed opportunity to apply the mitigation strategy more effectively.
306. The relevant risk analysis and mitigation measures (Section A.5) also could also have addressed environmental risks associated with activities planned under pilot projects, such as ecosystem-based adaptation or women-led microfinance initiatives. The project could have benefited from planning mitigation measures for these activities during implementation, such as holistic planning and long-term evaluation, as part of strategies to ensure sustainability beyond the project's lifetime.
307. Finally, it is worth noting that UNEP replaced the ESERN in 2019 with the Safeguard Risk Identification Form (SRIF) to enhance project design. While the SRIF does not apply to the project in question, as it was developed in 2018, the SRIF improves upon the ESERN by incorporating more detailed standards related to carbon footprint. For example, Section 3, Safeguard Standard 2 on "Climate Change and Disaster Risks," explicitly asks whether a project increases greenhouse gas emissions, black carbon emissions, or other drivers of climate change. However, a simple "yes" or "no" response is insufficient for effectively operationalizing UNEP's Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework. It emphasized the need for comprehensive and quantified assessments. The absence of quantified carbon emission estimates or a framework to evaluate the environmental footprint of project-supported activities, such as travel, suggests an area for improvement. Future projects could provide an opportunity to integrate quantifiable data on carbon emissions into risk assessments and consider applying emission caps at the project level. These measures would strengthen

¹²¹ UNEP / GEF / Republique Islamique de Mauritanie (2023) Rapport de Mise en Œuvre du Microprojet Pilote Communautaire D'agriculture Resiliente aux Changements Climatiques Dans la Region du Hodh el Gharbi. Project Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministere de L'environnement et du Developpement Durable (MESD).
MESD / CNOEZA (n.d.). Distribute lessons learnt and best practices of the demonstration projects among the relevant institutional key stakeholders. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministere de L'environnement et du Developpement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

UNEP's leadership in achieving net-zero emissions and promoting environmental responsibility within the UN system.

308. Overall, safeguarding considerations were addressed to a moderate level of quality and consistency in areas such as management, risk reviews, monitoring, response to issues, and reporting. Environmental and social impacts, especially on vulnerable groups, were considered to a good extent.

Rating for Environmental and Social Safeguards: Satisfactory

Country Ownership and Driven-ness

309. The engagement of government and public sector agencies in the project was generally positive and contributed to maintaining momentum toward the intended results.
310. One notable positive aspect was the representation and participation of stakeholders in the Project Steering Committee, which promoted strategic guidance for project delivery and increased the potential for embedding changes in national institutions. The Steering Committee was represented by UNEP EWAD, MESD, other relevant ministries, civil society, academia, and the private sector.
311. The project effectively fostered national ownership by actively engaging government representatives in key discussions and decision-making processes. This was achieved through inclusive consultation mechanisms (e.g., Output 1.2), capacity-building workshops, and targeted training activities that supported institutional strengthening and policy alignment (e.g, Outputs 1.4 and 1.6).
312. These efforts enabled government ministries and public sector agencies to assume a leadership role in promoting transformative change, validating project outcomes, and initiating complementary activities essential to sustaining project momentum. For instance, government representatives played an active role in training activities: a training summary report for the ALivE Planning Tool – Adaptation, Livelihoods and Ecosystems¹²²; a training of trainers initiative focused on the UNEP Live platform and GE06 as flagship knowledge management tools; a final report on the training for ecosystem-based adaptation actions¹²³, and a final report on the design and support for the creation of a demonstration and documentation center under CNOEZA¹²⁴.
313. Evidence identified in PIRs also indicates that the project promoted meaningful efforts to foster country ownership:
- i. The executing agency and relevant stakeholders demonstrated strategic leadership through the following actions:
 - The committee's composition was enhanced by the addition of new members and the issuance of a new administrative act. This measure strengthened project governance, resulting in increased stakeholder

¹²² Lafdal, M. Y. (2020) ALivE Planning Tool - Adaptation, Livelihoods and Ecosystems. Training Course Summary. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

¹²³ UNEP / GEF / République Islamique de Mauritanie (2023) Rapport de formation sur la mise en œuvre et la gestion des actions d'adaptation basées sur les écosystèmes (EBA). Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD).

¹²⁴ Abdoua, S. (2019). Design and support the creation of a demonstration and documentation center under CNOEZA responsibilities. Rapport final. Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale De L'observation Environnementale Et Des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

engagement. Ministries and directorates appointed focal points who played central roles in implementation, and stakeholders contributed to disseminating results within their respective institutions. These actions reflect a deliberate strategy to embed the project within national structures and processes, promoting alignment with country priorities and enhancing institutional commitment.

- A new vision for project activities was introduced, aligned with national priorities and the project document. This vision directly contributed to the implementation of national strategies for sustainable development (SNEDD) and accelerated growth and shared prosperity (SCAPP), reinforcing the strategic role of stakeholders in guiding project delivery.

ii. Stakeholders actively promoted structural and social changes through the following initiatives:

- Implementation of Socioeconomically Relevant Microprojects: The microprojects addressed community needs, generating high interest and participation.
- Community Mobilization and Strengthening of G.I.E Benichab: Local government support for food production led to community engagement with the associative group, fostering concrete local development actions.
- Women's Empowerment and Agricultural Innovation: Women-led initiatives enabled the production of dates and fruits for the first time in Benichab, contributing to food security, strengthening family microeconomies, and promoting social inclusion.

iii. Stakeholders demonstrated active endorsement and acceptance of project outcomes:

- Microprojects were cited by local authorities as successful experiences recommended for replication.
- Missions conducted in November 2021 and March 2022 demonstrated growing stakeholder commitment to the project's results.
- Efforts to maintain and improve the outcomes of demonstration projects indicate local ownership and long-term commitment. Local technicians and communities have actively participated in project meetings and work sessions to promote local ownership, leverage indigenous knowledge, and share best practices and lessons learned for continuous improvement.

iv. Complementary actions that did not incur additional costs were identified, including the voluntary participation of the population (approximately 170 individuals) with the support of G.I.E. Benichab, encouraged by the local government.

314. No explicit evidence was found of direct financial contributions, future budgetary provisions, or external resource mobilization. However, local government support for food production may be interpreted as an indirect in-kind contribution, through the mobilization of human and logistical resources. Interview feedback emphasized that the project's design, execution, and implementation were sufficiently robust, suggesting that further funding might not be immediately necessary to sustain ongoing studies and demonstration initiatives. Nonetheless, some stakeholders highlighted the importance of securing dedicated funding and

strengthening institutional structures to support the long-term sustainability and scalability of project outcomes.

315. Interview feedback suggested a mixed perception of country ownership. While some respondents highlighted strong collaboration, national execution, and active participation from diverse actors, others pointed to some limitations in strategic involvement. According interview feedback:
- i. The project was recognized for strengthening institutional capacities, particularly in environmental data management. Its strategic alignment with national policies and its contribution to multisectoral coordination and monitoring of the SDGs further reinforce its relevance and integration within the local context.
 - ii. The project fostered a meaningful sense of national ownership, particularly through its collaborative structure and active stakeholder engagement, even under the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. The involvement of local institutions, universities, NGOs, and communities contributed positively to this dynamic, reinforcing the project's integration into national priorities and local realities.
 - iii. At the community level, the project catalyzed grassroots initiatives, empowering women and local groups to launch their own environmentally focused activities, such as agricultural monitoring. This bottom-up engagement is a strong indicator of ownership, suggesting that the project resonated with local needs and capacities. However, concerns about the continuity of these initiatives after the project's conclusion point to limitations in sustained ownership. The uncertainty surrounding follow-up support, such as a potential World Bank initiative, highlights the need for stronger institutional anchoring and long-term planning to ensure that local efforts are maintained and scaled.
 - iv. The establishment and ongoing management of the National Observatory for the Environment and the Coastal Zone, as a direct outcome of the project, reflects a tangible example of country ownership. Its continued use of project-developed tools and products demonstrates institutional uptake and commitment, suggesting that national actors are actively sustaining and integrating project results into existing structures.
 - v. Although relevant sectors were formally represented on the Project Steering Committee, this representation did not guarantee consistent practical engagement from all members. Participation in activities and planning was limited, which may have hindered cross-sectoral collaboration and reduced interest from some stakeholders in the project's progress. Better integration of committee members could have increased engagement and fostered stronger intersectoral cooperation. Despite a politically stable and favorable context, the available institutional capacities were not fully leveraged. This highlights a gap between the committee's formal structure and active ownership, underscoring the need to strengthen institutional commitment and promote more strategic participation from national actors to support the project's long-term outcomes.
316. Finally, the transition of CNOEZA and the resulting misalignment in roles and responsibilities reveal vulnerabilities in institutional coordination. While the project succeeded in mobilizing national and local actors, strong country ownership requires stable governance structures and clear mandates to carry forward the

project's outcomes. Addressing these gaps is essential to reinforce national leadership and ensure the durability of results beyond external support.

317. Evidence shows that key government ministries and public sector agencies essential to the project played an active leadership role in advancing it from outputs to outcomes and toward intermediate states. Their contributions, such as advocating for higher-level results, endorsing project outcomes, and initiating complementary activities without additional costs, reflect a good foundation for country ownership and sustained institutional engagement. There is a noticeable lack of clear evidence demonstrating engaged strategic guidance in project implementation, as well as the provision of in-kind or financial contributions aimed at incorporating resources into future budgetary plans or mobilizing additional external funding.

Rating for Country Ownership and Driven-ness: Moderately satisfactory

Communication and Public Awareness

318. The project concept presented on the GEF6 Request for Approval emphasizes knowledge management, aiming to the strengthening of a coordinated environmental information system (Environment Live Knowledge platform), and to produce a range of knowledge products, including reports and training initiatives (Section A.8). Sections A.6 and A.8 also cite the knowledge base informing the project design, incorporating experiences from other countries and lessons learned from previous GEF projects.
319. However, the communication plan or strategy presented in the project document is limited. While the project implementation arrangements (Annex H) provide a clear overview of roles, responsibilities, and approaches for engaging stakeholders, and offer a strong foundation for developing a learning, communication, and outreach plan, the project document would have benefited from a more detailed and inclusive communication strategy, particularly to guide engagement with minority and gender groups.
320. The project document identifies the Terminal Evaluation (TE) as the primary mechanism for promoting learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing among stakeholders and executing partners. Nonetheless, additional mechanisms such as workshops, policy briefs, or online platforms could have been explicitly planned to strengthen the dissemination of results and lessons learned.
321. During implementation, the project made substantial efforts to communicate and share experiences with partners and stakeholders through PSC meetings, consultation mechanisms, capacity-building workshops, and targeted training activities. Reports from the December 2023 exit meeting identified the strengthening of stakeholder capacities as a key lesson learned from the project. This was achieved through diverse knowledge-sharing activities, including exchanges and workshops with local and regional offices, as well as experience-sharing among members of the Steering Committee, thematic groups, and consultants.
322. Evidence identified in PIRs indicated that Communication and Public Awareness initiatives played a strategic role in project implementation, acting as a catalyst for stakeholder engagement, knowledge dissemination, and behavioral change regarding environmental issues.
- i. Throughout the project lifecycle, consistent efforts were made to ensure that lessons learned and experiences were effectively communicated among project partners and stakeholders. Reports and studies were shared

broadly and disseminated. The project prioritized knowledge management as a central element in decision-making, suggesting an intention to maintain active communication channels beyond the project's duration. Nevertheless, further analysis is needed to assess the long-term viability of these mechanisms.

- ii. Active participation of local technicians and communities in meetings and working sessions was encouraged, contributing to local communication, public awareness, ownership of project actions, and the recognition of traditional knowledge.
- iii. The State of the Environment Report (SoER) was highlighted as a key milestone in the project's strategic communication efforts. The document provided clear and accessible information on major environmental challenges, public policies, and ongoing strategies, serving as a reference for national decision-makers, the Thematic Group on Environment and Sustainable Development (GTEDD), donors, and other interested parties such as NGOs. It identified critical links between environmental issues and poverty reduction, and compiled essential data to support political dialogue and cooperation on sustainable development and awareness-raising.
- iv. Public awareness activities aimed to influence civil society's attitudes and behaviors toward environmental protection, particularly those under Output 2.3 (Public environmental education for sustainable development and awareness raising activities focused on climate change, biodiversity, and land degradation). These included environmental education and awareness activities in schools conducted by the local NGO *Action Carbone Solidaire*¹²⁵; the development of a national strategy to integrate environmental education into school curricula¹²⁶; and a study on the use of mass media and communication tools for environmental awareness, which informed the design and dissemination of awareness materials such as posters and resources used during national environmental events¹²⁷.

323. Evidence indicated that key audiences were generally well-informed about the project's core messages. The project demonstrated a clear commitment to the inclusion of marginalized groups and gender considerations. Broader community and civil society engagement was notably strengthened through demonstration projects that addressed the specific needs of these groups. Communication activities were frequent and well-targeted, fostering collaboration and facilitating knowledge dissemination. However, the absence of robust feedback mechanisms limited the project's ability to assess the effectiveness of its communication efforts. For example, only one workshop were identified as having conducted a feedback survey to evaluate the outcomes of communication initiatives¹²⁸.

¹²⁵ Action Carbone Solidaire (n.d). Conception et mise en œuvre d'une activité de sensibilisation et d'éducation environnementale à petite échelle au niveau scolaire primaire et secondaire. Rapport final. Project Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale de L'observation Environnementale et des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

¹²⁶ MESD / CNOEZA (2019) Appui au Ministère de l'Éducation dans l'intégration de l'éducation environnementale dans les curricula scolaires et la préparation d'une stratégie nationale. Rapport final. Project Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD) / Cellule Nationale de L'observation Environnementale et des Zones Arides (CNOEZA).

¹²⁷ CEM Consultants (2022) Etude pour la conception et la diffusion de produits de sensibilisation à la surveillance environnementale. Rapport provisoire. Rapport final. Project Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania (CCCD MAU). Ministère de L'environnement et du Développement Durable (MESD).

¹²⁸ UNEP / GEF / République Islamique de Mauritanie (2023) Rapport de formation sur la mise en œuvre et la gestion des actions d'adaptation basées sur les écosystèmes (EBA). Project "Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and

Furthermore, there was no evidence that communication methods were adequately tailored to the specific needs of marginalized and gender groups. This presents an opportunity for future initiatives to improve inclusivity through the development of targeted communication strategies and feedback mechanisms designed for diverse audiences.

324. Communication efforts were sufficiently funded throughout the project. However, they were not systematically monitored for impact. Much of the project's monitoring and reporting system focused on process indicators, such as the timely submission of reports, rather than outcome-based metrics. This limited the ability to evaluate progress toward broader goals, including improvements in the national environmental knowledge system, institutional coordination, and technical capacity development (see Monitoring and Reporting Section).
325. Stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the project's communication and public awareness efforts. Feedback highlighted that the communication strategy was effective, with activities carried out in schools, universities, and communities. Environmental dates such as World Environment Day and Desertification Day were celebrated, serving as key moments to raise awareness and engage diverse audiences. These initiatives fostered learning and the exchange of experiences among partners and stakeholders, contributing to a more informed and collaborative environment. Actions implemented in schools were particularly praised for promoting environmental knowledge and were recognized as a good practice within the scope of the project.
326. Capacity-building activities focused on technical training for the use of the EIS and knowledge management. Efforts were effective in generating results beyond immediate outputs. Communication activities slowed during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, but this had only a partial impact on the consistency and effectiveness of stakeholder engagement.
327. Overall, evidence indicates that key audiences driving the desired change were aware of the project's main messages. Communication activities were well-targeted, frequent, interactive, and responsive to feedback; however, there was no regular monitoring to assess their impact. The efforts were adequately budgeted and partially effective in driving change beyond outputs. Substantial experience sharing took place among project partners and stakeholders. Finally, a communication plan/strategy was developed and implemented, although they were somewhat limited in scope.

Rating for Communication and Public Awareness: Satisfactory

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance: Satisfactory

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions¹²⁹

328. The GEF-funded CCCD project “Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania” made substantial progress in enhancing institutional capacity and environmental data management, despite operating in an evolving institutional context. One of the project’s most notable achievements was the transition from paper-based records to a cloud-based EIS, hosted by the DPCS (paras. 151 and 253). This shift represents a major advancement in data accessibility and integration. The system is now operational and supported by the creation of the National Observatory for the Environment and the Coastal Zone (para. 155ii and 170i). The project’s outcomes were complemented by capacity-building efforts, studies, demonstration projects, engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, from government ministries to local communities, and a robust knowledge-sharing approach (para. 152, 195, 238i, and 286).
329. The project fostered inter-institutional coordination by engaging ministries, academic institutions, civil society, and local communities under a shared environmental governance framework (para. 251). This inclusive approach enabled the development of consensual environmental indicators and supported the integration of MEA and SDG principles into national planning (para. 238i, 286, and 287). Demonstration projects, such as ecosystem-based adaptation initiatives and women-led microfinance pilots, strengthened local ownership and showcased practical applications of environmental conventions, valuing local and traditional knowledge (para. 119 and 288). The participatory validation of the sustainability strategy, the adoption of a “train-the-trainers” approach, and the use of localized training models further reinforced institutional relevance and community empowerment (para. 195, 236i, and 245).
330. However, several challenges limited the project’s overall effectiveness and sustainability. The dissolution of CNOEZA and subsequent transition to MESD disrupted institutional continuity and created difficulties in clearly defining and aligning roles and responsibilities (para. 115 and 116). While the project successfully delivered a proposal and secured agreement on an Environmental Information Charter, this document remains non-binding and does not establish enforceable obligations. As such, its influence on actual data-sharing practices and institutional behavior is limited (para. 130). To ensure institutional sustainability and operational effectiveness, the Charter should be complemented by other formal mechanisms, such as MoUs and legal mandates to fully embedding the EIS within national decision-making structures over the long term (para. 257i, 258, 258, and 259). Fragmented data ecosystems, overlapping institutional responsibilities, and limited interministerial coordination can pose risks to data consistency and system legitimacy (para. 167iv and 257ii).
331. The COVID-19 pandemic caused delays, requiring two project extensions and adjustments to implementation strategies (para. 109 and 190i). Restrictions on in-person engagement and field activities were partially mitigated by hybrid work models and remote coordination (para. 111v and 191). However, limited digital infrastructure constrained stakeholder participation, and the lack of a centralized

¹²⁹ The main conclusions presented are based on the assessment, guided by two strategic questions developed collaboratively with the project manager and team during the data analysis phase. These questions were formulated in response to the absence of predefined evaluation questions in the Terms of Reference (ToR) and were designed to reflect UNEP’s interests and align with the project’s expected contributions.

training agenda following institutional transitions affected the continuity of capacity-building efforts (para. 157iii). The project's reliance on a single focal point also exposed vulnerabilities during leadership changes (para. 282vi).

332. In response to the first strategic question—**what approaches were most effective in encouraging national institutions to use and maintain the EIS**¹³⁰—the project demonstrated that technical solutions must be complemented by institutional integration and inclusive engagement. Key success factors included positioning the EIS within influential government bodies such as DPCS and the National Observatory for the Environment and the Coastal Zone (para. 151, 155ii, 170i), promoting inclusive stakeholder engagement and the integration of traditional knowledge (para. 238i, 286, and 287). Structured coordination between financial and operational teams improves oversight, responsiveness, and strategic alignment (para. 188 and 282iv). Tailored capacity-building strategies and localized approach, such as the “train-the-trainers” model and community-driven demonstration projects helped build local capacity and autonomy (para. 195 and 238i). UNEP eventual in-country presence was key to sustaining coordination and institutional engagement (paras. 111iv and 277).
333. In response to the second strategic question—**how future projects can strengthen adaptive management in fragile or complex contexts**¹³¹—the project could have benefited from a comprehensive legal and policy foundation to support the establishment and long-term integration of the EIS. Formalizing data-sharing agreements and embedding the system within legal frameworks aligned with MEA obligations would have strengthened institutionalization (paras. 236 and 260). The project underscored the value of strong governance mechanisms and consistent engagement of the Steering Committee to support strategic oversight and institutional continuity. (paras. 269, 270, 274, 282v and 290). The direct relationship between UNEP and the local partners facilitated operational efficiency. Diversifying interlocutors and reducing reliance on single points of contact can enhance institutional resilience and continuity (paras. 277 and 282iv). Combining national-level training with locally driven initiatives enhances technical capacity and fosters inclusive environmental governance (para. 195). Similarly, designing, implementing, and monitoring robust, inclusive, and context-specific communication strategies is critical for promoting stakeholder engagement, facilitating knowledge exchange, and driving behavioural change (para. 322). However, these activities must be systematically monitored and evaluated to ensure their continued relevance and long-term impact (paras. 323 and 324). Finally, maintaining effective implementation in the face of external disruptions and institutional shifts requires a blend of flexible management practices, integrated remote and on-site work strategies, and a well-planned local presence. The team adapted to institutional disruptions and pandemic-related constraints by adjusting timelines, shifting to virtual platforms, and maintaining stakeholder communication (paras. 109, 111v, and 277).
334. The project also revealed limitations in its monitoring framework. While regular reporting and oversight mechanisms were in place (para. 224), many indicators were process-oriented and lacked specificity, limiting the ability to demonstrate institutional change and long-term impact (para. 205, 207, and 220). Future projects should incorporate outcome-level indicators, robust baseline data,

¹³⁰ Refers to the Strategic Question: What approaches were most effective in encouraging national institutions to use and maintain the Environmental Information System (EIS), especially in challenging contexts?

¹³¹ Refers to the Strategic Question: How can future projects strengthen adaptive management to respond more effectively to political, security, and institutional disruptions during implementation in fragile or complex contexts?

and a clear Theory of Change to guide adaptive management and strategic learning (para. 104, 159, and 209).

335. Gender considerations were partially integrated into project activities, with notable successes such as the women-led microfinance pilot in Benichab (para. 169 and 296i). However, the absence of a gender action plan and gender-specific indicators in the logical framework constrained the ability to monitor inclusiveness and transformative impact (para. 222 and 295). Future initiatives should adopt systematic gender mainstreaming approaches, including early gender analysis, and disaggregated data collection.
336. In conclusion, the project delivered a technically sound and strategically relevant outcome by establishing the foundation for improved environmental governance in Mauritania. Its achievements in system development, stakeholder engagement, and capacity-building are commendable. However, sustaining and scaling these gains will require stronger institutional commitment, formalized governance mechanisms, and adaptive strategies that align technical tools with political and operational realities.

B. Summary of project findings and ratings

337. The overall assessment of the project was rated as Satisfactory, based on the 'weightings table for review criteria rating' following the Evaluation Office of UNEP guidelines. The project performed well in areas such as Strategic Relevance, Quality of Project Design, Effectiveness, Financial Management, Monitoring and Reporting, and Factors affecting performance. It received moderate ratings in Sustainability and Efficiency. The table below summarizes the ratings and key findings discussed in Chapter V.

UNEP Evaluation Office Validation of Performance Ratings:

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

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

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

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

Table 7: Summary of project findings and ratings¹³²

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
Strategic Relevance		HS	The rating is validated	HS
1. Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and strategic priorities	The project demonstrated strong alignment with UNEP's MTS for 2018–2021 and 2022–2025, as well as its PoWs, by contributing to key subprogrammes and expected accomplishments related to environmental governance, data accessibility, and science-policy integration. It supported national and regional reporting systems, enhanced institutional capacities, and promoted evidence-based policymaking through open environmental data and participatory processes. The project also contributed to climate action, sustainable ecosystem management, and transparency under the Paris Agreement. While not explicitly referencing the Bali Strategic Plan or South-South Cooperation, it supported their objectives through capacity building and regional knowledge exchange. Overall, the project's strategies and outcomes were well-aligned with UNEP's mandate and strategic priorities across multiple planning cycles.	HS	The rating is validated	HS
2. Alignment to Donor/Partner strategic priorities	The project demonstrates strong alignment with GEF strategic priorities, national development goals, and the SDGs by tackling systemic barriers to implementing multilateral environmental agreements and strengthening institutional capacities for integrated environmental governance. It addresses priority needs identified in assessments such as the NCSA and GEF Scorecard and supports GEF's CCCD-1 and CCCD-3 objectives by integrating environmental considerations into monitoring systems and national policy frameworks. The project contributes to both GEF-6 and GEF-7 indicators, including tracking gender-disaggregated beneficiaries, and has received positive stakeholder feedback confirming its alignment with donor priorities. Knowledge-sharing events in 2023 further enhanced regional collaboration and stakeholder engagement.	HS	The rating is validated	HS

¹³² Most criteria will be rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated, also on a six-point scale, from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU).

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	The project was well aligned with global, regional, and national priorities, including SDGs 13, 15, 16, and 17, and Mauritania's strategic frameworks such as the NSDS, NEAP, SCAPP, NAPA, and NCSA. It supported key MEAs including the UNCCD, CBD, UNFCCC, and the Paris Agreement, and contributed to Strategic Priority 1 of Mauritania's UNDAF/UNDSF, focused on inclusive and sustainable growth. Stakeholder feedback confirmed its relevance to national environmental commitments and multisectoral coordination. While not explicitly stated, the project also supported the UN's "Leave No One Behind" principle by promoting inclusive and equitable environmental governance in a least-developed country context.	HS	The rating is validated	HS
4. Complementarity with relevant existing interventions/coherence	The project's design demonstrated full complementarity with other ongoing and planned initiatives, avoiding duplication and actively engaging with UNEP and partner interventions. During implementation, adaptive management facilitated collaboration with overlapping efforts, notably with GIZ, and partnerships with universities and local communities enhanced training and stakeholder engagement. Although the design did not fully anticipate the benefits of collaboration, the project showed awareness to the broader intervention landscape.	S	The rating is validated	HS
Quality of Project Design	The project demonstrated strong performance in strategic relevance, logical framework and monitoring, governance and supervision, and financial planning. However, areas such as learning, communication, outreach, sustainability, replication, and catalytic effects require further development. The design would have been strengthened by including a ToC diagram, clearly defining the intermediate state and long-term impact, and incorporating a sustainability strategy and exit plan. Stakeholder engagement during preparation was limited, and although gender-responsive elements were present, a formal gender analysis was missing. Key opportunities for improvement include developing a comprehensive communication plan, enhancing stakeholder engagement and refining pathways for long-term impact and sustainability.	S	The rating is validated	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
Nature of External Context	The project's implementation was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused delays and required two timeline extensions. Despite that, the project adapted by prioritizing activities benefiting vulnerable communities, and maintaining progress on tasks that could be conducted virtually. Field-based activities, workshops, and stakeholder engagement were heavily disrupted, and the dissolution of CNOEZA, further complicated implementation and weakened ownership. Nonetheless, the project team demonstrated resilience, revising work plans and strengthening governance structures. Notably, two microprojects provided critical socioeconomic support during the crisis, helping maintain community cohesion and food security.	MU	The rating is validated	MU
Effectiveness		S	The rating is validated	S
1. Availability of outputs	All 10 outputs were completed and contributed to the intended outcomes, particularly strengthening environmental governance through integrated information systems and policy coordination. Key achievements included the development of a national State of the Environment Report, GIS-based databases, a cloud-based digital system, and capacity-building initiatives with strong community and female leadership. While the quality and utility of outputs were generally satisfactory, some tools required further refinement for full governmental uptake. Delays in finalizing the Environmental Information System limited time for integration and training, and challenges such as data fragmentation, geographic constraints, and language barriers affected implementation. Nonetheless, stakeholder feedback was positive, and the project remained well-aligned with its objectives.	S	The rating is validated	S
2. Achievement of project outcomes	According to project indicators, the two outcomes were only partially achieved, with key outputs delivered but not fully transitioned into sustained institutional use. While foundational structures such as the EIS, capacity-building efforts, and coordination mechanisms were established, delays and institutional changes limited their full integration. By 2023, approximately 80% of planned actions were successfully completed, and stakeholder feedback confirmed the relevance and usefulness of the outputs. Key assumptions and drivers were only partially upheld. Gender inclusion was promoted through community-led initiatives, but broader engagement with minority groups remained limited.	MS	The rating is validated	MS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Likelihood of impact	The project's impact is rated as "Likely," with essential foundations in place and key aspects of the intermediate state achieved, such as the operational EIS, strengthened institutional capacities, and improved coordination for MEA and SDG reporting. While assumptions and drivers were only partially upheld, they remain valid for continued progress toward long-term impact. Stakeholder feedback confirmed the project's relevance and strategic value, particularly in supporting informed decision-making and sustainable land management. No significant unintended negative effects were reported, and the project's flexible design and positive reception suggest strong potential for replication and resource mobilization. Sustained impact will depend on continued institutional commitment, integration of tools into routine operations, and strategic follow-up to ensure long-term sustainability and inclusive engagement.	L	The rating is validated	L
Financial Management		HS	The rating is validated	HS
1. Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures	The project demonstrated strong financial management throughout its implementation, consistently adhering to UNEP's financial policies and standards. All disbursements and expenditures were timely and aligned with the approved budget. Only no-cost extensions to accommodate delays caused by COVID-19 and institutional restructuring. Quarterly and annual financial reports were submitted regularly, reflecting transparency and accountability. The project used 100% of its allocated resources, passed audits without issues, and maintained proactive communication with UNEP regarding financial matters.	HS	The rating is validated	HS
2. Completeness of project financial information	The project maintained complete, accurate, and accessible financial documentation throughout its implementation, demonstrating strong adherence to UNEP's financial management standards. Co-financing and expenditures were clearly presented and tracked, with quarterly and annual reports submitted consistently from 2018 to 2023. Audit reports confirmed proper disbursement and use of funds, and no formal budget revisions were required despite two no-cost extensions. Legal agreements and amendments were properly documented, and financial records were well-organized and transparent. Interview feedback reinforced the project's solid financial oversight, highlighting timely reporting, full budget utilization, and proactive communication.	HS	The rating is validated	HS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Communication between finance and project management staff	The project demonstrated exemplary coordination between the PM, TM, and FMO, which significantly contributed to effective delivery and adaptive management. Regular meetings, direct access to stakeholders, and a proactive problem-solving approach ensured smooth implementation and strong alignment between financial and operational teams. Co-location of staff enabled informal and efficient communication, while structured weekly and quarterly meetings supported timely issue resolution and progress tracking. Interview feedback confirmed that financial and project management teams maintained clear awareness of the project's status, jointly reviewed reports, and responded promptly to challenges. This high level of collaboration and responsiveness was key to delivering the project within budget and on schedule.	HS	This sub-criterion has been discontinued (ref. Tool#15 https://communities.unep.org/spaces/EOU/pages/70320228/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS)	Not rated
Efficiency	The project underwent two well-justified no-cost extensions totaling 19 months—one due to the COVID-19 pandemic and institutional restructuring, and another to organize a closure workshop. The initial 12-month extension was part of a broader GEF policy response and not counted as an individual project decision. Despite these delays, the project delivered its outputs and outcomes within the revised timeline, demonstrating strong efficiency in resource use, adaptive management, and institutional coordination. Cost-effective strategies such as remote implementation, leveraging existing systems, and strategic partnerships, particularly with GIZ, helped maintain momentum and minimize operational costs. While some challenges, including fragmented data and logistical constraints, affected efficiency, the project achieved full budget utilization and was recognized for its high output delivery relative to its modest resources. The use of train-the-trainers models and community-led microfinance initiatives further enhanced impact and sustainability, positioning the project as a strong example of efficient implementation in a complex context.	MS	The rating is validated	MS
Monitoring and Reporting		S	The rating is validated	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
1. Monitoring design and budgeting	The M&R plan adopted a results-based management approach with SMART indicators and a participatory framework, as outlined in Annex G of the project document. It included clearly defined responsibilities, a dedicated budget, and scheduled mid-term and terminal evaluations led by UNEP. It tracked 37 indicators across outputs, outcomes, and impact, supported by clear roles, a dedicated budget, and regular reporting. However, the logical framework showed limitations, with a predominance of process-focused indicators that measured activity delivery rather than long-term change. While some indicators showed potential for impact, others lacked specificity and objective criteria, limiting their effectiveness in assessing institutional transformation and policy integration. The GEF Core Indicators were well-formulated and aligned with GEF-6 goals, but the absence of gender-specific indicators and limited focus on outcome-level change highlighted areas for improvement. Nonetheless, the M&R system was maintained throughout implementation, with strong ownership from the project team, enabling consistent progress tracking and responsive management.	MS	This sub-criterion has been discontinued (ref. Tool#15 https://communities.unep.org/spaces/EOU/pages/70320228/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS)	Not rated
2. Monitoring of project implementation	The monitoring system implemented during the project was generally functional and supported timely tracking of outputs and progress toward objectives, with a structured plan that included data collection methods, reporting frequencies, and allocated resources. While the system enabled adaptive management and informed decision-making, its effectiveness was limited by broad baseline definitions, a reliance on process-focused indicators, and the absence of gender-specific or inclusion-focused metrics. The Capacity Development Scorecard was included but not updated during implementation, and final reporting lacked detail on actual changes achieved. Despite these gaps, the project team demonstrated strong ownership of the monitoring process, using mechanisms like workshops and PSC meetings to gather feedback and adjust strategies. The team's adaptive response to unforeseen challenges, such as the passing of the mid-term review consultant, further highlighted its commitment to learning and accountability.	S	The rating is adjusted to 'Moderately Satisfactory' due to gaps in baseline data, and absence of disaggregated data (Para 226). This is in line with the Evaluation Office's guidance provided in the Review Criteria Ratings Matrix.	MS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Project reporting	The project demonstrated robust and consistent documentation of progress throughout its lifecycle (2018–2023), with comprehensive reporting that included inception, financial, technical, and implementation reviews, as well as gender-sensitive data and SDG contributions. Reports were submitted regularly and aligned with donor requirements, supported by UNEP's proactive oversight, training, and communication with MESD's PMU leadership. The PSC met three times, and reporting was facilitated through systems like Umoja and PIMS, ensuring transparency and accountability. While monitoring was thorough, limitations in indicator specificity affected the ability to fully capture outcome-level impacts, and data disaggregation by vulnerable groups was only partially achieved.	S	The rating is validated	S
Sustainability		ML	The rating is validated	ML
1. Socio-political sustainability	The sustainability of the projects outcomes is closely tied to political will, stakeholder ownership, and institutional integration. The project fostered inclusive engagement through capacity-building, cross-sectoral collaboration, and alignment with MEAs and SDGs, while initiatives like women-led microfinance pilots in Inchiri demonstrated how global frameworks can be locally adapted to build trust and empower communities. The development of an EIS emphasized accessibility and responsiveness to evolving priorities, helping position it as a relevant and dynamic tool. A sustainability strategy was embedded from the project design, validated through stakeholder consultations, and supported by ongoing training and community-driven activities. The strategy promotes inclusive growth through sustainable economic activities and community participation but faces challenges from urban pressure, behavioral dependency, and climate vulnerability. Risks to long-term viability remain, including moderate levels of stakeholder ownership, institutional transitions, and limited clarity around follow-up initiatives. While demonstration projects continue and signs of national commitment persist, further integration into planning processes, clearer institutional responsibilities, and sustained advocacy are needed to ensure the project's outputs remain impactful, resilient, and politically supported over time.	ML	The rating is validated	ML

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
2. Financial sustainability	The long-term sustainability of the project is dependent on future funding to support critical activities such as EIS maintenance, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement. While the project developed a sustainability strategy, including cost-saving measures, institutional commitments, and proposals for diversified funding, gaps remain in contingency planning and resource mobilization. The strategy introduces innovative financing mechanisms and long-term cost internalization yet relies heavily on external resources and lacks guarantees for revenue sustainability. The MESD's commitment to financing the portal domain and ongoing partner support are encouraging, but the absence of detailed financial mechanisms and limited prioritization of environmental issues in national budgets pose risks. Interviews and reports suggest that while some components require minimal resources, maintaining the EIS and governance structures demands consistent annual budgets and dedicated personnel. Demonstrating the economic and strategic value of environmental data could help strengthen political will and secure long-term investment. Without predictable funding and institutional support, the project risks reduced functionality and discontinuity, underscoring the need for a second phase or structured follow-up to consolidate gains and ensure lasting impact.	ML	The rating is validated	ML

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Institutional sustainability	The institutional sustainability of the project was supported by its integration into national governance structures, notably through the anchoring of the PMU within MESD and the transfer of the EIS to the ministry's IT team. These efforts were reinforced by capacity-building initiatives, formal documentation, and a national sustainability strategy. Collaborative mechanisms, including interministerial coordination and links to other GEF-funded initiatives, promoted cross-sectoral engagement and institutional ownership. Despite disruptions caused by the dissolution of CNOEZA, the project maintained the momentum, reflecting growing institutional resilience. However, challenges persist due to fragmented data, unclear institutional roles, and limited formal agreements. Systemic uptake of the EIS requires stronger legal frameworks, formal mandates, and MoUs to ensure continuity. The governance structure promoted by the sustainability strategy is well-defined and inclusive, but risks include overlapping mandates, complex reforms, and limited technical and human capacity for effective implementation. Reframing the EIS as a permanent national function, rather than a time-bound project, is essential for long-term integration. The continued use of project outputs by institutions such as the National Observatory for the Environment and Coastal Zone demonstrates sustained commitment and potential for lasting impact. Without predictable institutional support, stable personnel, and integration into national planning instruments, the system risks diminished legitimacy and operational effectiveness.	ML	The rating is validated	ML
Factors Affecting Performance		S	The rating is validated	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
1. Preparation and readiness	The period between project approval and the first disbursement (March–July 2018) was under six months and marked by efficient preparatory actions that laid a strong foundation for implementation. Key activities, including the finalization of the PCA between UNEP and MESD, stakeholder consultations, a costed annual work plan, a detailed procurement plan, and the establishment of a well-represented Steering Committee, were completed on time. The project was anchored within MESD through the creation of a Project Management Unit and supported by prompt staffing mobilization. The inception workshop officially launched the project and introduced institutional mechanisms such as CNOEZA and the ROEZA coordination panel. Environmental and social safeguards were assessed, and partner roles were confirmed through a stakeholder analysis. While no major design changes occurred post-approval, PRC recommendations were addressed, and governance structures were put in place, ensuring readiness for implementation despite limited evidence of stakeholder involvement in the ESS process.	S	This sub-criterion has been discontinued (ref. Tool#15 https://communities.unep.org/spaces/EOU/pages/70320228/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS)	Not rated
2. Quality of project management and supervision	The project demonstrated strong leadership, coordination, and adaptive management throughout implementation, supported by a technically competent and responsive team. The project manager's early familiarity with UNEP and GEF procedures facilitated smooth collaboration, while leadership transitions within MESD were managed effectively despite language and training challenges. Communication between UNEP, TM, PM, and the project team was inclusive and fluid, enabling timely decision-making and operational continuity. However, strategic engagement from the PSC was limited, and reliance on a single focal point exposed vulnerabilities during institutional transitions. To enhance resilience and long-term sustainability, diversifying communication channels and broadening stakeholder engagement were identified as key priorities.	S	The rating is validated	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
2.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:	UNEP, as the Implementing Agency, played a central role in ensuring strategic oversight, compliance with GEF procedures, and timely project mobilization. It actively engaged MESD during the drafting of the PCA, facilitated joint planning and inception workshops, and supported the establishment of key governance structures such as the PSC and PMU. UNEP also ensured the integration of environmental and social safeguards, coordinated stakeholder consultations, and oversaw the development of costed work plans and procurement strategies. Its consistent follow-up and technical guidance helped maintain project momentum, during the inception phase and institutional changes, reinforcing institutional anchoring. UNEP's leadership contributed to effective coordination and readiness for implementation, although some limitations in stakeholder involvement during safeguards assessments were noted.	S	The rating is validated	S
2.2 Partners/Executing Agency:	MESD, as the Executing Agency, was responsible for operationalizing the project, leading the implementation of activities, managing resources, and coordinating national stakeholders. It played a key role in establishing the PMU, the PSC, and institutional mechanisms such as CNOEZA and the ROEZA coordination panel. MESD ensured timely staffing mobilization, facilitated workshops, and launched initial activities aligned with the project's objectives. Despite challenges such as the dissolution of CNOEZA and limited Steering Committee engagement, MESD maintained leadership and continuity, demonstrating resilience and commitment. However, gaps in interministerial coordination and data governance frameworks highlight the need for stronger institutional planning and clearer mandates to sustain long-term impact.	S	The rating is validated	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	The project demonstrated a well-structured and inclusive approach to stakeholder participation, beginning with a comprehensive stakeholder analysis and clearly defined governance mechanisms. Engagement efforts included formal structures such as the PSC and informal consultations, fostering collaboration among government bodies, civil society, academia, and local communities. The project promoted ownership through workshops, training, demonstration projects, and strategic partnerships with national institutions, while also integrating traditional knowledge into local initiatives. Communication and coordination were generally effective, though occasionally constrained during the COVID-19 pandemic. Linkages to poverty alleviation and livelihoods were addressed through gender-focused and ecosystem-based interventions, with mechanisms in place to promote equity and community representation. However, the Steering Committee's role remained more formal than strategic, indicating room to strengthen institutional ownership and cross-sectoral engagement to support long-term sustainability.	S	The rating is validated	S
4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	The project demonstrated a generally positive performance in promoting inclusive stakeholder participation and addressing equity considerations. The project actively engaged disadvantaged groups through gender-focused initiatives, community-based demonstration projects, and educational activities targeting women, children, and indigenous populations. While gender and human rights considerations were not embedded in a fully systematic or transformative framework, they were integrated into both the design and implementation phases. Mechanisms such as community representation via G.I.E Benichab and the incorporation of traditional knowledge helped reinforce equity and local ownership. The project also made meaningful progress in promoting female engagement, with 62% female beneficiaries in microfinance initiatives. However, gaps remained in monitoring and targeted inclusion, as there was no formal gender action plan and limited capacity within the M&E system to track gender-related outcomes. Despite these limitations, the project showed strong commitment to inclusive development and laid a foundation for continued progress toward equity, sustainability, and institutional awareness.	S	The rating is validated	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
5. Environmental and social safeguards	The project adopted a sound approach to risk management and was classified as low risk under UNEP's safeguards, given its focus on policy development and capacity building rather than physical interventions. Safeguard principles, grievance mechanisms, and attention to vulnerable groups were applied throughout implementation, and monitoring confirmed no significant environmental or social harm. However, some mitigation measures, such as appointing backup focal points and systematically addressing potential indirect risks from pilot projects, could have been better implemented. Monitoring of pilot activities was broad and could have been strengthened through a systematic M&E framework with indicators. Future projects involving similar field activities could improve risk management by integrating mitigation measures such as holistic planning and long-term evaluation to ensure sustainability beyond the project's lifetime.	S	The rating is validated	S
6. Country ownership and driven-ness	The project demonstrated strong engagement and collaboration across government ministries, public sector agencies, civil society, academia, and the private sector, fostering national ownership and strategic alignment with national priorities. Inclusive consultations, capacity-building workshops, and targeted training empowered stakeholders to lead transformative change and embed project outcomes within institutional frameworks. Tangible impacts emerged through microprojects (e.g., women-led agricultural initiatives) and the establishment of the National Observatory for the Environment and the Coastal Zone, which reinforced grassroots empowerment and multisectoral coordination. The project catalysed structural and social changes and advanced the integration of environmental data management into national systems. However, constraints such as inconsistent PSC engagement and coordination gaps were noted. Additionally, concerns around the sustainability of local initiatives and the need for stronger institutional anchoring underscore the importance of long-term planning to ensure durable results beyond external support.	MS	The rating is validated	MS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
7. Communication and public awareness	The project placed strong emphasis on knowledge management and strategic communication, aiming to strengthen a coordinated environmental information system and disseminate knowledge products. While the initial project design drew on lessons from previous GEF initiatives, the communication strategy outlined in the documentation was limited, particularly regarding engagement with marginalized and gender groups. Throughout implementation, communication and public awareness efforts were actively pursued through stakeholder meetings, workshops, training, and targeted outreach activities, contributing to behavioral change and stakeholder engagement. Initiatives such as the State of the Environment Report and environmental education in schools were well-received and recognized as good practices. Despite adequate funding and frequent activities, the absence of robust feedback mechanisms and outcome-based monitoring limited the ability to assess impact and inclusivity. Stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the communication efforts, though future initiatives could benefit from more tailored strategies and systematic evaluation to enhance long-term effectiveness and reach.	S	The rating is validated	S
Overall Project Performance Rating		S	The rating is validated	S

C. Lessons learned

Lesson Learned #1:	Institutional Sustainability of the Environmental Information System Requires Legal Mandates, Clear Roles, and Long-Term Capacity Strategies
Context/comment:	The project demonstrated that the sustainability and effective use of EIS depend not only on technical achievements but also on institutional clarity, legal frameworks, and long-term capacity-building. While the project successfully made available a cloud-based EIS hosted by the DPCS (paras. 151, 155ii, and 253), and achieved strong institutional uptake through the creation of the National Observatory for the Environment and the Coastal Zone (para. 170i), challenges remain regarding the system's long-term integration into national decision-making structures. The lack of clearly defined institutional mandates and responsibilities poses risks to data consistency and credibility (para. 257i). Without formal agreements or legal frameworks, sustaining the EIS as a national platform for environmental reporting and planning is difficult. Fragmented data, overlapping mandates, and limited interministerial coordination can undermine the system's legitimacy and operational continuity (para. 167, 257i, 258, 258, and 259). Under activity 1.2.5, the project delivered a proposal and agreement on an Environmental Information Charter among the involved institutional stakeholders. This Charter represents an important institutional milestone, signalling commitment to shared principles and responsibilities. It also includes terms of reference for stocktaking and mapping of existing databases and GIS systems managed by ministries and public bodies involved in environmental and natural resource management (para. 130). However, as a non-binding document, the Charter does not establish enforceable obligations, and its influence on actual data-sharing practices and institutional behaviour remains limited. To ensure institutional sustainability and operational effectiveness, the Charter must be complemented by formal mechanisms, such as MoUs and legal mandates, that translate shared principles into stronger operational enforceable commitments. The project's success in mobilizing and establishing a directorate for data and statistics (para. 151) illustrates the importance of positioning data governance within influential government bodies. However, limited institutional capacity and influence (para. 167ii) highlight the need to embed data management into long-term strategies supported by human resource planning and interministerial collaboration (para. 257ii). The UNEP GEF CCCD Knowledge Exchange Session emphasized that branding the EIS as a time-bound "project" may weaken its institutional sustainability. Reframing it as a permanent national function embedded in government structures is essential to foster ownership and continuity (para. 260). Participants also stressed the importance of formal agreements (e.g., MoUs) and legal mandates to ensure regular data provision and system legitimacy (para. 258). Despite challenges due to Mauritania's vast geography and fragmented data (para. 126ii, 171, and 195), the project adopted efficient practices such as the "train-the-trainers" model to mitigate risks related to staff turnover and ensure knowledge dissemination (para. 195, and 258). These efforts must be institutionalized to avoid reliance on external support and ensure long-term system functionality. Evidence from the exit meeting indicated that project studies uncovered major national, institutional, and technical weaknesses in environmental management, reinforcing the need for targeted, data-driven interventions and ongoing assessments to inform policy (para. 155v). This lesson is related to Conclusion 1 and Conclusion 2 (para. 332 and 333).

Lesson Learned #2:	Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement and Integration of Traditional Knowledge Strengthen Ownership and Sustainability in Environmental Governance
Context/comment:	The project demonstrated that inclusive stakeholder engagement and the integration of traditional knowledge are essential for fostering ownership, legitimacy, and long-term sustainability of environmental initiatives. Involving a wide range of actors, from government ministries and academic institutions to local communities and women-led groups, enabled the project to align with national priorities while remaining responsive to local realities (para. 238i, 286, and 287). As discussed during the exit meeting, the enthusiasm showed by stakeholders, including public institutions, civil society, and technical partners, was identified as a decisive factor in the project's success (paras. 167 and 290). This engagement highlighted the importance of mobilization and communication strategies that recognize the role of local actors and foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility. It was also noted that the adoption of a participatory approach throughout the project significantly contributed to meeting deadlines and achieving targets (paras. 157i, 236, and 290). The active involvement of beneficiaries and partners in prioritizing and implementing actions led to greater efficiency, stronger ownership of results, and better alignment with the real needs of the territory. Community-based demonstration projects, such as the ecosystem-based adaptation initiatives in Benichab and Hodh el Gharbi, and the women-led microfinance pilot in Inchiri, empowered local actors to take leadership roles in environmental management (paras. 119, 195, and 288). These initiatives promoted food security, strengthened family microeconomies, and supported social inclusion, particularly during the socioeconomic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic (paras. 119 and 287). The participatory validation of the sustainability strategy (para. 236i) and the active involvement of the Benichab Economic Interest Group (G.I.E) as a strategic partner (para. 287) illustrate how inclusive processes can reinforce community representation and mutual accountability. The project also leveraged partnerships with national academic and scientific institutions (para. 286), enhancing technical credibility and expanding the reach of environmental knowledge. Stakeholder engagement was further strengthened through capacity-building workshops, joint planning, and knowledge exchange activities involving universities, NGOs, and local institutions (para. 289i). The adoption of a "train-the-trainers" model (para. 195) facilitated broader dissemination of knowledge and reduced dependency on external support. The project's success in promoting inclusive engagement and integrating traditional knowledge highlights the importance of culturally sensitive, community-driven approaches in environmental governance. These practices not only enhance local ownership but also contribute to the resilience and sustainability of project outcomes. This lesson is related to Conclusion 1 (para. 332).

Lesson Learned #3:	Strengthened Governance Mechanisms and Consistent Steering Committee Engagement Enhance Strategic Oversight and Institutional Continuity
Context/comment:	The project demonstrated the value of establishing inclusive governance structures, such as the Project Steering Committee (PSC), to support strategic oversight and institutional ownership. The PSC was composed of representatives from UNEP, MESD, relevant ministries, academia, civil society, and the private sector (para. 269), and it contributed to key decisions related to work plans, budgets, and sustainability strategies (para. 274i–iii). While the PSC fulfilled its formal oversight role, its strategic engagement could have been further enhanced. The committee met three times during the project cycle (para. 274), and although relevant topics were addressed, participation varied over time (para. 287), and some sectors were less consistently involved (para. 289ii and 315v). Meeting documentation, while useful, could have been more detailed to support knowledge sharing and institutional learning (para. 229v). At the December 2023 exit meeting, participants identified administrative delays in forming the PSC as a key challenge during project implementation (paras. 270 and 274). The project team made commendable efforts to promote stakeholder ownership and alignment with national priorities (paras. 309, 310, 311, 312, and 313), and the PSC’s composition was revised to include additional relevant actors (para. 116). Ministries and directorates appointed focal points who actively contributed to implementation and dissemination of results (para. 313i.a). However, the transition of CNOEZA and resulting role misalignments (para. 252 and 316) highlighted the importance of stable governance structures and clearly defined responsibilities³. Interview feedback and PIRs suggest that the PSC’s involvement was more procedural than strategic, indicating opportunities to strengthen its role in future initiatives (para. 282v and 290). A more consistent and proactive engagement from governance bodies could help reinforce cross-sectoral coordination, institutional commitment, and long-term sustainability. This lesson highlights that Steering Committees should be empowered not only with broad representation but also with clear mandates, regular engagement routines, and meaningful roles in guiding implementation. Strengthening governance mechanisms, through structured meeting protocols, strategic integration, and alignment with national systems, can significantly enhance project effectiveness and institutional resilience. This lesson is related to Conclusion 2 (para. 333).
Lesson Learned #4:	Direct Access to Local Partners and Diversification of Interlocutors Strengthen Coordination and Institutional Resilience
Context/comment:	The project demonstrated that maintaining direct relationships with local partners, including decentralized authorities, civil society organizations, and community actors, can significantly enhance coordination and institutional resilience. The direct relationship between UNEP and the local executing agency (MESD) allowed for greater reach of activities, improved understanding of local dynamics, and increased responsiveness to operational and political challenges (paras. 277 and 282iv). The project team was widely recognized for its professionalism and technical competence. As lesson learned, it was emphasized during the exit meeting that the project team demonstrated a high level of volunteerism, creativity, and

	resilience in the face of various challenges, including administrative, structural, and financial constraints (para. 290). This proactive attitude was crucial to maintaining the pace of implementation and achieving the expected results, highlighting the importance of committed leadership and operational flexibility in complex contexts. Interview feedback highlighted the positive experience with project management, particularly the first project manager's familiarity with UNEP and GEF processes, which facilitated smoother coordination with the implementing agency (paras. 155iii, 179i, 184, and 282i). Beyond operational efficiency, the human dimension of the team, its receptiveness, courtesy, and responsiveness, was especially appreciated and contributed to a collaborative working environment. However, the project also revealed vulnerabilities linked to excessive reliance on a single focal point. While centralizing communication around the project manager helped streamline coordination in the early stages, it also created risks during institutional transitions, such as the dissolution of CNOEZA (paras. 115, 116, and 305). This approach limited the resilience of project management and underscored the need to diversify communication channels and build a broader network of interlocutors (para. 282vi). The transition of responsibilities to MESD and the reorganization of governance structures posed challenges in clearly defining roles and maintaining continuity (para. 116). These experiences highlight the importance of engaging multiple national team members and institutional actors to ensure stability and mitigate risks associated with staff turnover and structural changes. This lesson is related to Conclusion 2 (para. 333).
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Lesson Learned #5:	Structured and Frequent Coordination Between Financial and Operational Teams Enhances Oversight and Responsiveness
Context/comment:	The project demonstrated that regular and well-structured coordination between financial and operational teams contributes significantly to effective project oversight, timely problem-solving, and strategic alignment. Interview feedback emphasized that the combination of weekly internal meetings, direct access to stakeholders, and a proactive approach to addressing challenges created a responsive and collaborative implementation environment (para. 188 and 282iv). Co-location of teams and the absence of hierarchical barriers facilitated informal interactions and quick resolution of issues. Weekly meetings provided a consistent space to raise concerns, which were often addressed within the same week depending on urgency (para. 188). In addition to internal coordination, quarterly meetings with implementing partners and the Financial Management Officer (FMO) supported progress tracking and strengthened follow-up (para. 224iii and 282iv). This collaborative dynamic was further supported by UNEP's organizational culture, which encouraged open communication and direct engagement with the ministry, avoiding delays caused by intermediary systems (para. 188). The willingness to hold additional meetings during critical moments reflected a flexible and responsive management style. This lesson underscores that structured, recurring coordination mechanisms between financial and operational teams are not only beneficial but essential for maintaining momentum, anticipating risks, and aligning financial planning with programmatic goals.

	This lesson is related to Conclusion 1 (para. 332).
Lesson Learned #6:	Tailored Capacity-Building Strategies and Localized Tools Enhance Technical Competence and Policy Engagement Across Stakeholder Groups
Context/comment:	The project demonstrated that capacity-building strategies tailored to diverse stakeholder groups (government institutions, academic bodies, civil society, and local communities) can significantly strengthen technical competencies and promote meaningful engagement with environmental policies and multilateral agreements. The project made steady progress toward Outcome 2, enhancing national capacities to develop and implement policies aligned with MEAs and SDGs (para. 152 and 155iii). During the exit meeting, it was recognized as a lesson learned that the project fostered significant capacity building through workshops, exchanges, and critical review of documents (paras. 236 and 290). The interaction among local, regional, and national actors created a collaborative learning environment that contributed to skill development and the sustainability of the project's outcomes. Foundational activities such as the development of the Natural Resources Atlas, training on MEA mainstreaming, and the creation of a national environmental education strategy laid the groundwork for broader institutional engagement (para. 152i). Public-private partnerships and streamlined data collection processes further reinforced MESD's role in sustainable development planning (para. 152ii and 152iii). By 2023, stakeholders, including ministries, academic institutions, and NGOs, recognized the project's contributions to capacity development (para. 152iv). The project adopted localized and cost-effective approaches, such as the "train-the-trainers" model and community-driven demonstration projects, which enabled broader dissemination of knowledge and reduced reliance on external support (para. 195). These initiatives empowered communities, particularly women-led groups, to apply environmental conventions like the UNCCD in practical decision-making (para. 155iii), showcasing the project's reach beyond institutional boundaries. Environmental education and outreach activities reached over 1,500 students across 11 schools, and a national strategy for integrating environmental education into curricula was validated (para. 156iv). However, the lack of gender-sensitive design in some outreach efforts and the absence of robust feedback mechanisms limited the inclusiveness and evaluative depth of these initiatives (para. 323). Only one workshop was identified as having conducted a feedback survey (para. 323), and communication efforts, though well-funded, were not systematically monitored for impact (para. 324). This lesson is related to Conclusion 1 and Conclusion 2 (para. 332 and 333).

Lesson Learned #7:	Adaptive Management, Hybrid Work Models, and Strategic In-Country Presence Are Essential for Project Continuity in Times of Crisis and Institutional Transition
Context/ comment:	The project in Mauritania demonstrated that a combination of adaptive management, hybrid work models, and strategic in-country presence is vital to sustaining implementation amid external shocks and institutional change. The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant delays, requiring two extensions and adjustments to execution strategies (paras. 109 and 190i). Government-imposed restrictions limited in-person engagement, postponed workshops, and disrupted recruitment and field activities (paras. 111i, 111iii, 113, 114, and 190i). These challenges were compounded by the dissolution of CNOEZA during a government reorganization, which weakened institutional ownership and disrupted coordination (paras. 115, 116, 118iv, and 190i). To overcome these constraints, the project adopted a hybrid work model. Remote engagement enabled continuity for several activities and reduced operational costs (paras. 111v and 191), while in-person presence, when feasible, was critical for strategic alignment, stakeholder trust, and effective coordination, especially during transitions such as the change in focal point (para. 224v). The presence of UNEP in-country, even if intermittent, proved vital for maintaining relationships, facilitating coordination, and reinforcing institutional commitment (paras. 111iv and 277). The project also prioritized community-focused microprojects, which proved essential for maintaining relevance and cohesion during the crisis, supporting livelihoods and food security (paras. 111ii and 119). Interview feedback emphasized that although technical workshops and field missions were heavily impacted (paras. 118i and 118ii), the project's ability to sustain core activities with only two extensions was commendable (para. 118iii). This lesson is related to Conclusion 2 (para. 333).

Lesson Learned #8:	Insufficiently Specific and Impact-Oriented Indicators Limit the Ability to Demonstrate Institutional Change and Long-Term Results
Context/ comment:	Although the project implemented a functional and adaptive monitoring system that supported regular reporting, strategic oversight, and decision-making (paras. 201, 221, 224i, 224ii, and 224iv), the formulation of many indicators, particularly those linked to the outcomes, lacked specificity, objective measurement criteria, and a clear distinction between outputs and outcomes (paras. 159, 204, 205, 207, 208, and 210). This limited the project's ability to assess institutional, behavioral, and systemic changes, which were central to its broader objectives. A significant portion of the indicators focused on process-oriented metrics, such as the number of reports produced, training sessions held, or charters signed (paras. 205 and 206). While these indicators captured operational delivery, they did not assess whether outputs were effectively used or led to meaningful transformation. For example, tracking the number of training sessions did not reveal whether participants applied the knowledge gained, and counting signed charters did not indicate changes in data-sharing practices (para. 205). Some indicators, such as those related to demonstration projects and microfinance initiatives, showed potential for impact but could have been strengthened by incorporating criteria that assess adoption of sustainable practices or improvements in beneficiaries' livelihoods (para. 206). Outcome indicators, while conceptually aligned with project goals, often relied on

	vague terms like “quality” or “capable,” without mechanisms to verify actual implementation or integration of MEAs, SDGs, and gender considerations (paras. 159, 207, and 208). For instance, indicators could have been reformulated to include thresholds or percentages that reflect measurable change, such as “Percentage of MEA reports meeting predefined quality criteria” or “Percentage of institutions implementing policies with MEA and SDG integration” (paras. 159 and 209). The project did report on GEF Core Indicators, such as the number of hectares under improved management and the number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (paras. 212i and 213ii). These indicators were relevant and measurable, aligning well with GEF-6 goals (para. 213). However, the absence of more outcome-focused indicators hindered the project's ability to systematically monitor and demonstrate real-world change (para. 220), and reporting was limited in its capacity to reflect broader impacts (para. 230). Finally, particularly for the demonstration projects, the initiative could have benefited from planning outputs aimed at developing and implementing systematic monitoring frameworks during and beyond the project’s lifetime, to mitigate risks and ensure sustainability (para. 300, 303, and 306). This lesson is related to Conclusion 2 (para. 334).
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Lesson Learned #9:	Strategic and Inclusive Communication Planning Is Essential to Strengthen Engagement, Knowledge Sharing, and Behavioral Change
Context/comment:	The project in Mauritania demonstrated that strategic communication plays a central role in fostering stakeholder engagement, disseminating knowledge, and promoting behavioral change in environmental governance. From its inception, the project emphasized knowledge management and public awareness as key components (paras. 318 and 322), and implemented a range of communication activities, including PSC meetings, workshops, training sessions, and environmental education campaigns, that contributed to collaboration and learning among stakeholders (paras. 321, 322i, 322ii, 325, and 327). The State of the Environment Report (SoER) emerged as a particularly effective communication product, providing accessible and policy-relevant information to decision-makers, civil society, and donors (para. 322iii). Public awareness initiatives, such as school-based education and national environmental events, were praised for their impact and inclusivity (paras. 322iv and 325). These efforts helped ensure that key audiences were informed and engaged, and that traditional knowledge was recognized and valued (para. 322ii). However, the communication strategy presented in the project document was limited in scope and lacked detailed guidance for engaging marginalized and gender groups (para. 319). While the project demonstrated a commitment to inclusion (para. 323), the absence of tailored communication approaches and robust feedback mechanisms constrained its ability to assess the effectiveness of outreach efforts. For example, no feedback surveys were conducted during workshops, and communication methods were not systematically adapted to the needs of diverse audiences (para. 323). Moreover, although communication activities were adequately funded and partially effective in driving change (paras. 324 and 327), they were not regularly monitored for impact. The monitoring system focused primarily on

	process indicators, limiting the ability to evaluate progress toward broader goals such as institutional coordination and technical capacity development (para. 324). This lesson is related to Conclusion 2 (para. 334).
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Lesson Learned #10:	Embedding Gender-Responsive Design, Monitoring, and Local Empowerment Mechanisms Enhances Inclusiveness and Sustainability in Environmental Projects
Context/comment:	Integrating gender equality and social inclusion into environmental initiatives is essential to ensure equitable participation, strengthen local ownership, and promote long-term impact. The project in Mauritania demonstrated meaningful progress in this area, particularly through the implementation of a women-focused microfinance pilot in Inchiri, which contributed to empowerment, resilience, and community engagement (paras. 169 and 296i). Women participated in training and practical activities, and institutional partners were sensitized to the importance of their inclusion in decentralization and decision-making processes (paras. 169, 293ii, and 296ii). The project design incorporated human rights and gender considerations, including commitments to gender balance and inclusive capacity-building (paras. 293 and 294). It promoted sex- and age-disaggregated indicators within MEA and SDG frameworks and aimed to integrate gender-specific data into the EIS (para. 293i). However, the absence of a gender action plan and gender-specific indicators in the logical framework limited the ability to monitor and evaluate gender-related outcomes (paras. 222 and 295). While sex-disaggregated data were reported through GEF Core Indicators (para. 222), no formal gender evaluation was conducted, and data were not disaggregated by other vulnerable or marginalized groups. Interview feedback and PIRs confirmed that the project played a catalytic role in promoting women's leadership and environmental awareness, especially under challenging socio-economic conditions (paras. 296i, 296ii). Nonetheless, persistent gender disparities in professional sectors and governance structures constrained the achievement of full gender balance in project activities (para. 296iii). The project encouraged inclusive participation but lacked the mandate and capacity to transform deeply rooted social norms. Even so, women's involvement in informal spaces and community-level actions was significant and impactful (para. 296iv). Overall, the project contributed to national-level gender mainstreaming and institutional awareness, integrating gender and human rights considerations into environmental policy and practice (para. 297). These efforts reflect a positive evolution in promoting equity, despite structural limitations. Future initiatives can enhance the transformative potential of the EISs and related policies by integrating gender analysis during the design phase and explicitly recognizing marginalized groups as priority stakeholders, thereby promoting inclusive and equitable practices. Although gender balance is not yet a reality in certain professional sectors and governance structures, future projects can benefit from targeted and sustained actions that promote gender equity in these areas, building on progress made at the project level and addressing systemic barriers through institutional commitments. This lesson is related to Conclusion 2 (para. 335).

D. Recommendations¹³³

Recommendation #1:	Strengthening Legal Mechanisms and Institutional Agreements to Ensure Environmental Data Governance and Long-Term Sustainability of the EIS in Mauritania
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project has achieved significant technical progress through the implementation of the EIS. The National Observatory for the Environment and Coastal Zone has emerged as a key institution actively leveraging the project's outputs, underscoring the strategic relevance and potential impact of the EIS. Building on the project's technical achievements, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the EIS remains a key priority. As data collection and system maintenance involve recurring costs, it is important that these needs are progressively integrated into institutional budgets. While the EIS has demonstrated strong performance during project-supported phases, establishing mechanisms for continued support will help maintain its effectiveness beyond the project's duration. Positioning the EIS primarily as a time-bound project may constrain its potential for sustained impact. To support its long-term viability, it could be advantageous to progressively embed the EIS within permanent government structures. This would help strengthen its legitimacy and operational stability through the development of formal legal mandates, interministerial agreements, and clearly defined institutional roles. The discontinuation of the CNOEZA during project implementation illustrates the value of reinforcing institutional coordination and resilience through robust and adaptable governance arrangements. The project delivered a Environmental Information Charter, marking institutional commitment to shared principles. However, to ensure sustainability and impact, it must be complemented by formal mechanisms, such as MoUs and legal mandates, that enable enforceable and operational commitments. To strengthen the institutional foundation of the EIS and ensure its long-term viability, it is recommended that the Government of Mauritania consider implementing the following actions in a coordinated and context-sensitive manner. The proposed actions are presented in order of priority, reflecting their potential impact on sustainability and feasibility within the national context: 1. Assess the feasibility of enacting national legislation that formally recognizes the EIS as an official tool for environmental decision-making, linking its operation to permanent state structures. 2. Build upon the Environmental Information Charter by complementing it with formal instruments, such as MoUs, interministerial agreements, or legal mandates, that define roles, responsibilities, and data-sharing protocols among relevant institutions. This step is essential to translate the Charter's shared principles into operational and legally enforceable commitments. 3. Promote the integration of the EIS into national strategic frameworks, including environmental policies, digital transformation plans, and commitments under MEAs. 4. Consider the designation of permanent technical units within key ministries to manage environmental data, supported by dedicated human and financial resources, as feasible.

¹³³ These recommendations were developed in accordance with the Guidance for Project/Task Managers and Review Consultants, Presentation and Quality of Recommendations in the Main Terminal Review Report, 15 July 2025.

	5. Evaluate the establishment of an interministerial technical committee to oversee the operation of the EIS, ensure regular data updates, and promote interoperability across systems. These actions will help transition the EIS from a project-based initiative to a fully institutionalized component of Mauritania's environmental governance architecture. Given that this recommendation relies on active engagement from the executing agency, and that no formal agreement or follow-on project is currently in place, it is recommended that the UNEP Task Manager ensures the recommendation is clearly communicated to the responsible entities through the appropriate institutional channels.
Priority Level:	Critical Recommendation
Type of Recommendation	Partner
Responsibility:	UNEP Task Manager (to ensure the recommendation is clearly communicated to the responsible entities)
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Start within the first 6 months after Terminal review, with operational milestones defined by the end of the first year.

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

- Section D. Effectiveness (paras. 126ii, 130, 151, 155ii, 155v, 167, 170i, and 171);
- Section E. Efficiency (para. 195)
- Section H. Sustainability (paras. 253, 257i, 257ii, 258, and 260)
- Conclusion #1 and #2 (paras. 332 and 333), and Lessons Learned #1

Recommendation #2:	Strengthen the Strategic Role of the Project Steering Committee through Clear Mandates, Regular Engagement, and Structured Documentation to Promote Intersectoral Coordination, Institutional Continuity and Ownership
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The Project Steering Committee brought together representatives from ministries, academia, civil society, and the private sector, playing a key role in validating work plans, budgets, and sustainability strategies. However, its strategic function could be strengthened, particularly by ensuring consistent engagement from all relevant sectors, whose participation fluctuated throughout the project. The institutional transition, including the dissolution of CNOEZA, highlighted opportunities to strengthen governance structures for greater resilience. Delays in establishing the PSC, a lower frequency of meetings and limited documentation of discussions may have constrained opportunities for institutional learning and hindered effective interministerial coordination. Enhancing these processes could support more consistent engagement and knowledge exchange across relevant entities. To support future PSCs in Mauritania in providing meaningful strategic guidance and fostering institutional ownership, it is recommended that executing agencies consider adopting the following measures, with flexibility to adapt them to specific project contexts and institutional capacities. The proposed actions are presented in order of priority, reflecting their potential impact on sustainability and feasibility within the national context: 1. Review and, where appropriate, formalize the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the PSC, outlining its strategic role, composition, meeting

	schedule, and reporting mechanisms in a way that reflects national priorities and operational realities. 2. Facilitate regular meetings with structured agendas that encourage strategic decision-making, progress monitoring, and proactive risk management, while allowing for adjustments based on project needs and stakeholder availability. 3. Promote balanced and active representation from relevant sectors, including technical ministries, academic institutions, civil society, and local communities, ensuring inclusivity while remaining responsive to evolving stakeholder dynamics. 4. Support systematic documentation of PSC meetings, including minutes that capture key decisions, recommendations, and responsibilities, to strengthen transparency and institutional learning. The format and depth of documentation may be tailored to available resources and capacities. 5. Explore opportunities to integrate the PSC into existing national environmental coordination frameworks, reinforcing its legitimacy and alignment with public policies and international commitments, while allowing for context-specific approaches to coordination. Given the absence of a formal follow-on project or agreement, the UNEP Task Manager must ensure this recommendation is clearly communicated to the relevant entities through appropriate institutional channels, such as final presentations, email correspondence, or meeting records
Priority Level:	Important Recommendation
Type of Recommendation	Partner
Responsibility:	UNEP Task Manager (to ensure the recommendation is clearly communicated to the responsible entities)
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Initiated during project design of future initiatives and supported throughout implementation, with mechanisms established within the first year

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

- Section C. Nature of the External Context (para. 116);
- Section G. Monitoring and Reporting (para 229v);
- Section H. Sustainability (para. 252)
- Section I. Factors Affecting Performance (paras. 269, 270, 274, 274, 282v, 287, 289ii, 290, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 315v, and 316);
- Conclusion #2 (para. 333), and Lessons Learned #3

Recommendation #3:	Develop and Implement a National Strategy for Continuous and Monitored Capacity-Building.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project successfully delivered a range of well-received capacity-building activities, including the development of the Natural Resources Atlas, training on the integration of MEAs and SDGs, and environmental education initiatives in schools. Locally anchored approaches, such as the “train-the-trainers” model and community-based projects, expanded outreach and promoted autonomy in knowledge dissemination. These efforts reflect the existence of a formal capacity development strategy that contributed to strengthening the technical and institutional capabilities of the involved teams. To build on these achievements and ensure lasting impact, the government would benefit from the integration of structured feedback mechanisms and measurable indicators that support continuous learning and institutional consolidation.

	It is therefore recommended that the executing agency consider developing and implementing a national post-project capacity-building strategy that is continuous, fostering long-term engagement and learning; contextualized, reflecting national and local realities; institutionally integrated, aligned with existing governance structures; and systematically monitored, with adaptable evaluation mechanisms to inform decision-making. To support this strategy, the following components could be considered and tailored to national priorities and available resources. The actions are presented in order of priority, reflecting their potential impact on sustainability and feasibility within the national context: 1. Conduct a national capacity needs assessment to identify technical gaps, institutional priorities, and local demands. 2. Design recurring, context-specific training programmes, led by previously trained local trainers and, where feasible, integrated into existing government training structures to promote continuity and institutional ownership. 3. Explore institutional retention and succession mechanisms, such as formalizing EIS-related responsibilities in job descriptions and internal mandates, in alignment with existing human resource policies. 4. Maintain institutional knowledge repositories, including digital libraries or internal platforms, to store training materials, manuals, and recorded sessions, ensuring accessibility and continuity. 5. Establish post-project follow-up mechanisms, such as periodic evaluations of EIS usage, refresher trainings, and user feedback channels, allowing for adaptive updates to content and delivery methods. This recommendation underscores the importance of designing capacity-building strategies that are context-sensitive, inclusive, and embedded within long-term institutional frameworks. It also highlights the need for systematic evaluation and continuous improvement. Given that this recommendation relies on active engagement from the executing agency, and that no formal agreement or follow-on project is currently in place, the UNEP Project Manager must ensure the recommendation is clearly communicated to the responsible entities through the appropriate institutional channels.
Priority Level:	Important Recommendation
Type of Recommendation	Partner
Responsibility:	UNEP Task Manager (to ensure the recommendation is clearly communicated to the responsible entities)
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Start within the first 6 months after Terminal review, with operational milestones defined by the end of the first year.

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

- Section D. Effectiveness (paras. 152, 155iii, and 156iv)
- Section E. Efficiency (para. 195)
- Section H. Sustainability (paras. 236, 257, 258, and 260)
- Section I. Factors Affecting Performance (paras. 290, 323 and 324).
- Conclusion #1 and #2 (paras. 332 and 333), and Lessons Learned #1 and #6

Recommendation #4:	Strengthen existing monitoring mechanisms in future projects by establishing an impact-focused monitoring and evaluation system at project level to measure long-term results and enhance sustainability
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project maintained regular reporting and supervision mechanisms, contributing to effective implementation. However, many of the indicators used were process-oriented (e.g., number of trainings, reports produced), which limited the ability to assess institutional, behavioral, and systemic changes. Future projects would benefit from a more impact-oriented monitoring and evaluation system. Establishing such a system from the outset can support adaptive management, continuous learning, and strategic decision-making. It also enables clearer demonstration of progress in areas such as MEA and SDG integration, use of the EIS in decision-making, and gender inclusion. This review suggests that upcoming projects consider establishing and maintaining an impact-focused Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system to track the achievement of outcomes. The following actions are proposed in order of priority, reflecting both their potential contribution to sustainability and their feasibility within the national context: • Developing a clear Theory of Change (ToC) that outlines the pathways from activities to intended outcomes and impacts. • Defining both output and outcome indicators, using quantitative and qualitative measures to assess institutional change, data use, and policy influence. • Using monitoring data systematically to inform mid-course adjustments and strategic decisions. • Assigning clear roles and timelines for indicator review and reporting, integrated into Project Steering Committee (PSC) agendas. Additionally, long-term indicators could be incorporated into a comprehensive sustainability plan, co-developed and endorsed by all project partners as part of the Exit Strategy. Future projects implementing similar pilot interventions should also integrate mitigation measures and sustainability strategies, including the development and implementation of systematic monitoring frameworks with indicators and long-term evaluation plans. This approach would not only ensure continuity and accountability beyond the project lifecycle but also foster ownership and alignment with national priorities. Embedding sustainability and impact measurement into closure planning reinforces the commitment to lasting institutional change.
Priority Level:	Important Recommendation
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	UNEP Task Manager
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Initiated during project design of future initiatives and supported throughout implementation, with mechanisms established within the first six months

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

- Section D. Effectiveness (para. 159);
- Section G. Monitoring and Reporting (paras. 201, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 212i, 213, 220, 221, 224i, 224ii, 224iv, and 230);
- Section I. Factors Affecting Performance (paras. 300, 303, and 306)
- Conclusion #2 (para. 334) and Lesson Learned #8

Recommendation #5:	Integrate inclusive and context-specific communication strategies into project design, with dedicated resources for implementation
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project recognized communication as a central component, supporting awareness campaigns, environmental education, and the production of knowledge materials such as the State of the Environment Report (SoER). These efforts contributed to increased visibility and public engagement around environmental issues. To further enhance the impact of communication activities, future initiatives would benefit from expanding the scope of communication strategies to include tailored approaches for engaging marginalized groups and establishing mechanisms to assess outreach effectiveness. Developing detailed operational plans, outcome indicators, and feedback tools can help align communication efforts more closely with project objectives and support continuous learning. By integrating key elements, communication can serve not only as a tool for dissemination but also as a catalyst for inclusive participation, institutional learning, and long-term sustainability. To strengthen future project implementation, it is advisable to consider the following adaptable actions. The following actions are proposed in order of priority, reflecting both their potential contribution to sustainability and their feasibility within the national context: • Develop a context-specific and inclusive communication strategy during the project design phase, tailored to the governance environment and stakeholder landscape. During the inception phase, this strategy could be translated into an operational Communication Plan, co-developed with key stakeholders, allowing room for adjustments as the project evolves. • Allocate appropriate resources and budget for communication activities, such as translation services, outreach materials, and feedback mechanisms. Resource allocation should be aligned with project priorities and adjusted as needed to support effective implementation of the Communication Plan. • Promote inclusive and culturally sensitive communication approaches that engage marginalized groups—such as women, youth, and minority communities—through differentiated strategies tailored to local dynamics. This may include the co-development of communication tools with local actors to ensure relevance, resonance, and equitable participation across diverse stakeholder groups. • Implement flexible feedback and monitoring mechanisms, using both qualitative and quantitative indicators to assess the impact of communication efforts on behavior change, institutional engagement, and community ownership. These mechanisms should be designed to evolve in response to stakeholder input and project learning. By embedding these elements into project design and inception, future initiatives can enhance stakeholder participation, improve coordination, and ensure that communication efforts contribute meaningfully to project outcomes and long-term sustainability.
Priority Level:	Opportunity of improvement
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	UNEP Task Manager
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Initiated during project design of future initiatives and supported throughout implementation, with mechanisms established within the first year.

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

- Section I. Factors Affecting Performance (paras. 318, 319, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, and 327)
- Conclusion #2 (para. 334), and Lesson Learned #9.

ANNEX I. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

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

Page Ref	Stakeholder comment	Reviewer Response
	Xxx	Xxx

ANNEX II. REVIEW FRAMEWORK/MATRIX

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
A. Strategic Relevance		
To what extent were the project implementation strategies and expected contributions (results) aligned with the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (PoW) and Strategic Priorities?	In-depth desk review (IDR): Project document, PIR, UNEP MTS and PoW Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team)
To what extent were the project implementation strategies and expected contributions (results) aligned with the BSP ¹³⁴ and S-SC ¹³⁵ ?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, BSP and S-SC decisions Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)
To what extent were the project implementation strategies and expected contributions (results) aligned with Donor/Partner strategic priorities?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports, Steering Committee (SC) minutes and report Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)
To what extent were the project implementation strategies and expected contributions (results) suited, or responding to, the stated environmental concerns and needs of the country where it is being implemented?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports, National and regional policies/documents Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Steering Committee
To what extent was the project aligned with global priorities such as the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, Agenda 2030 Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)
How well did the project (either at design or inception) consider any ongoing and planned initiatives that address similar problems/issues?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Steering Committee
To what extent did the project (either at design or inception) ensure it was complementary to other interventions, optimized synergies and avoided duplication of efforts?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Steering Committee (MoE)
A. Strategic Relevance		
To what extent was the project (either at design or inception) aware of, or in dialogue/engagement with, other ongoing or planned interventions on the same problem/issue (including UN Strategic Development Cooperation Framework (SDCF) or One UN programming for the country)?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports, UN SDCF Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)
B. Quality of Project Design		
To what extent was the approach adopted by the project the best possible to strengthen national capacity for environmental information and knowledge management for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Steering Committee
Were project objectives realistic, given the time and budget allocated to the project, the baseline situation, and institutional context? Project objective: To strengthen national capacity for environmental information and knowledge management for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Steering Committee

¹³⁴ The Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building (BSP) relates to the capacity of governments to comply with international agreements and obligations at the national level; promote, facilitate and finance environmentally sound technologies and to strengthen frameworks for developing coherent international environmental policies.

¹³⁵ South-South Cooperation (S-SC) is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between developing countries.

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania		
C. Nature of External Context		
To what extent was project performance affected by political disruption, disasters, security situation, and health and economic changes (i.e. COVID-19) and/or an unfavorable operating environment?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
D. Effectiveness		
D1. Availability of Outputs		
To what extent were the planned outputs made available for the intended users? Note: this question will be divided in sub-questions according to the ToC (10 outputs), targeting distinct respondent groups/stakeholders.	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and deliverables Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
To what extent were the most important outputs to achieve outcomes delivered in time and fulfilled their intended use?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and deliverables Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MoE and other ministries)
How do users and reviewers rate (or consider) the quality and utility of the most important delivered outputs, i) poor, ii) good, or iii) excellent quality and utility?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and deliverables Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
What was the level of ownership of the intended users of key outputs? To what extent were the intended users of key outputs involved in / party to preparation of key outputs: i) not involved, ii) only peripherally involved, iii) partially and unevenly involved, iv) somewhat involved, v) meaningfully involved, or vi) closely involved?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and deliverables Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
D2. Achievement of Outcome		
To what extent were the project outcome achieved?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and deliverables Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
To what extent were the assumptions for progress from project outputs to project outcomes held?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and deliverables Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
		Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
To what extent were the drivers to support transition from outputs to project outcomes in place?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and deliverables Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
D3. Likelihood of Impact		
What is the likelihood that the intended impact become a reality? Intended impact: Sustainable development in Mauritania is advanced through informed environmental decision-making and effective implementation of MEAs and SDGs.	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and deliverables Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
D3. Likelihood of Impact		
Is there already any evidence that indicates that the project expected intermediated state has been or will be achieved soon? What is the likelihood that the project intermediated state will be achieved? Expected intermediate state: Environmental governance in Mauritania is strengthened through integrated information systems and policy coordination at national and local levels.	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and deliverables Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
To what extent were the assumptions for progress from projects outcomes through intermediate state towards the expected impact held?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and deliverables Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
To what extent were the drivers to support transition from projects outcomes through intermediate state towards the expected impact in place?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and deliverables Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
Were there any unintended negative effects as a result of the project? What is the likelihood that the intervention may lead, or contribute to, unintended negative effects?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and deliverables Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
To what extent has the project played a catalytic role or has promoted scaling up and/or replication ¹³⁶ ? How these are likely to contribute to long-term impact?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and deliverables Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit

¹³⁶ Scaling up refers to approaches being adopted on a much larger scale, but in a very similar context. Scaling up is often the longer-term objective of pilot initiatives. Replication refers to approaches being repeated or lessons being explicitly applied in new/different contexts e.g. other geographic areas, different target group etc. Effective replication typically requires some form of revision or adaptation to the new context. It is possible to replicate at either the same or a different scale.

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
		Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
D3. Likelihood of Impact		
What is the likelihood of the project to make a substantive contribution to the long-lasting changes represented by the SDGs, and/or the intermediate-level result reflected in the Expected Accomplishments?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and deliverables Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
E. Financial Management		
E1. Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures		
To what extent has the project applied proper financial management standards and adhered to UNEP's financial management policies? With what frequency was the cash advance to partners timely approved and disbursed? With what frequency was regular analysis of actual expenditure against budget and workplan done? How many regular expenditure reports (six-monthly and annual) were timely submitted? Were expenditures within the approved annual budget? If it was the case, were timely revision submitted/approved? Were regular budget revisions made when relevant and for expenditure variations of 10% and above?	IDR: Project document, MTR, financial documents (financial reports, audit reports, budget revisions, etc) Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO and UNEP TM)
Were there any financial management issues that have affected the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance	IDR: Project document, MTR, financial documents (financial reports, audit reports, budget revisions, etc) Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO and UNEP TM)
E2. Completeness of Financial Information		
To what extent was the financial information complete, accurate and made available to evaluation, considering the following criteria/items? High level project budget (costs) for secured and unsecured funds. High level project budget by funding source(s) for secured and unsecured funds. Disbursement (funds transfer) document from funding source(s) to UNEP. Project expenditure sheet by output/outcome (to-date). Detailed project budget (by output/outcome) for secured funds. Proof/report of delivery of in-kind contributions. Partner legal agreements and documentation for all amendments exist. Where applicable: - Re-approved project budget by budget line for project extensions (both cost and no-cost extension). - Disbursement (Funds Transfer) documents (cash statement) from UNEP to partners. For GEF funded projects: - Proof/report of delivery of in-kind contributions exists. - For externally executed GEF projects, audit reports for the Executing Agency exist. - Management response to audit reports exists.	IDR: Project document, MTR, financial documents (financial reports, audit reports, budget revisions, etc) Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO and UNEP TM)
E3. Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff		

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
How frequent, fluid and useful were communications between the project manager and FMO? Is there documentation to confirm it?	IDR: E-mails and other proof of communications Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO and UNEP TM)
What was the level of awareness of the project manager regarding the ongoing financial status of project during its implementation: i) no awareness, ii) little awareness, iii) moderate awareness, and iv) strong awareness?	IDR: MTR, progress, financial and final reports, and e-mails and other proof of communications Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO and UNEP TM)
What was the level of awareness of the FMO regarding overall project progress when financial disbursements were made (i.e. disbursements made against good quality financial and technical progress reports): i) no awareness, ii) little awareness, iii) moderate awareness, and iv) strong awareness?	IDR: MTR, progress, financial and final reports, and e-mails and other proof of communications Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO and UNEP TM)
Which of the following options better describe the project regarding how the communication affected project implementation? i) the lack of communication between financial and project staff members had negatively affected project implementation, or ii) good communication between financial and project staff members had positively affected project implementation (i.e. within budget, no extensions, more outputs than planned etc.).	IDR: MTR, progress, financial and final reports, and e-mails and other proof of communications Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO and UNEP TM)
Which of the following options better describe the project regarding raising and resolving financial issues/problems? i) financial issues/problems were only addressed retrospectively when identified by senior management/staff external to the project team, or ii) PM or FMO were proactive in raising and resolving financial issues.	IDR: MTR, progress, financial and final reports, and e-mails and other proof of communications Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO and UNEP TM)
Which of the following options better describe the project regarding reviewing narrative and financial reports? i) Narrative reports were only reviewed by project manager and financial reports only by the FMO, or ii) All narrative and financial reports are reviewed by both finance and project staff members prior to submission.	IDR: MTR, progress, financial and final reports, and e-mails and other proof of communications Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO and UNEP TM)
F. Efficiency		
To what extent the project delivered maximum results from the given resources? To what extent has the project achieved its results at the lowest possible cost? How could the project be more efficient in the use of resources (time, funds, staff, partnerships, etc.)?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and deliverables Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
What were the major reasons to require the no-cost extension?	IDR: MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and PCA/ICA Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
To what extent were the project extension justified ¹³⁷ or could they have been avoided through stronger project management?	IDR: MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and PCA/ICA Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
To what extent did the delays/extensions in project implementation affect the achievement of the project outcomes? What were the major implications of these delays/extensions?	IDR: MTR, PSC report, HYPR, final reports, and PCA/ICA Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit

¹³⁷ 'Justifications' for no cost extensions should involve increases in identified benefits and could include: changes in the timing or sequencing of activities to realize greater results (i.e. to take advantage of positive opportunities; donor-requested changes to better align with, or contribute to, their strategic results; re-scheduling of events to increase country-level ownership or leadership etc.).

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
To what extent has the project applied any time or cost-saving mechanisms or cost-effective approaches to achieve results within the approved timeframe and budget? If yes, to what extent these mechanisms or approaches supported the achievement of project targets? If no, to what extent the lack of these mechanisms or approaches undermined the achievement of project targets?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, financial and final report. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
Did the project face any obstacles (financial, administrative, managerial) and to what extent they affected output delivery and overall efficiency?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, financial and final report. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
F. Efficiency		
How frequently were project outputs delivered according to expected timeframes? How frequently were project activities/events sequenced efficiently?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, financial and final report. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM, FMO, and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
Which of the following options better describe the project regarding operation within existing roles or institutions? i) The project established unnecessarily duplicative roles, mechanisms, or institutions ii) The project operated within existing roles, mechanisms, institutions or expanded them in an efficient and effective manner	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, financial and final report. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
To what extent the project, during its implementation, made use of/built upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programs and projects? To what extent this contributed to increase project efficiency?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, PSC report, HYPR, financial and final report. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
To what extent the management of the project, or the method of carrying out activities by partners, minimized UNEP's carbon footprint?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, agreements, PSC report, HYPR, and final report. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
G. Monitoring and Reporting		
G1. Monitoring Design and Budgeting		
To what extent were the indicators of M&E Plan (at project launch) specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented (SMART)? To what extent were the methods designed for tracking progress against the indicators adherent with results-based management?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)
G1. Monitoring Design and Budgeting		
At project launch, to what extent the project's M&E Plan: a. Covered all indicators appropriately in the logical framework b. Had data sources and data collection methods clearly defined c. Had appropriated data collection instruments in place d. Data collection frequency was appropriate e. Had a dedicated budget per monitoring activity f. Person responsible for monitoring progress against each indicator was identified g. Was disaggregated by relevant stakeholder groups including gender and minority/disadvantaged groups h. Additional gender specific indicators, if necessary, were developed i. Funds for mid-term and terminal evaluations/reviews were considered adequate by the UNEP Evaluation Office and were available to the evaluation	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
G2. Monitoring of Project Implementation		
To what extent was the monitoring system operational throughout the project implementation period? Did it facilitate the timely tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, HYPR, and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)
To what extent was baseline data collected and used to contribute to the project monitoring, knowledge management and final reporting?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, HYPR, and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)
To what extent was monitoring data collected regularly in accordance with a monitoring plan and workplan? To what extent was it complete, relevant, and properly detailed?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, HYPR, and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO, UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)
To what extent was monitoring data analyzed and shared with appropriate project managers and steering partners?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, HYPR, final reports, and SC minutes Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
G2. Monitoring of Project Implementation		
What was the level of detail of the M&E data made available to the evaluators?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, HYPR, and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO, UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)
To what extent was M&E data collected disaggregate by vulnerable/marginalized groups, including gender?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, HYPR, and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO, UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)
To what extent were the tools and methodologies utilized during monitoring responsive to the needs of different stakeholder groups?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, HYPR, and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO, UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)
How well were funds spent on monitoring in accordance with the planned expenditures or against budget lines identified for monitoring?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, and financial reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO, UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)
To what extent was the information generated by the M&E used during the life of the project to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and to ensure sustainability?	IDR: Project document, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, and progress and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
Was there a M&E Implementation Plan? What tools were used by the project to conduct M&E (i.e. indicators profile sheet, indicator dashboard, etc.)?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, HYPR, and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
G3. Project Reporting		
To what extent had both UNEP and donor reporting commitments been fulfilled?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, and HYPR, and financial and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
How complete and with what quality was documentation of project progress made available?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, and HYPR, and financial and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
What is the evidence available of collaboration and communication with appropriate UNEP colleagues ¹³⁸ ? How efficient was this collaboration and communication?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR, and financial, and final reports, and communication evidence (e-mails, meeting minutes) Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
Were there any gaps in IPMR/donor reporting?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, and HYPR, and financial and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team)
How well does the official records in IPMR/donor reports match available evidence?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, and HYPR, and financial and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team)
To what extent did the IPMR/donor reporting adequately reflect the project scope of work?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, and HYPR, and financial and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team)
To what extent were monitoring reports gender neutral (ie. reflecting gendered experiences equally) and/or, if appropriate, gender sensitive (ie. reporting experiences differentiated by gender groups)?	IDR: Project document, MTR, and progress, financial, and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
H. Sustainability		
H1. Socio-political Sustainability		
To what extent does the maintenance and further development of project outcomes after the closure of the project depend on social/political factors (i.e. changes in social-political context, interest and commitment among government representatives and other stakeholders to use the indicator-based monitoring and reporting system)?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports, PSC minutes and reports, project's technical documents, deliverables, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
What is the level of ownership, interest, and commitment among government representatives and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forwards?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports, PSC minutes and reports, project's technical documents, deliverables, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
What mechanisms are in place to adapt/respond to changes in the social/political context that may jeopardize the sustainability of the project outcomes?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports, PSC minutes and reports, project's technical documents, deliverables, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
H2. Financial Sustainability		
To what extent does the maintenance and further development of project outcomes after the closure of the project depend on future funding / financial flows (i.e. maintenance of monitoring and reporting system, continuous capacity building, engagement with stakeholders to promote the system use for decision making)?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports, PSC minutes and reports, project's technical documents, deliverables, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit

¹³⁸ Appropriate UNEP colleagues mean other staff working on complementary projects or in the same sector/on the same topic/in the same country. The aim is to recognize efforts to work outside 'silos'.

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
		Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
H2. Financial Sustainability		
To what extent has the required future funding been secured?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports, PSC minutes and reports, project's technical documents, deliverables, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
Has an exit strategy with a financial component been developed? Has it been initiated already?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports, PSC minutes and reports, project's technical documents, deliverables, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
H3. Sustainability of the Institutional Framework		
To what extent is the maintenance and further development of project outcomes after the closure of the project depend on / sensible to institutional support?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports, PSC minutes and reports, project's technical documents, deliverables, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
What mechanisms are in place to sustain/support the institutionalization of the project outcome (i.e. governance structures and processes, policies, partnership agreements, legal and accountability frameworks are in place favoring stakeholders to use the monitoring and reporting system)? Is the institutional framework solid enough to guarantee that stakeholders will apply an integrated approach to implement global environmental priorities of different MEAs and SDGs at national and local levels?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports, PSC minutes and reports, project's technical documents, deliverables, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
To what extent has the capacity of relevant individuals been enhanced? What is the likelihood that these relevant individuals will stay in their position or in a position where they can continue to support the project outcome?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports, PSC minutes and reports, project's technical documents, deliverables, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
H3. Sustainability of the Institutional Framework		
Has an exit strategy (with an institutional component) been developed? Has it been or will be discussed in the SC and agreed among project partners? Are the activities, roles and responsibilities clearly described and agreed upon? Does the exit strategy include timeframes and any mechanism to monitor its implementation? Has it been initiated already?	IDR: Final report, PSC minutes and reports, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
I. Factors affecting Project Performance		
I1. Preparation and Readiness		
To what extent were appropriate measures taken to address weaknesses in project design or respond to changes that took place between project approval, securing funds and project mobilisation?	IDR: Project document, PIR, Inception Report, 1st Work Plan, MTR, and PSC minutes and report. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
I1. Preparation and Readiness		

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
During the inception or mobilization stage of the project (i.e. the time between project approval and first disbursement) which of the following actions were done aiming at achieving a proper startup of the project: - A comprehensive inception meeting was held and reported on. - An annual, costed workplan was developed with appropriate detail - A detailed and compliant procurement plan was developed. - A Steering Committee was established with full, appropriate representation. - A good ESE safeguards assessment was carried out, with stakeholder participation. - Comprehensive and relevant stakeholder analysis was undertaken (complementing the one from Project document). - All partner's capacity was confirmed/addressed. - Legal agreements were signed with partners in a timely manner. - Staffing mobilization was undertaken in a timely manner. - Appropriate and adequate governance arrangements were established. - All necessary measures were taken to respond to contextual changes that took place during the inception period. These were timely and of good quality. - The period between project approval and first disbursement is 6 months or less. - Measures were taken during the inception period that noticeably strengthened the project design (i.e. design of Communication Strategy and Plan, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, KM Strategy, Replication and Scaling-up Plan, etc.).	IDR: Project document, PIR Inception Report, 1st Work Plan, MTR, PSC minutes and report, procurement plans, ESS documents, communication strategy / plan, stakeholder engagement plan. KM strategy, replication and scaling-up plan, and agreements. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Steering Committee (MESD and other ministries)
I2. Quality of Project Management and Supervision		
How effective was the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UNEP?	IDR: Project document, PIR, HYPR, MTR, and PSC minutes and report. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Steering Committee
I2. Quality of Project Management and Supervision		
How well was the Steering Committee functioning (frequent meetings, relevant issues discussed, leadership provided)?	IDR: PSC minutes and report Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Steering Committee
How well managed were the teams involved in the implementation of the project?	IDR: Project document, PIR, HYPR, final reports, MTR, and PSC minutes and report. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee
To what extent the working relationship between the PM/TM and project partners has been constructive and/or effective?	IDR: Project document, PIR, HYPR, final reports, MTR, and PSC minutes and report. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
How well were the turnover of staff handled? To what extent were there effective (i.e. systematized, complete and ensured smooth transition) handover processes and information exchange (supported by good documentation) between outgoing and incoming staff?	IDR: Handover notes Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
To what extent the capacity of project staff, including some key members, was aligned with project requirements?	IDR: Project document, ToRs for the project staff, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
To what extent were project staff, including some key members, located appropriately for efficient project implementation?	IDR: Project document, PIR, HYPR and final reports, MTR, and project's technical documents Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
I2. Quality of Project Management and Supervision		
How regular and constructive information exchange between project team, PM/TM and UNEP colleagues had taken place?	IDR: Project document, PIR, HYPR and final reports, MTR, and project's technical documents Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)
To what extent had the Executing Agency and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UNEP provided strategic, timely and effectively leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes?	IDR: Project document, PIR, MTR, HYPR and final reports, PSC minutes and reports, project's technical documents, deliverables, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO, UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
How fast and effective were the responses of project team to execution challenges or contextual changes? (adaptative management)	IDR: MTR, HYPR and final reports, PSC minutes, and email correspondence. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO, UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
How adequate was the management response to any financial shortfalls, changes and unforeseen situations (i.e. response shows clear prioritization and movement of funds to meet implementation and accountability requirements)? (adaptative management)	IDR: MTR, HYPR and final reports, PSC minutes, and email correspondence. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO, UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
How relevant and timely was the advice provided by PM/TM to deal with known problems, risks or challenges? (adaptative management)	IDR: MTR, HYPR and final reports, PSC minutes, and email correspondence. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (FMO, UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)
I3. Stakeholders'¹³⁹ Participation and Cooperation		
To what extent did the implementation begin, and was undertaken, with a relevant and useful analysis of stakeholder groups?	IDR: Project document, PIR, inception and progress reports, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit
I3. Stakeholders'¹⁴⁰ Participation and Cooperation		
What efforts were made by project team to promote stakeholder ownership (specially by national and local government) of processes and outcomes of the project? How effective were these efforts?	IDR: Project document, PIR, HYPR and final reports, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Communication Strategy, technical reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local

¹³⁹ Here the term 'stakeholder' should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners, duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs and target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UNEP

¹⁴⁰ Here the term 'stakeholder' should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners, duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs and target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UNEP

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
		government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
How effective, regular, and timely were consultations and communication made with stakeholder groups during the life of the project?	IDR: Project document, progress and final reports, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Communication Strategy, technical reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
How adequate (or relevant) was the support given by the project to maximize collaboration or collective action between stakeholder groups (e.g. sharing plans, pooling resources, exchanging learning and expertise)?	IDR: Project document, progress and final reports, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Communication Strategy, technical reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee
I3. Stakeholders¹⁴¹ Participation and Cooperation		
To what extent linkages to poverty alleviation or impact on economic livelihoods have been considered and addressed in the project to assess and mitigate negative effects on sustainability of livelihoods, equity of opportunities and the protection of human rights for populations directly or indirectly affected by the project	IDR: Project document, progress and final reports, Stakeholder Engagement, technical reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
I4. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity		
To what extent has the project, during its implementation, applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People?	IDR: Project document, PIR, HYPR and final reports, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Gender Strategy, Communication Strategy, technical reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
To what extent the project adheres to UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment (2015)?	IDR: Project document, PIR, HYPR and final reports, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Gender Strategy, Communication Strategy, technical reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
I4. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity		

¹⁴¹ Here the term 'stakeholder' should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners, duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs and target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UNEP

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
To what extent the project takes into consideration possible inequalities (especially disadvantaged groups - i.e. women, and indigenous people) in its implementation?	IDR: Project document, PIR, HYPR and final reports, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Gender Strategy, Communication Strategy, technical reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
I5. Environmental and Social Safeguard		
To what extent safeguarding considerations are demonstrated in the items below regarding quality, detail and consistency: a. management plan for addressing safeguarding b. review(s) of risk ratings c. monitoring of project implementation for safeguarding issues d. response (where relevant) to safeguarding issues e. reporting on safeguarding issues/reporting that no safeguarding issues arose	IDR: Project document, PIR, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, SRIF, technical reports, MTR, and Final Report. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)
To what extent the project considered and/or addressed environmental, social and economic impacts to the key stakeholders and, in particular, to the most vulnerable groups?	IDR: Project document, PIR, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, SRIF, technical reports, MTR, and Final Report. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
I6. Country Ownership and Driven-ness		
To what extent did data providers, generators and users that were essential for moving from outputs to direct outcomes or from direct outcomes to intermediate states took a leadership role in: a. Strategic guidance of project delivery b. Driving or advocating for change to achieve higher level results c. Endorsing / accepting project results d. Initiating non-cost complementary or additional activities e. Provision of in-kind and / or cash co-financing contributions; making provisions in forward-looking budgetary plans or securing additional external resources	IDR: Project document, PIR, agreements, formal commitments from partners, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, progress and final reports, PSC minutes and report, technical reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
I7. Communication and Public Awareness		
What was the level of awareness that the key audiences (the ones driving desired change from outputs to impact) had about the project, its main messages and goals?	IDR: Project document, PIR, Communication Strategy, communication materials, papers and reports, MTR, and HYPR and final reports. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
To what extent were communication activities and channels: a. Well-targeted towards all key audiences b. Continuous over the life of the project	IDR: Project document, PIR, Communication Strategy, communication materials, papers and reports, MTR, and HYPR and final reports.	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA)

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
c. Always interactive / responsive to audience feedback d. Very well monitored for evidence of effect e. Fully budgeted/financed	Interviews and/or surveys	Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
17. Communication and Public Awareness		
How effectively were communication/public awareness efforts in driving change towards results beyond outputs?	IDR: Project document, PIR, Communication Strategy, communication materials, papers and reports, MTR, and HYPR and final reports. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
How effective was the project in the communication of learning and experience sharing between project partners and interested groups?	IDR: Project document, PIR, Communication Strategy, communication materials, papers and reports, MTR, and HYPR and final reports. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)
How solid and comprehensive was the communication plan/strategy? Was it fully financed, implemented and monitored during the life of the project?	IDR: Project document, PIR, Communication Strategy, communication materials, papers and reports, MTR, and HYPR and final reports. Interviews and/or surveys	GEF Implementing agency (UNEP TM and team) Executing Agency (MESD/CNOEZA) Project Management Unit Project Steering Committee Implementing partners (including MEAs focal points, government directorate, local government, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and private sector)

ANNEX III. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW

Table 6: People consulted during the Review

Organisation	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
UNEP / EWAD	Jochem Zoetelief	Senior Management and Programme Analyst	Portfolio and Task Manager	M
UNEP / EWAD	Sulastri Manik	Project Management Assistant	Project Management Assistant	F
UNEP / EWAD	Kevin Mtuweta	Senior Finance and Budget Assistant / Fund Management Officer	Financial management, Implementing agency	M
UNEP / EWAD	Ayda Maria Villalobos Castro	Associate Programme Management Officer / Project Associate	Project team member, Implementing agency	F
UNEP / EWAD	Florence Kahiro	Administrative Officer / Fund Management Officer	Financial management, Implementing agency	F
Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MESD)	Hacen Maouloud	Technical Advisor	Project Manager	M
Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MESD)	Mohamed Yahya Lafdal	Coordinator CCCD Project Mauritania / CNOEZA	Project Manager	M
NGO NAFORE	Amadou diam Ba	President	Project Steering Committee	M
Ministry of Health	Anne Ahmed Tidjane	Director of the fight against communicable diseases	Project Steering Committee	M
Ministry of National Education and Reform of the Educational System	Cheikh MAATA	Advisor in charge of school health	Project Steering Committee	M

ANNEX IV. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Project and related documents:

- UNEP. (2017). GEF-6 Project Identification Form (PIF). Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania.
- UNEP (2018) GEF-UNEP/CCCD/MSP/ GEF ID 9747. GEF6 Request for Project Approval. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania (And Annexes).
- GEF (2018) UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. CEO Approved Letter.
- UNEP (2018). Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the United Nations Environment Programme, Science Division, and Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Mauritania. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania (May 2018).
- UNEP. (2018) General Report. Inception Workshop. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania, Nouakchott, Mauritania, 27 September 2018.
- MESD GEF UNEP. (2019). Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting minutes. UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania, 08 October 2019.
- Amendment No. (1.0) to the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Mauritania and The United Nations Environment Programme on UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania (May 2022) and Annexes.
- MESD GEF UNEP. (2021). Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting minutes. UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania, 09 December 2021.
- Amendment No. (2.0) to the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Mauritania and The United Nations Environment Programme on UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania (May 2023).
- MESD GEF UNEP. (2023). Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting minutes. UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania, 15 June 2023.

- UNEP. (2023) Mission Report. Project Steering Committee (PSC) session of the UNEP GEF-funded Mauritania Crosscutting Capacity Development Project and Monitoring Mission, 13-15 June 2023.
- UNEP. (2024). Final Report. UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania (February 2024).
- UNEP (2025). Terms of Reference. Terminal Review. UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania\
- UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. Documents Repository. (2018-2023). Project reports (Inception Report, Quarterly Expenditure Reports, Half Yearly Progress Reports, Half-Yearly Expenditures Reports, Project Implementation Reviews, Technical reports, Workshop/ training reports, presentations, and notes), including six-month progress and financial reports, and progress reports.
- UNEP GEF Project ID 9747. Deliverables. (2018-2023). Reports, presentations, recommendations, and publications (Components 1 and 2).

Review Documents:

- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 00 TR List of TR Support Tools. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 00a Review Consultants Agreement Form. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 00b UNEP Glossary of Results Definitions. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 00c Estimating Review Budgets. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 00d Documents needed for Terminal Reviews. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 00e TR Main TR Report Template (FOR USE BY CONSULTANTS). <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 00f_TR Quality Assess of TR Report Template FOR USE BY UNEP_18.06.24. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 01 TOR Terminal Review All Funders. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 02 TR Review Criteria Ratings Table. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 03 TR Criterion Rating Descriptions Matrix. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>

- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 04 TR Weighted Ratings Table. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 05 TR Inception Report Guidance Note. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 06 TR Main Review Report Guidance Note. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 07 TR TOC Reformulation Justification Template – use this table for when/if you reconstruct the TOC for review. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 08 and 08a_Quality_of_Project_Design_Assessment Template (Word and Excel versions). <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 09 TR Stakeholder Analysis Guidance Note. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 10 TR Review Methodology Guidance Note. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 11 TR Addressing Gender Guidance Note. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 12 TR Safeguards Assessment Template. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 13 TR Use of Theory of Change in Reviews Guidance Note. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 14 TR Financial Tables – these go into the main review report and will guide you on the evidence to look for under Financial Management Criteria. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 15 TR Likelihood of Impact Flow Chart. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
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- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2025, April 22). 17 TR Recommendation Impl Plan Template. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>

ANNEX V. REVIEW ITINERARY

No field missions were conducted. All interviews were carried out through online or written meetings. The list of interviewees is provided in Annex III.

ANNEX VI. PROJECT BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

Table 7: Project Funding Sources Table

Funding source	Planned funding	% of planned funding	Secured funding	% of secured funding
All figures as USD				
Cash				
Funds from the Environment Fund	0.00	0	0.00	0
Funds from the Regular Budget	0.00	0	0.00	0
Extra-budgetary funding (listed per donor):	950,000.00	100	950,000.00	100
Sub-total: Cash contributions				
In-kind				
Environment Fund staff-post costs	0.00	0	0.00	0
Regular Budget staff-post costs	0.00	0	0.00	0
Extra-budgetary funding for staff-posts (listed per donor)	0.00	0	0.00	0
Sub-total: In-kind contributions				
Co-financing*				
Co-financing cash contribution (Government of Mauritania)	50,000.00	100	50,000.00	100
Co-financing in-kind contribution (Government of Mauritania)	100,000.00	100	100,000.00	100
Co-financing in-kind contribution (UNEP EWAD)	200,000.00	100	200,000.00	100
Sub-total: Co-financing contributions				
Total	1,300,000	100	1,300,000	100

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

Table 8: Expenditure by Outcome/Output

Component/sub-component/output	Estimated cost at design ¹⁴²	Actual Cost / expenditure ¹⁴³
All figures as USD		
Component 1	380,000.00	380,000.00
Component 2	428,500.00	428,500.00
M&E Total	66,500.00	21,500.00
Project management costs	75,000.00	75,000.00

¹⁴² Data identified in Annex F-1: Detailed GEF Budget and UMOJA Budget

¹⁴³ Data identified in Half yearly Expenditure Report from October 2023 to December 2023

ANNEX VII. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Table 9: Financial Management Table

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures:		HS	
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence ¹⁴⁴ to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		No	Evidence from project documentation, financial reports (including budget, co-financing, and expenditure reports), and stakeholder interviews indicates that expenditures were well aligned with the project's financial planning, despite delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and institutional changes.
2. Completeness of project financial information¹⁴⁵:			
Provision of key documents to the reviewer (based on the responses to A-H below)		HS	
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	The tables highlighted in the project documents presented the co-financing and project costs at the design stage, broken down by type of funding (cash or in kind) and source.
B.	Revisions to the budget	N/A	No formal revised budget documents were identified or made available for review.
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	Project legal agreements were identified – one PCA and two amendment – indicating due diligence in managing this type of project financial documentation, despite certain delays caused by COVID-19 pandemic and institutional changes.
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	Two cash advance statements, dated March 2022 and January 2024, were identified. These statements indicate amounts received in July 2018, June 2019, May 2020, and June 2022, totalling the full GEF budget approved for the executing partner.
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Yes/No	The review found that co-financing reports were adequately documented for the period spanning July 2018 to June 2022.
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	Consistent and comprehensive expenditure reports were available for each year of the project, with clear categorization by budget lines and components.
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (<i>where applicable</i>)	Yes	The review found that comprehensive annual reports were properly maintained throughout the entire project duration, covering the years 2018 to 2023.
H.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	N/A	-

¹⁴⁴ If the review raises concerns over adherence with policies or standard procedures, a recommendation maybe given to cover the topic in an upcoming audit, or similar financial oversight exercise.

¹⁴⁵ See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference

3. Communication between finance and project management staff	HS	
Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.	HS	Evidence and interviews show that the PM has a strong awareness of the project's financial status.
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.	HS	Evidence showed that FMO used to be well-informed of project progress and disbursements, as funds were released based on detailed financial and technical reports, ensuring alignment between financial and project status
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.	HS	Interviews and desk review findings indicated that FMO, PM and TM collaborated effectively to identify and resolve financial issues through proactive communication, including regular meetings to monitor financial risks and corrective actions.
Contact/communication between by Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports.	HS	Interviews indicated FMO, PM and TM maintain frequent communication during the preparation of reports, ensuring that both financial and project progress are accurately tracked and aligned.
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the review process	HS	Interviews feedback indicated the project team and FMO used to respond promptly to financial requests, with regular and in-depth meetings ensuring swift identification and resolution of financial issues.
Overall rating	HS	

ANNEX VIII. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH TOOLS

Preliminary Findings and Recommendations (in English)



“Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of MEAs and relevant SDGs in Mauritania”
Project GEF ID 9747
2018 - 2023

Management-led Terminal Review
– Preliminary Findings and Recommendations

November 2025

Summary

- Objective & Methods
- **Preliminary Findings**
- Conclusions, Lessons Learned & Recommendations
- The way forward
- Discussions

Objective



To support the participatory approach of the review



To share emerging findings with project stakeholders



To ensure access to all relevant information sources



To provide an opportunity to verify emerging findings before finalizing the draft report

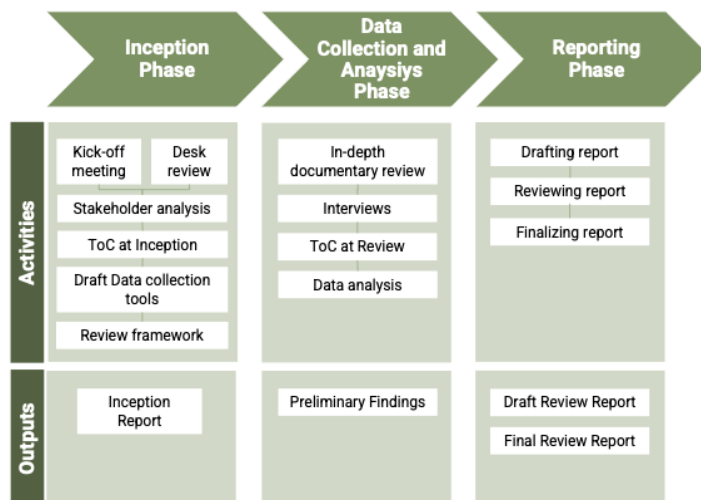


To enable project stakeholders to engage with lessons learned and contribute to recommendations

Method

- Based on the guidelines, criteria, methods, and tools presented by the UNEP Evaluation Office
- Participatory approach
- 10 responses (individual and group interviews*) with key stakeholders (Implementing and executing agencies, sectorial ministries, and NGOs)

70% 30%



* written and spoken formats

Preliminary Findings

A. Strategic Relevance

- Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW, and strategic priorities
- Alignment to Donor/Partner strategic priorities
- Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional, and national environmental priorities
- Complementarity with relevant existing interventions/coherence

B. Quality of Project Design

C. Nature of External Context

D. Effectiveness

- Availability of outputs
- Achievement of project outcomes
- Likelihood of impact

E. Financial Management

- Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures
- Completeness of project financial information
- Communication between finance and project management staff

F. Efficiency

G. Monitoring & Reporting

- Monitoring design and budgeting
- Monitoring of project implementation
- Project reporting

H. Sustainability

- Socio-political sustainability
- Financial sustainability
- Institutional sustainability

I. Factors Affecting Performance

- Preparation and readiness
- Quality of project management and supervision
- Stakeholders' participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality
- Environmental and social safeguards
- Country ownership and driven-ness
- Communication and public awareness

A. Strategic relevance

- Fully aligned with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities (MTS 2018–2021 and 2022–2025) and corresponding PoVs (2018–2019, 2020–2021, 2022–2023), supporting environmental governance, data access, and science-policy interface, and supporting Capacity Building (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC).
- Contributed to GEF CCCD priorities (CCCD-1, CCCD-3), and GEF-6 Core Indicator 6 and GEF-7 indicators, including gender-disaggregated direct beneficiaries.
- Aligned with global, regional, and national priorities, including SDGs 13, 15, 16, and 17, and Mauritania's national strategies and commitments under MEAs (NCSA, NSDS, NEAP, SCAPP, NAPA, etc).
- Indirectly aligned with the UN's "Leave No One Behind" policy by addressing development and human rights and engaging a least-developed country to foster an inclusive and equitable impact.
- Demonstrated satisfactory complementarity with existing UNEP and partner initiatives (e.g., German cooperation (GIZ), the University of Nouakchott Al Asriya and G.I.E Benichab).
- Fostered regional knowledge exchange (e.g., Botswana and Benin) and supported the role of CNOEZA within MESD.

B. Quality of Project Design

- Good performance in key review areas: strategic relevance, logical framework, monitoring, governance and supervision arrangements, partnerships, and financial planning/budgeting.
- Areas for enhancement: Project Preparation, Learning, Communication and Outreach, and Identified Project Design Weaknesses/Gaps.
- Opportunities for improvement: evidence of stakeholder consultation, formal gender analysis, more detailed communication plan, clearer sustainability and exit strategies, and improved Theory of Change pathways.

C. Nature of External Context



Affected by COVID-19 and CNOEZA dissolution, leading to delays and requiring timeline adjustments.



Field activities, workshops and trainings were postponed or canceled, but remote work enabled partial continuity.



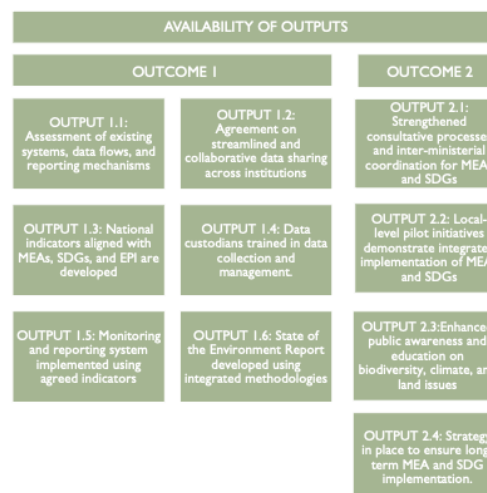
The project showed strong adaptability, revising its work plan and progressing with only two no-cost extensions.



Community-based microprojects stood out for their socioeconomic impact, supporting livelihoods and food security during the crisis.

D. Effectiveness (1/3)

- All 10 outputs were fully achieved, despite challenges.
- Key deliverables included a national State of the Environment Report, the development of GIS-based environmental databases, core environmental indicators, a sustainability strategy, 30+ reports and studies, 6 workshops, training sessions and capacity-building activities, and 3 demonstration projects, including one women-led initiative.
- While the outputs were generally of acceptable quality and met the needs of end users, some instruments were not developed to an optimal level for full governmental uptake.
- Mauritania's vast geography and fragmented data systems present key challenges that must be addressed early to ensure effective environmental planning and implementation.
- Ownership was good, the project's demonstration activities remain operational, and the National Observatory for the Environment and the Coastal Zone continue to use project results, including the EIS.



D. Effectiveness (2/3)

Achievement of outcome

OUTCOME 1: Enhanced management of environmental information and knowledge for use in decision-making, planning, and reporting

OUTCOME 2: Enhanced capacities to develop and implement policies, plans and programmes integrating MEAs and related SDGs

- According to project indicators, both outcomes were achieved, with key outputs delivered and foundational structures established (e.g. EIS, including database mapping, GIS structuring, hosting options, and stakeholder agreements, and train of trainers and capacity-building efforts).
- 2023 PIR rated Outcome 1 as moderately satisfactory and Outcome 2 as satisfactory. Component 2 had a greater impact, as Component 1 was affected by the dissolution of CNOEZA and the centralization of EIS management under DPCS. About 80% of actions were completed; the rest were delayed by pending studies, technical implementation, and equipment procurement.
- Key assumptions were upheld, including institutional support and stakeholder engagement. Drivers, such as participation, monitoring improvements, technical capacity, and sustainability strategies, were only partially upheld.

D. Effectiveness (3/3)

Likelihood of impact

Intermediate State

Environmental governance is strengthened through integrated information systems and policy coordination at national and local levels.

- Project impact is rated as “Likely”, with key foundations in place
- The intermediate state was partially achieved: The project delivered foundational studies, strengthening institutional and community capacities, improving environmental monitoring, and piloting 3 initiatives with tangible local benefits.
- Government commitment was upheld, and the National Observatory for the Environment and Coastal Zone is actively utilizing the project's outcomes.
- Main risks include institutional and leadership changes, limited institutional capacity and influence, challenges to sustainability and strategic continuity, and weaknesses in environmental information management
- No unintended negative effects were reported.

E. Financial Management



Strong financial management ensured alignment with UNEP policies, timely disbursements, regular reporting, and adaptive responses to COVID-19 and institutional changes.



No major financial issues impacted performance; two no-cost extensions were approved in compliance with UNEP and donor guidelines.



Financial documentation was complete, accurate, and accessible, with expenditures tracked via Umoja and linked to specific outputs and outcomes.



Effective collaboration between TM and FMO, with regular and responsive communication, supported adaptive management and procedural adherence.



The project fully utilized its budget, and audits confirmed compliance and transparency.

F. Efficiency

- Two no-cost extensions (totaling 19 months): COVID-19 Pandemic (12-month extension) and Closure Event with stakeholders (7-month extension).
- Successfully delivered expected outputs within revised timelines, despite external disruptions.
- Use of limited resources, delivering a high number of outputs despite a modest budget.
- The project collaborated with a GIZ-funded initiative focused on environmental statistics and information systems, avoiding duplication
- Strategic use of existing institutions and partnerships, involving not only the MESD but also other key ministries like the statistics department, which played a vital role in the EIS.
- Several efficiency-enhancing practices (e.g., train-the-trainers and community-driven initiatives) were adopted.
- 100% of the budget was utilized with no reported waste.

G. Monitoring & Reporting

Successes:

- M&R plan based on UNEP standards, with SMART indicators and a participatory approach.
- Functional monitoring throughout implementation, tracking 37 indicators regularly.
- Semi-annual reports, annual PIRs, and quarterly meetings ensured continuous oversight.
- Extensive and high-quality documentation: technical, financial, training reports, and presentations.
- Use of Umoja ensured financial transparency and compliance.
- GEF Core indicators were consistently reported, including gender-disaggregated data.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- Process-focused indicators at outcome level limited a comprehensive evaluation of the project's long-term impact (*)
- Baseline data were broad and general; the Capacity Scorecard was not updated.
- Disaggregated data by vulnerable groups and gender were only partially collected (only GEF Core indicators).
- Only one post-workshop survey was conducted after training.
- Monitoring data could have been more systematically analyzed and used for adaptive management.

(*) Instead of measuring the "Number of government institutions capable of developing and implementing PPPs integrating MEAs and SDGs " (Outcome Indicator 2), a more appropriate outcome indicator could be: "Percentage of targeted institutions that have implemented at least one policy or program with evidence of MEA and SDG integration."

H. Sustainability



Socio-political sustainability

- Depends heavily on political will and stakeholder ownership..
- Engagement was built through capacity-building, active involvement of stakeholders and cross-ministerial initiatives, and incorporation of traditional and community-based knowledge into environmental practices.
- Sustainability remains vulnerable to institutional transitions and the absence of legal mandates (e.g.; CNOEZA transition).
- Awareness, coordination, and mandate alignment are key to sustaining long-term use.
- Exit workshop reinforced ownership and collective reflection.



Financial sustainability

- Partially reliant on future funding for EIS maintenance, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement.
- MESD's support for the portal domain and ongoing funding discussions indicate forward-looking financial planning.
- Strategy included proposals for financing mechanisms, identifying synergies with the private sector and civil society, creating opportunities for diversified funding sources beyond traditional donor support.
- While some interviewees felt no additional resources were needed for maintaining outcomes, others emphasized the importance of dedicated funding and personnel to sustain them.



Institutional sustainability

- Highly dependent on institutional frameworks and governance structures.
- Challenged by the transition of CNOEZA
- Limited evidence, such as formal policy changes, dedicated budgets, or institutional mandate updates, to confirm systemic adoption or integration.
- Capacity-building efforts (e.g., ToT) supported institutional autonomy.
- The National Observatory continues to build on its studies and institutional framework.
- Requires aligning with national systems, formalizing roles through legal frameworks, and reframing EIS as a permanent government function.

I. Factors Affecting Performance (1/3)

Preparation and readiness

- **Successes:** Project was launched within 6 months (Mar–Jul 2018), anchored in MESD structures, with timely legal agreements, joint planning workshop, inception and introductory ("prise de contact") meetings, workplan, procurement plan, PSC w/ broad representation, creation of CNOEZA and the ROEZA coordination panel, prompt staffing mobilization, ESS assessment, and defined stakeholder roles.
- **Opportunities of improvements:** Strengthen stakeholder engagement in ESS assessments, update the stakeholder analysis, and consider measures at inception to enhance project design.

Quality of project management and supervision

- **Successes:** Strong and experienced leadership, clearly defined roles, and well-structured communication between the FMO, Task Manager, and project team. Adaptive management ensured resilience and timely oversight, minimizing disruptions despite external challenges.
- **Challenges:** Limited PSC engagement (3 meetings), leadership transition within the ministry (CNOEZA dissolution), and excessive reliance on a single focal point in the region.

Stakeholders' participation and cooperation

- **Successes:** Stakeholder collaboration supported by a robust knowledge-sharing approach, PSC meetings, and capacity-building initiatives; engagement included a broad spectrum of participants; project's governance and management structures clearly defined, with roles aligned to capacities; strategic partnerships with national academic and scientific institutions; and local knowledge integrated into pilot projects, supporting sustainable livelihoods and gender equity.
- **Challenges:** Limited strategic engagement from the PSC, leadership transitions, and irregular communication during the pandemic.

I. Factors Affecting Performance (2/3)

Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality

- **Successes:** Integration of human rights and gender equality into the project's design, implementation, and resource allocation; inclusive capacity-building and awareness-raising activities; microfinance initiative targeting indigenous women, with a positive impact on resilience and community leadership; and valuation of local and traditional knowledge into pilot projects.
- **Challenges:** No gender action plan; and lack of gender balance in formal decision-making spaces, despite women's involvement in other project activities.

Environmental and social safeguards

- **Successes:** Low-risk and safeguard-aligned approach ensuring environmental and social responsibility, including monitoring of demonstration projects.
- **Comment:** Risk management focused on political/organizational aspects as no major environmental or social impacts were expected. Staff turnover risk was underestimated (backup focal points not appointed). Opportunity: Strengthen monitoring of demonstration projects by using systematic methods and indicators to support robust long-term evaluation.

I. Factors Affecting Performance (3/3)

Country ownership and driven-ness

- **Successes:** National ownership and stakeholder engagement through inclusive governance structures such as PSC^(*), capacity-building workshops, ToT initiatives, and grassroots microprojects that empowered local actors, and the establishment of the National Observatory and its continued use of project outputs.
- **Challenges:** Underestimated risk of staff turnover; limited strategic engagement from certain stakeholders; lack of dedicated financial planning, and inconsistent participation within the PSC.

Communication and public awareness

- **Successes:** Knowledge management and stakeholder engagement through well-funded communication activities, capacity-building workshops focused on technical training, public awareness activities and inclusive outreach efforts (eg.; Environment Live Knowledge platform, State of the Environment Report, and active involvement of communities, schools, and marginalized groups).
- **Challenges:** Limited communication strategy in scope; weak feedback mechanisms, and lack of outcome-based monitoring.

^(*) Representation from UNEP EWAD, MESD, other relevant ministries, civil society, academia, and the private sector

Conclusions

MLTR Strategic Questions:

1. “What approaches were most effective in encouraging national institutions to use and maintain the Environmental Information System (EIS), especially in challenging contexts?”
2. “How future projects can strengthen adaptive management in fragile or complex contexts?”

General conclusion

- The project significantly enhanced institutional capacity and environmental data management, transitioning from paper-based records to a cloud-based EIS, now operational and supported by the National Observatory for the Environment and the Coastal Zone.
- It fostered inter-institutional coordination, developed consensual environmental indicators, and integrated MEA and SDG principles into national planning.
- Demonstration projects, including ecosystem-based adaptation and women-led microfinance pilots, strengthened local ownership and showcased practical applications of environmental conventions.
- The participatory sustainability strategy, train-the-trainers model, and localized training reinforced institutional relevance and community empowerment.
- COVID-19 caused delays and reduced stakeholder engagement, and the dissolution of CNOEZA, disrupted continuity and created role misalignments.
- While the project established an Environmental Information Charter to guide data-sharing, formal legal mandates and MoUs between ministries are still needed to ensure long-term institutional commitment.
- Fragmented data ecosystems, limited coordination, and reliance on a single focal point exposed vulnerabilities.

1st Question: “What approaches were most effective in encouraging national institutions to use and maintain the Environmental Information System (EIS), especially in challenging contexts?”

- **Beyond Technology:** Success required more than technology. It depended on institutional integration and inclusive engagement.
- **Institutional Anchoring:** Positioning the EIS within influential government bodies such as DPCS and the National Observatory for the Environment and the Coastal Zone Sustainability ensured legitimacy and sustainability.
- **Inclusive Engagement & Traditional Knowledge:** Inclusive stakeholder engagement and the integration of traditional knowledge enhanced relevance and ownership.
- **Strategic Coordination:** Structured collaboration between financial and operational teams strengthened oversight and alignment.
- **Localized Capacity Building:** Tailored strategies like “train-the-trainers” and community-led demonstration projects fostered local autonomy and skills development.
- **Sustained Presence:** UNEP’s in-country presence was important for maintaining coordination and institutional engagement.

2nd Question: “How future projects can strengthen adaptive management in fragile or complex contexts?”

- **Legal and Policy Foundations:** Embedding the EIS in legal frameworks and formalizing data-sharing agreements are critical to enhance institutionalization and alignment with MEA obligations.
- **Strong Project Governance and Continuity:** Strong governance mechanisms and consistent engagement of the PSC are essential to support strategic oversight and institutional continuity.
- **Flexible Implementation:** Hybrid work models, timeline adjustments, and virtual platforms enabled continuity amid disruptions.
- **Continuous and Monitored Capacity-Building:** National training such as the “train-the-trainers” combined with local initiatives (community-based projects) built technical capacity and should be systematically evaluated.
- **Impact-focused Monitoring System:** A clear Theory of Change, baseline data, and impact-focused indicators are essential for adaptive learning.
- **Strategic and Inclusive Communication:** Embed robust, inclusive, and context-specific communication in project design to drive engagement, knowledge sharing, and behavior change, while monitoring its impact to ensure effectiveness.
- **Direct Partnerships:** UNEP’s direct relationship with local partners streamlined operations and improved responsiveness. Diversifying interlocutors and avoiding reliance on single contacts strengthens institutional resilience and continuity.
- **Gender Mainstreaming and communication:** Successes like the women-led microfinance pilot show potential. Future projects should adopt systematic gender mainstreaming through early gender analysis and disaggregated data collection.

		Conclusions	
Lessons learned		Q1	Q2
	L1	X	X
	L2		X
	L3	X	X
	L4		X
	L5	X	
	L6	X	X
	L7		X
	L8		X
	L9		X
	L10		X

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons learned (1/4)

- 1 Institutional Sustainability of the Environmental Information System Requires Legal Mandates, Clear Roles, and Long-Term Capacity Strategies.**
- 2 Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement and Integration of Traditional Knowledge Strengthen Ownership and Sustainability in Environmental Governance.**
- 3 Strengthened Governance Mechanisms and Consistent Steering Committee Engagement Enhance Strategic Oversight and Institutional Continuity.**

Lessons learned (2/4)

- 4 Direct Access to Local Partners and Diversification of Interlocutors Strengthen Coordination and Institutional Resilience.**
- 5 Structured and Frequent Coordination Between Financial and Operational Teams Enhances Oversight and Responsiveness.**
- 6 Tailored Capacity-Building Strategies and Localized Tools Enhance Technical Competence and Policy Engagement Across Stakeholder Groups.**

Lessons learned (3/4)

- 7 Adaptive Management, Hybrid Work Models, and Strategic In-Country Presence Are Essential for Project Continuity in Times of Crisis and Institutional Transition.**
- 8 Insufficiently Specific and Impact-Oriented Indicators Limit the Ability to Demonstrate Institutional Change and Long-Term Results.**

Lessons learned (4/4)

- 9 Strategic and Inclusive Communication Planning Is Essential to Strengthen Engagement, Knowledge Sharing, and Behavioral Change.**
- 10 Embedding Gender-Responsive Design, Monitoring, and Local Empowerment Mechanisms Enhances Inclusiveness and Sustainability in Environmental Projects**

RECOMMENDATIONS

(*) Guidance for Project/Task Managers and Review Consultants, Presentation and Quality of Recommendations in the Main Terminal Review Report, 15 July 2025.

Recommendations

- 1 Strengthening Legal Mechanisms and Institutional Agreements to Ensure Environmental Data Governance and Long-Term Sustainability of the EIS in Mauritania.**

Priority level: Critical Recommendation

Type: Partner

Recommendations

- 2 Strengthen the Strategic Role of the Project Steering Committee through Clear Mandates, Regular Engagement, and Structured Documentation to Promote Intersectoral Coordination, Institutional Continuity and Ownership.**

Priority level: Important Recommendation

Type: Partner

Recommendations

3

Develop and Implement a National Strategy for Continuous and Monitored Capacity-Building.

Priority level: Important Recommendation

Type: Partner

Recommendations

4

Strengthen existing monitoring mechanisms in future projects by establishing an impact-focused monitoring and evaluation system at project level to measure long-term results and enhance sustainability.

Priority level: Important Recommendation

Type: Project

Recommendations

- 5 Integrate inclusive and context-specific communication strategies into project design, with dedicated resources for implementation.**

Priority level: Opportunity of Improvement

Type: Project

The way forward



Thank you

Elaine P. Varela Alberte
Evaluation Consultant
UNEP



Preliminary Findings and Recommendations (in French)



**“Renforcement des
capacités essentielles
pour la mise en
œuvre, le suivi et la
communication des
AME et des ODD
pertinents en
Mauritanie”**

**Project GEF ID 9747
2018 - 2023**

Évaluation terminale dirigée par la
direction – Conclusions
préliminaires et recommandations

Novembre 2025

Résumé

- Résumé
- Objectif et Méthodes
- **Résultats Préliminaires**
- Conclusions, Leçons Tirées et Recommandations
- Perspectives / Prochaines Étapes
- Discussions

Objectif



Soutenir l'approche participative de l'examen



Partager les résultats émergents avec les parties prenantes du projet



Garantir l'accès à toutes les sources d'information pertinentes



Offrir l'opportunité de vérifier les résultats émergents avant la finalisation du rapport provisoire



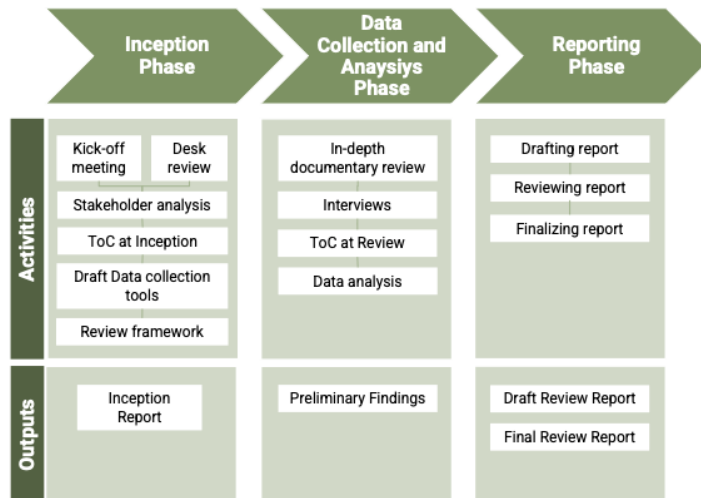
Permettre aux parties prenantes du projet de s'approprier les leçons tirées et de contribuer aux recommandations

Method

- Sur la base des lignes directrices, des critères, des méthodes et des outils présentés par le Bureau de l'évaluation du PNUE
- Approche participative
- 10 entretiens* (individuels et collectifs) avec les principales parties prenantes (agences de mise en œuvre et d'exécution, ministères sectoriels et ONG)

70% 30%

* formats écrit et oral



Résultats Préliminaires

A. Pertinence Stratégique

- Alignement avec le MTS, le POW et les priorités stratégiques du PNUE
- Alignement avec les priorités stratégiques des donateurs/partenaires
- Pertinence par rapport aux priorités environnementales mondiales, régionales, sous-régionales et nationales
- Complémentarité avec les interventions existantes pertinentes / cohérence

B. Qualité de la Conception du Projet

C. Nature du Contexte Externe

D. Efficacité

- Disponibilité des produits (outputs)
- Réalisation des résultats du projet (outcomes)
- Probabilité d'impact

E. Gestion Financière

- Respect des politiques et procédures financières du PNUE
- Exhaustivité des informations financières du projet
- Communication entre le personnel financier et l'équipe de gestion du projet

F. Efficience

G. Suivi et Rapport

- Conception et budgétisation du suivi
- Suivi de la mise en œuvre du projet
- Rapports du projet

H. Durabilité

- Durabilité socio-politique
- Durabilité financière
- Durabilité institutionnelle

I. Facteurs Affectant la Performance

- Préparation et état de préparation
- Qualité de la gestion et de la supervision du projet
- Participation et coopération des parties prenantes
- Réactivité aux droits humains et à l'égalité des genres
- Garanties environnementales et sociales
- Appropriation et leadership national
- Communication et sensibilisation du public

A. Pertinence Stratégique

- Entièrement aligné sur le mandat et les priorités thématiques du PNUE (MTS 2018–2021 et 2022–2025) ainsi que sur les PoV correspondants (2018–2019, 2020–2021, 2022–2023), en soutenant la gouvernance environnementale, l'accès aux données et l'interface science-politique, ainsi que le renforcement des capacités (BSP) et la coopération Sud-Sud (S-SC).
- A contribué aux priorités du GEF en matière de CCCD (CCCD-1, CCCD-3) et aux indicateurs clés du GEF-6 (Indicateur 6) et du GEF-7, y compris les bénéficiaires directs ventilés par sexe.
- Aligné sur les priorités mondiales, régionales et nationales, notamment les ODD 13, 15, 16 et 17, ainsi que sur les stratégies nationales et engagements de la Mauritanie dans le cadre des AME (NCSA, NSDS, NEAP, SCAPP, NAPA, etc.).
- Indirectement aligné sur la politique des Nations Unies « Ne laisser personne de côté » en abordant les questions de développement et de droits humains et en impliquant un pays moins avancé afin de favoriser un impact inclusif et équitable.
- A démontré une complémentarité satisfaisante avec les initiatives existantes du PNUE et des partenaires (par exemple, coopération allemande (GIZ), Université de Nouakchott Al Asriya et G.I.E Benichab).
- A favorisé l'échange de connaissances au niveau régional (par exemple, Botswana et Bénin) et soutenu le rôle du CNOEZA au sein du MESD.

B. Qualité de la Conception du Projet

- Bonne performance dans les principaux domaines de l'examen : pertinence stratégique, cadre logique, suivi, dispositifs de gouvernance et de supervision, partenariats et planification/budgétisation financière.
- Domaines à renforcer : préparation du projet, apprentissage, communication et sensibilisation, ainsi que les faiblesses/lacunes identifiées dans la conception du projet.
- Opportunités d'amélioration : preuves de consultation des parties prenantes, analyse formelle du genre, plan de communication plus détaillé, stratégies de durabilité et de sortie plus claires, et amélioration des trajectoires de la Théorie du Changement.

C. Nature du Contexte Externe



Impacté par la COVID-19 et la dissolution du CNOEZA, entraînant des retards et nécessitant des ajustements du calendrier.



Les activités sur le terrain, ateliers et formations ont été reportés ou annulés, mais le travail à distance a permis une continuité partielle.



Le projet a démontré une forte capacité d'adaptation, en révisant son plan de travail et en progressant avec seulement deux prolongations sans coût supplémentaire.



Les microprojets communautaires se sont distingués par leur impact socio-économique, soutenant les moyens de subsistance et la sécurité alimentaire pendant la crise.

D. Efficacité (1/3)

- Les 10 produits ont été entièrement réalisés, malgré les défis rencontrés.
- Les livrables clés comprenaient : un Rapport national sur l'état de l'environnement, le développement de bases de données environnementales basées sur SIG, des indicateurs environnementaux essentiels, une stratégie de durabilité, plus de 30 rapports et études, 6 ateliers, des sessions de formation et des activités de renforcement des capacités, ainsi que 3 projets pilotes, dont une initiative dirigée par des femmes.
- Bien que les produits aient généralement été de qualité acceptable et aient répondu aux besoins des utilisateurs finaux, certains instruments n'ont pas été développés à un niveau optimal pour une adoption complète par le gouvernement.
- La vaste géographie de la Mauritanie et la fragmentation des systèmes de données représentent des défis majeurs qui doivent être abordés dès le début pour garantir une planification et une mise en œuvre environnementales efficaces.
- L'appropriation a été satisfaisante : les activités pilotes du projet restent opérationnelles et l'Observatoire national de l'environnement et de la zone côtière continue d'utiliser les résultats du projet, y compris le SIE.

DISPONIBILITÉ DES PRODUITS

RÉSULTAT 1

OUTPUT 1.1 : Évaluation des systèmes existants, des flux de données et des mécanismes de rapport

OUTPUT 1.3 : Indicateurs nationaux alignés sur les AME, les ODD et l'EPI développés

OUTPUT 1.5 : Système de suivi et de rapport mis en œuvre à l'aide des indicateurs convenus

RÉSULTAT 2

OUTPUT 1.2 : Accord sur un partage de données simplifié et collaboratif entre les institutions

OUTPUT 1.4 : Formation des dépositaires de données à la collecte et à la gestion des données

OUTPUT 1.6 : Rapport sur l'état de l'environnement élaboré selon des méthodologies intégrées

OUTPUT 2.1 : Processus consultatifs renforcés et coordination interministérielle pour les AME et les ODD

OUTPUT 2.2 : Initiatives pilotes au niveau local démontrant la mise en œuvre intégrée des AME et des ODD

OUTPUT 2.3 : Sensibilisation et éducation du public renforcées sur les questions de biodiversité, de climat et de terres

OUTPUT 2.4 : Stratégie mise en place pour garantir la mise en œuvre à long terme des AME et des ODD

D. Efficacité (2/3)

Réalisation du résultat

RÉSULTAT 1 : Gestion améliorée des informations et des connaissances environnementales pour leur utilisation dans la prise de décision, la planification et la production de rapports

RÉSULTAT 2 : Capacités renforcées pour élaborer et mettre en œuvre des politiques, plans et programmes intégrant les AME et les ODD connexes

- Selon les indicateurs du projet, les deux résultats ont été atteints, avec des produits clés livrés et des structures fondamentales établies (par exemple : SIE, incluant la cartographie des bases de données, la structuration SIG, les options d'hébergement et les accords entre parties prenantes, ainsi que la formation de formateurs et les efforts de renforcement des capacités).
- Le PIR 2023 a évalué le Résultat 1 comme modérément satisfaisant et le Résultat 2 comme satisfaisant. Le Composant 2 a eu un impact plus important, car le Composant 1 a été affecté par la dissolution du CNOEZA et la centralisation de la gestion du SIE sous la DPCS. Environ 80 % des actions ont été réalisées ; le reste a été retardé en raison d'études en attente, de la mise en œuvre technique et de l'acquisition d'équipements.
- Les hypothèses clés ont été respectées, notamment le soutien institutionnel et l'engagement des parties prenantes. Les moteurs, tels que la participation, les améliorations du suivi, la capacité technique et les stratégies de durabilité, n'ont été que partiellement respectés.

D. Efficacité (3/3)

Probabilité d'impact

État intermédiaire

La gouvernance environnementale est renforcée grâce à des systèmes d'information intégrés et à la coordination des politiques aux niveaux national et local.

- L'impact du projet est évalué comme « probable », avec des bases essentielles en place.
- L'état intermédiaire a été partiellement atteint : le projet a livré des études fondamentales, renforcé les capacités institutionnelles et communautaires, amélioré le suivi environnemental et mis en œuvre 3 initiatives pilotes avec des bénéfices locaux tangibles.
- L'engagement du gouvernement a été maintenu, et l'Observatoire national de l'environnement et de la zone côtière utilise activement les résultats du projet.
- Les principaux risques incluent les changements institutionnels et de leadership, la capacité et l'influence institutionnelles limitées, les défis liés à la durabilité et à la continuité stratégique, ainsi que des faiblesses dans la gestion des informations environnementales.
- Aucun effet négatif imprévu n'a été signalé.

E. Gestion Financière



Une gestion financière solide a assuré l'alignement avec les politiques du PNUE, des décaissements en temps voulu, des rapports réguliers et des réponses adaptatives face à la COVID-19 et aux changements institutionnels.



Aucun problème financier majeur n'a affecté la performance ; deux prolongations sans coût supplémentaire ont été approuvées conformément aux directives du PNUE et des donateurs.



La documentation financière était complète, exacte et accessible, avec des dépenses suivies via Umoja et liées à des produits et résultats spécifiques.



Une collaboration efficace entre le TM et le FMO, avec une communication régulière et réactive, a soutenu la gestion adaptative et le respect des procédures.



Le projet a pleinement utilisé son budget, et les audits ont confirmé la conformité et la transparence.

F. Efficience

- Deux prolongations sans coût supplémentaire (total de 19 mois) : pandémie de COVID-19 (extension de 12 mois) et événement de clôture avec les parties prenantes (extension de 7 mois).
- Livraison réussie des produits attendus dans les délais révisés, malgré les perturbations externes.
- Utilisation de ressources limitées, avec un nombre élevé de produits livrés malgré un budget modeste.
- Collaboration avec une initiative financée par la GIZ axée sur les statistiques et systèmes d'information environnementaux, évitant les duplications.
- Utilisation stratégique des institutions et partenariats existants, impliquant non seulement le MESD mais aussi d'autres ministères clés, comme le département des statistiques, qui a joué un rôle essentiel dans le SIE.
- Adoption de plusieurs pratiques favorisant l'efficacité (par exemple, formation des formateurs et initiatives communautaires).
- 100 % du budget utilisé sans gaspillage signalé.

G. Suivi et Rapport

Succès:

- Plan de suivi et d'évaluation basé sur les normes du PNUE, avec des indicateurs SMART et une approche participative.
- Suivi fonctionnel tout au long de la mise en œuvre, avec un suivi régulier de 37 indicateurs.
- Rapports semestriels, PIR annuels et réunions trimestrielles assurant une supervision continue.
- Documentation étendue et de haute qualité : rapports techniques, financiers, de formation et présentations.
- Utilisation d'Umoja garantissant la transparence financière et la conformité.
- Les indicateurs clés du FEM ont été systématiquement rapportés, y compris les données ventilées par sexe.

Opportunités d'amélioration:

- Process-focused indicators at outcome level limited a comprehensive evaluation of the project's long-term impact (*)
- Baseline data were broad and general; the Capacity Scorecard was not updated.
- Disaggregated data by vulnerable groups and gender were only partially collected (only GEF Core indicators).
- Only one post-workshop survey was conducted after training.
- Monitoring data could have been more systematically analyzed and used for adaptive management.

(*) Au lieu de mesurer le « Nombre d'institutions gouvernementales capables de développer et de mettre en œuvre des PPP intégrant les AME et les ODD » (Indicateur de résultat 2), un indicateur de résultat plus approprié pourrait être :

« Pourcentage des institutions ciblées ayant mis en œuvre au moins une politique ou un programme avec preuve d'intégration des AME et des ODD ».

H. Durabilité



Durabilité socio-politique

- Dépend fortement de la volonté politique et de l'appropriation par les parties prenantes. L'engagement a été renforcé grâce au développement des capacités, à l'implication active des acteurs, aux initiatives inter-ministérielles et à l'intégration des savoirs traditionnels et communautaires dans les pratiques environnementales. La durabilité reste vulnérable aux transitions institutionnelles et à l'absence de mandats légaux (ex. : transition du CNOEZA). La sensibilisation, la coordination et l'alignement des mandats sont essentiels pour garantir une utilisation à long terme. L'atelier de clôture a consolidé l'appropriation et la réflexion collective.



Durabilité financière

- Partiellement dépendante de financements futurs pour la maintenance du SIE, le renforcement des capacités et l'engagement des parties prenantes. Le soutien du MESD pour le domaine du portail et les discussions en cours sur le financement témoignent d'une planification financière prospective. La stratégie comprenait des propositions de mécanismes de financement, l'identification de synergies avec le secteur privé et la société civile, ainsi que la création d'opportunités pour diversifier les sources de financement au-delà du soutien traditionnel des bailleurs. Bien que certains interlocuteurs estiment qu'aucune ressource supplémentaire n'est nécessaire pour maintenir les résultats, d'autres soulignent l'importance d'un financement et d'un personnel dédiés pour les pérenniser.



Durabilité institutionnelle

- Fortement dépendante des cadres institutionnels et des structures de gouvernance. Mise à l'épreuve par la transition du CNOEZA. Peu d'éléments probants, tels que des changements politiques formels, des budgets dédiés ou des mises à jour des mandats institutionnels, pour confirmer une adoption ou une intégration systémique. Les efforts de renforcement des capacités (ex. : formation de formateurs) ont soutenu l'autonomie institutionnelle. L'Observatoire national continue de s'appuyer sur ses études et son cadre institutionnel. Nécessite un alignement avec les systèmes nationaux, la formalisation des rôles par des cadres juridiques et la requalification du SIE en tant que fonction gouvernementale permanente.

I. Facteurs influençant la performance (1/3)

Préparation et état de préparation

- **Succès** : Le projet a été lancé en moins de six mois (mars–juillet 2018), ancré dans les structures du MESD, avec des accords juridiques conclus en temps voulu, un atelier de planification conjoint, des réunions de démarrage et de présentation (« prise de contact »), un plan de travail, un plan de passation des marchés, un comité de pilotage (PSC) avec une large représentation, la création du CNOEZA et du panel de coordination ROEZA, une mobilisation rapide du personnel, une évaluation ESS et des rôles clairement définis pour les parties prenantes.
- **Opportunités d'amélioration** : Renforcer l'engagement des parties prenantes dans les évaluations ESS, actualiser l'analyse des parties prenantes et envisager des mesures dès la phase de démarrage pour améliorer la conception du projet.

Qualité de la gestion et de la supervision du projet

- **Succès** : Leadership solide et expérimenté, rôles clairement définis et communication bien structurée entre le FMO, le gestionnaire de projet et l'équipe. Une gestion adaptative a assuré la résilience et une supervision rapide, minimisant les perturbations malgré les défis externes.
- **Défis** : Engagement limité du PSC (3 réunions), transition du leadership au sein du ministère (dissolution du CNOEZA) et dépendance excessive à un seul point focal dans la région.

Participation et coopération des parties prenantes

- **Succès** : Collaboration des parties prenantes soutenue par une approche robuste de partage des connaissances, réunions du PSC et initiatives de renforcement des capacités ; engagement incluant un large éventail de participants ; structures de gouvernance et de gestion du projet clairement définies, avec des rôles alignés sur les capacités ; partenariats stratégiques avec des institutions académiques et scientifiques nationales ; intégration des savoirs locaux dans les projets pilotes, favorisant des moyens de subsistance durables et l'équité de genre.
- **Défis** : Engagement stratégique limité du PSC, transitions de leadership et communication irrégulière pendant la pandémie.

I. Facteurs influençant la performance (2/3)

Réactivité aux droits humains et à l'égalité des genres

- **Succès** : Intégration des droits humains et de l'égalité des genres dans la conception, la mise en œuvre et l'allocation des ressources du projet ; activités inclusives de renforcement des capacités et de sensibilisation ; initiative de microfinance ciblant les femmes autochtones, avec un impact positif sur la résilience et le leadership communautaire ; valorisation des savoirs locaux et traditionnels dans les projets pilotes.
- **Défis** : Absence de plan d'action genre et manque d'équilibre entre les sexes dans les espaces décisionnels formels, malgré l'implication des femmes dans d'autres activités du projet.

Garanties environnementales et sociales

- **Succès** : Approche à faible risque et conforme aux garanties, assurant la responsabilité environnementale et sociale, y compris le suivi des projets de démonstration.
- **Commentaire** : La gestion des risques s'est concentrée sur les aspects politiques et organisationnels, aucun impact environnemental ou social majeur n'étant attendu. Le risque lié au roulement du personnel a été sous-estimé (absence de points focaux de remplacement). Opportunité : Renforcer le suivi des projets de démonstration en utilisant des méthodes et des indicateurs systématiques pour soutenir une évaluation robuste à long terme.

I. Facteurs influençant la performance (3/3)

Appropriation nationale et dynamisme

- **Succès** : Appropriation nationale et engagement des parties prenantes grâce à des structures de gouvernance inclusives telles que le PSC (*), des ateliers de renforcement des capacités, des initiatives de formation de formateurs (ToT) et des microprojets communautaires qui ont autonomisé les acteurs locaux, ainsi que la création de l'Observatoire national et son utilisation continue des résultats du projet.
- **Défis** : Risque de rotation du personnel sous-estimé, engagement stratégique limité de certaines parties prenantes, absence de planification financière dédiée et participation irrégulière au sein du PSC.

Communication et sensibilisation du public

- **Succès** : Gestion des connaissances et engagement des parties prenantes grâce à des activités de communication bien financées, des ateliers de renforcement des capacités axés sur la formation technique, des actions de sensibilisation et des efforts inclusifs (par exemple : plateforme de connaissances *Environment Live*, rapport sur l'état de l'environnement, et implication active des communautés, des écoles et des groupes marginalisés).
- **Défis** : Portée limitée de la stratégie de communication ; mécanismes de retour d'information faibles et absence de suivi basé sur les résultats.

(*) Représentation de l'UNEP EWAD, du MESD, d'autres ministères concernés, de la société civile, du milieu académique et du secteur privé.

Conclusions

Questions stratégiques:

1. « Quelles approches ont été les plus efficaces pour encourager les institutions nationales à utiliser et à maintenir le Système d'Information Environnementale (SIE), en particulier dans des contextes difficiles ? »
2. « Comment les projets futurs peuvent-ils renforcer la gestion adaptative dans des contextes fragiles ou complexes ? »

Conclusion générale

- Le projet a considérablement renforcé les capacités institutionnelles et la gestion des données environnementales, passant des dossiers papier à un Système d'Information Environnemental (SIE) basé sur le cloud, désormais opérationnel et soutenu par l'Observatoire National de l'Environnement et de la Zone Côtière.
- Il a favorisé la coordination interinstitutionnelle, développé des indicateurs environnementaux consensuels et intégré les principes des AME et des ODD dans la planification nationale.
- Les projets pilotes, incluant l'adaptation basée sur les écosystèmes et les initiatives de microfinance dirigées par des femmes, ont renforcé l'appropriation locale et illustré des applications concrètes des conventions environnementales.
- La stratégie participative de durabilité, le modèle « former les formateurs » et les formations localisées ont consolidé la pertinence institutionnelle et l'autonomisation communautaire.
- La pandémie de COVID-19 a entraîné des retards et réduit l'engagement des parties prenantes, tandis que la dissolution du CNOEZA a perturbé la continuité et créé des désalignements de rôles.
- Bien que le projet ait établi une Charte de l'Information Environnementale pour encadrer le partage des données, des mandats légaux formels et des protocoles d'accord entre ministères restent nécessaires pour garantir un engagement institutionnel à long terme.
Des écosystèmes de données fragmentés, une coordination limitée et une dépendance à un seul point focal ont révélé des vulnérabilités.

1ère Question : « Quelles approches ont été les plus efficaces pour encourager les institutions nationales à utiliser et à maintenir le Système d'Information Environnementale (SIE), en particulier dans des contextes difficiles ? »

- **Au-delà de la technologie** : Le succès a nécessité bien plus que la technologie. Il a reposé sur l'intégration institutionnelle et un engagement inclusif.
- **Ancrage institutionnel** : Positionner le SIE au sein d'organismes gouvernementaux influents tels que la DPCS et l'Observatoire National de l'Environnement et de la Zone Côtière a assuré sa légitimité et sa durabilité.
- **Engagement inclusif et savoirs traditionnels** : L'implication des parties prenantes et l'intégration des connaissances traditionnelles ont renforcé la pertinence et l'appropriation.
- **Coordination stratégique** : Une collaboration structurée entre les équipes financières et opérationnelles a consolidé la supervision et l'alignement.
- **Renforcement des capacités localisé** : Des stratégies adaptées, telles que le modèle « former les formateurs » et les projets pilotes communautaires, ont favorisé l'autonomie locale et le développement des compétences.
- **Présence continue** : La présence du PNUE dans le pays a été essentielle pour maintenir la coordination et l'engagement institutionnel.

2ème Question : « Comment les projets futurs peuvent-ils renforcer la gestion adaptative dans des contextes fragiles ou complexes ? »

- **Fondements juridiques et politiques** : Intégrer le SIE dans des cadres légaux et formaliser les accords de partage des données sont essentiels pour renforcer l'institutionnalisation et l'alignement avec les obligations des AME.
- **Gouvernance et continuité du projet** : Des mécanismes de gouvernance solides et un engagement constant du PSC sont indispensables pour soutenir la supervision stratégique et la continuité institutionnelle.
- **Mise en œuvre flexible** : Des modèles hybrides de travail, des ajustements de calendrier et des plateformes virtuelles ont permis d'assurer la continuité malgré les perturbations.
- **Renforcement des capacités continu et suivi** : Les formations nationales, telles que le modèle « former les formateurs », combinées à des initiatives locales (projets communautaires), ont développé des compétences techniques et devraient être systématiquement évaluées.
- **Système de suivi axé sur l'impact** : Une théorie du changement claire, des données de référence et des indicateurs orientés vers l'impact sont essentiels pour l'apprentissage adaptatif.
- **Communication stratégique et inclusive** : Intégrer une communication robuste, inclusive et adaptée au contexte dans la conception du projet pour stimuler l'engagement, le partage des connaissances et le changement de comportement, tout en surveillant son impact pour garantir son efficacité.
- **Partenariats directs** : La relation directe du PNUE avec les partenaires locaux a simplifié les opérations et amélioré la réactivité. Diversifier les interlocuteurs et éviter la dépendance à un seul contact renforce la résilience et la continuité institutionnelle.
- **Intégration systématique du genre** : Les réussites comme le projet pilote de microfinance dirigé par des femmes montrent un potentiel. Les projets futurs devraient adopter une approche systématique de l'intégration du genre dès le début, avec une analyse genre et la collecte de données ventilées par sexe.

Conclusions

Leçons apprises		Q1	Q2
	L1	X	X
	L2		X
	L3	X	X
	L4		X
	L5	X	
	L6	X	X
	L7		X
	L8		X
	L9		X
	L10		X

LEÇONS
APPRISES

Leçons apprises (1/4)

- 1** La durabilité institutionnelle du Système d'Information Environnementale nécessite des mandats légaux, des rôles clairement définis et des stratégies de renforcement des capacités à long terme.
- 2** Un engagement inclusif des parties prenantes et l'intégration des savoirs traditionnels renforcent l'appropriation et la durabilité dans la gouvernance environnementale.
- 3** Des mécanismes de gouvernance renforcés et un engagement constant du comité de pilotage améliorent la supervision stratégique et la continuité institutionnelle.

Leçons apprises (2/4)

- 4** Un accès direct aux partenaires locaux et la diversification des interlocuteurs renforcent la coordination et la résilience institutionnelle.
- 5** Une coordination structurée et fréquente entre les équipes financières et opérationnelles améliore la supervision et la réactivité.
- 6** Des stratégies de renforcement des capacités adaptées et des outils localisés renforcent la compétence technique et l'engagement politique auprès des différents groupes de parties prenantes.

Leçons apprises (3/4)

- 7** La gestion adaptative, les modèles de travail hybrides et une présence stratégique sur le terrain sont essentiels pour assurer la continuité des projets en période de crise et de transition institutionnelle.
- 8** Des indicateurs insuffisamment spécifiques et orientés vers l'impact limitent la capacité à démontrer le changement institutionnel et les résultats à long terme.

Leçons apprises (4/4)

- 9** Une planification stratégique et inclusive de la communication est essentielle pour renforcer l'engagement, le partage des connaissances et le changement de comportement.
- 10** Intégrer une conception sensible au genre, un suivi adapté et des mécanismes d'autonomisation locale améliore l'inclusivité et la durabilité des projets environnementaux.

Recommandations

- 1 Renforcer les mécanismes juridiques et les accords institutionnels afin de garantir la gouvernance des données environnementales et la durabilité à long terme du Système d'Information Environnementale (SIE) en Mauritanie.**

Niveau de priorité : Recommandation critique

Type : Partenaire

Recommandations

- 2 Renforcer le rôle stratégique du Comité de Pilotage du projet grâce à des mandats clairs, un engagement régulier et une documentation structurée afin de promouvoir la coordination intersectorielle, la continuité institutionnelle et l'appropriation.**

Niveau de priorité : Recommandation importante

Type : Partenaire

Recommandations

3

Élaborer et mettre en œuvre une stratégie nationale pour un renforcement des capacités continu et suivi.

Niveau de priorité : Recommandation importante

Type : Partenaire

Recommandations

4

Renforcer les mécanismes de suivi existants dans les projets futurs en établissant un système de suivi et d'évaluation axé sur l'impact au niveau du projet afin de mesurer les résultats à long terme et d'améliorer la durabilité.

Niveau de priorité : Recommandation importante

Type : Projet

Recommandations

- 5 Intégrer des stratégies de communication inclusives et adaptées au contexte dans la conception du projet, avec des ressources dédiées pour leur mise en œuvre.**

Niveau de priorité : Opportunité d'amélioration

Type : Projet

La voie à suivre



ANNEX IX. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER

Elaine P. Varela Alberte

Profession	Enviromental specialist / civil engineer
Nationality	Brazilian / Spanish
Country experience	• Europe: Spain • Africa: Kenya • Americas: Brasil, Colombia, and Canada
Education	• Doctor of Philosophy - PhD, Enviromental Engineering • Postgrade - Recovery of Degraded Areas • Bachelor of Science - BS, Civil Engineering

Short biography

Dr. Elaine Varela is an independent evaluator with a Ph.D. in Environmental Engineering and over 20 years of experience in developing and evaluating complex environmental projects and programs across multiple countries. She has conducted in-depth analyses and evaluations using methodologies aligned with OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and UNEP Evaluation Policy, including the Theory of Change, sustainability indicators, and multi-criteria matrices. Her expertise spans designing quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods, managing risks and results, and coordinating strategic plans and partnerships. She has authored multiple review reports, assessed over 150 project documents, and published more than 80 knowledge products.

Currently, she is a professor at the Federal University of Bahia, a board member and senior researcher at the UNESCO Chair on Sustainability, the Head of Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation at a Kenyan community-based organization, and an independent international consultant.

With a proven track record of leading over 30 environmental, development, engineering, and technology projects, as well as extensive collaboration with governments and international organizations, she brings professionalism, strong analytical and communication skills, and fluency in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Key specialties and capabilities cover:

- Results-Based monitoring and evaluation systems design and implementation
- Environmental-related programmes/ projects development and evaluation in national, regional, and global contexts, including least developed and developing countries
- Capacity building and training
- Data collection, analysis, and reporting (qualitative and quantitative methods)
- Environmental data management
- Sustainable development and SDGs
- Theory of Change approach

Selected assignments and experiences

Independent reviews/evaluations:

- Independent evaluator for the management-led Terminal Review of the UNEP project Environmental Treaties Programme – Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity (Treaties I) for UNEP Law Division.

ANNEX X. REVIEW TORS (WITHOUT ANNEXES)



Terms of reference

<i>Job Opening number</i>	:	25-United Nations Environment Programme-252815-Consultant
<i>Job Title</i>	:	Management-Led Terminal Review Consultant
<i>General Expertise</i>	:	Environmental Affairs
<i>Category</i>	:	Evaluation
<i>Department/ Office</i>	:	United Nations Environment Programme
<i>Organizational Unit</i>	:	UNEP ODED EWAD EWDAB CEW & CBU

Purpose

assessment of the projects' performance and will provide judgments on actual and potential results, their sustainability, the operational efficiency of implementation, and factors that affected performance. To achieve this, the MLTR will specifically focus on the 'theory of change' or 'impact pathways' used by the projects and review evidence of actual or potential achievements. In addition, it will identify lessons of operational relevance for future UNEP project design and implementation. The MLTR will be conducted in accordance with the GEF and UNEP requirements.

Duties and Responsibilities

Background and Organizational Settings

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. Its mandate is to coordinate the development of environmental policy consensus by keeping the global environment under review and bringing emerging issues to the attention of governments and the international community for action.

This consultancy is managed by UNEP's Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit in the Early Warning and Assessment Division. The Early Warning and Assessment Division is responsible for analyzing the state of the global environment, providing early warning information, and assessing global and regional environmental trends to catalyze and promote international cooperation and action on the environment.

The consultant (International Consultant) will work to provide a Management-Led Terminal Review (MLTR) for 2 (two) projects under the UNEP GEF-funded Cross-Cutting Capacity Development Portfolio, with the following title and GEF ID:

1) Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in

Mauritania (GEF ID: 9747).

2) Establishing a Functional Environmental Information System for the Synergistic Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) for Iraq (GEF ID: 9744).

This MLTR will provide an assessment of the projects' performance and will provide judgments on actual and potential results, their sustainability, the operational efficiency of implementation, and factors that affected performance. To achieve this, the MLTR will specifically focus on the 'theory of change' or 'impact pathways' used by the projects and review evidence of actual or potential achievements. In addition, it will identify lessons of operational relevance for future UNEP project design and implementation. The MLTR will be conducted in accordance with the GEF and UNEP requirements. The MLTR must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The consultant will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the project preparation phase, legal agreements, technical reports, mid-term evaluation reviews, and others as relevant. The consultant is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach ensuring close engagement with relevant Executing Agencies, National Government focal points, UNEP, members of the project steering committee, and other key stakeholders. Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities. Additionally, the consultant is expected to conduct field missions to be decided in consultation with UNEP. The MLTR report should describe the full MLTR approach taken and the rationale for the approach, making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the review. The MLTR should be conducted in line with the "UNEP Evaluation Policy, October 2022", "UNEP Evaluation Manual", and other relevant policies and procedures.

Project Information:

GEF-funded Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) projects have been designed to create an enabling environment and enhance the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of MEAs and all SDGs with an environmental dimension. UNEP serves as the Implementing Agency for the projects. In the context of these projects, the aim was to synergize with existing national baseline projects to enhance, increase, or strengthen the capacity of national institutions for the implementation and monitoring of international conventions and environmental management. This was intended to be done by institutionalizing identified tools and practices for environmental information and knowledge management and to use information and knowledge for both policy development and planning as well as for monitoring and evaluating environmental impacts and trends.

The individual project information is described as follows:

1) Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania

The project was approved by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in 2018 and completed on 31st December 2023, with a total implementation duration of 67 months and a budget of around

USD 1.3 million. The activities are executed by the Executing Agencies, which is the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Mauritania. The project aimed to strengthen national capacity for environmental information and knowledge management for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania.

Component 1: Development of a coordinated environmental knowledge and information management system, with an outcome of enhanced management of environmental information and knowledge for use in decision-making, planning and reporting.

Component 2: Enhancement of institutional and technical capacities to mainstream, develop, and utilize policies, plans and programmes for effective implementation of the Rio Conventions, other MEAs and relevant SDG, with an outcome of enhanced capacities to develop and implement policies, plans and programmes integrating MEAs and related SDGs.

2) Establishing a Functional Environmental Information System for the Synergistic Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) for Iraq

The project was approved by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in 2018 and completed on 30th June 2024, with a total implementation duration of 69 months and a budget of around USD 1.7 million. The activities are executed by the Ministry of Health and Environment of Iraq and UNEP Regional Office for West Asia. The overall objective of the project was to establish a functional environmental information system to enhance the capacities of Iraq for monitoring and reporting on Multilateral Environmental Agreements through a well-integrated and functional environment information system.

Component 1: Development of a coordinated environmental knowledge and information management system, with the following outcomes:

1. Streamlined and integrated data and information system at the national level that takes into consideration the decentralized governance system in Iraq for use in decision-making, planning, and reporting.
2. Improved regular environmental monitoring by directorates of environment in the governorates and other relevant agencies to integrate MEAs and relevant SDGs into the data collection and reporting procedures and system.

Component 2: Enhancement of institutional coordination and technical capacities to mainstream, develop, and utilize policies for the effective implementation of MEAs and relevant SDGs, with the following outcomes:

1. Enhanced capacities to develop and implement results-based and impact-oriented policies, plans and programme integrating MEAs and related SDGs.
2. Regulatory and collaborative institutional set-up for sustainable and transparent sharing of environmental information.

Specific tasks and responsibilities

Under the general supervision of Jochem Zoetelief, Portfolio and Task Manager, Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit, in the Early Warnings and Assessment Division, the consultant will:

- Review and fully understand UNEP policies and procedures for Management-Led Terminal Evaluations.
- Desk review of:
 - ☐ Relevant background documentation;
 - ☐ Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project (Project Document Supplement), the logical framework and its budget;
 - ☐ Project reports such as six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence and any other monitoring materials etc.;
 - ☐ Project deliverables (e.g. publications, assessments etc);
 - ☐ Mid-Term Review or Mid-Term Evaluation of the project;
 - ☐ Evaluations/Reviews of similar projects.
- Interviews (individual or in group):
 - ☐ UNEP Task/Portfolio Manager (TM team);
 - ☐ Project management team;
 - ☐ UNEP Fund Management Officer (FMO);
 - ☐ Portfolio Manager or Sub-Programme Coordinator;
 - ☐ Executing Agency;
 - ☐ National Government focal points; Relevant resource persons;
 - ☐ Representatives from civil society and specialist groups
- Inception report;
- Preliminary findings note;
- Draft and Final review report;
- Deliver virtual presentations to relevant stakeholders throughout the consultancy;
- Incorporate comments received from project beneficiaries, stakeholders, Executing Agency, Regional Technical Partners, and UNEP, when finalizing all documents mentioned above.

Ultimate result of service

Final Terminal Review Report for each GEF-funded CCCD project implemented in Mauritania and Iraq.

Travel Details

The assignment may involve travel to one or all countries where the projects are implemented to conduct interviews with stakeholders. Travel will be determined on an as-needed basis and as agreed upon with UNEP. Travel will be raised and organized separately from the contract, and the travel budget will be managed separately by UNEP.

Travel	Per Diem	Other	Total
0	0	0	0

Output/Work Assignments

- 1st payment - USD 10,875 upon submission of the approved inception report - May 2025
- 2nd payment of USD 21,750 upon submission of approved draft main review - August 2025
- 3rd payment of USD 10,875 upon submission of approved final main review - September 2025

Contract Duration

Overall Contract Duration: 6 months

Estimated amount of actual time to worked (days, weeks, months): 4.5 months

Regular Working Hours
(if applicable):

Total Remuneration: USD 43,500

Payment Terms: per deliverables

Qualification Requirements/Evaluation Criteria

Education:

Advanced university degree in environmental studies, environmental management, environmental protection, international development, environment, or related area is required.

Language:

English and French are the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat. For the consultancy, fluency in both oral and written English is required, while knowledge of French is an advantage.

JFQ/JSQ:

At least 8 years of experience in environmental-related programmes/ projects development, monitoring and evaluation, environmental data management, or related areas is required.

Experience in evaluating complex national, regional or global programs, with demonstrated proficiency in the Theory of Change approach is desired. A broad understanding of countries in the least developed and developing countries is highly desirable. Experience evaluating projects in UN settings, Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects, or similar international organizations is desired.

Supervisor Name: _____

Title: _____

ANNEX XI. GEF PORTAL INPUTS (for GEF funded projects)

The following table contains text to be uploaded to the GEF Portal. **It will be drawn from the Review 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 X: GEF portal inputs

Question: What was the performance at the project's completion against Core Indicator Targets? (For projects approved prior to GEF-7¹⁴⁶, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided¹⁴⁷).
Response: At project completion, the performance against Core Indicator Targets was satisfactory. The project was designed to collect and report on GEF Core Indicators, contributing specifically to the sixth core indicator under the GEF-6 replenishment targets: (1) Development and sectoral planning frameworks integrate measurable targets drawn from the MEAs in at least one country; (2) Functional environmental information systems are established to support decision-making in at least one country (Review Report para. 211). This aligns with the GEF-6 objective of enhancing the capacity of countries to implement MEAs and mainstream them into national and sub-national policy, planning, financial, and legal frameworks. Additionally, under GEF-7, the project tracked the number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as a co-benefit of GEF investment. According to the 2023 PIR (Review Report para. 212): GEF-6 Indicator: Terrestrial Protected Areas Created or Under Improved Management (hectares): Through micro pilot initiatives in Benichab, the project placed a total of 112 hectares under improved management as of June 30, 2023. GEF-7 Indicator: Number of Direct Beneficiaries Disaggregated by Gender: As of June 30, 2023, the project reached an estimated 3,885 direct beneficiaries, including 1,745 males and 2,140 females, through training sessions, knowledge management tools, and the adoption and scaling of demonstration micro pilot projects.
Question: What were the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program as evolved from the time of the MTR? <i>(This should be based on the description included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval)</i>
Response: The project began with a comprehensive stakeholder analysis and a clearly defined governance structure, as outlined in Sections A.3, A.6, and Annex H of the Project Approval Request. The PSC was established, bringing together UNEP EWAD, MESD, key ministries, research institutions, civil society organizations, and other relevant actors at national and subnational levels. Roles and responsibilities were well-articulated, and external partners were aligned with their capacities (Review Report para. 285).

¹⁴⁶ The GEF is currently operating under the seventh replenishment period of the GEF Trust Fund covering the period July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2022. The GEF Portal Reporting Guide for FY20 Reporting Process indicates that GEF-6 projects that have yet to map existing indicators to GEF-7 Core Indicators need to do so at MTR stage or (if already there) at the time of the TE. (i.e. not GEF projects approved before GEF-6)

¹⁴⁷ This is not applicable for Enabling Activities

MTR was planned but suspended due to the consultant's health issues and passing. Instead of restarting the process, UNEP held a knowledge exchange session as a cost-effective alternative, given the project's advanced stage and the non-mandatory nature of MTRs for GEF medium-sized projects (Review Report para. 4).

Throughout the project lifecycle, stakeholder engagement evolved positively. The Project Team actively promoted ownership through knowledge-sharing strategies, including wide dissemination of reports and studies via electronic platforms. Strategic partnerships were strengthened with national academic and scientific institutions such as UNA, ISET, ENVFA, IMROP, CNRE, CNERV, OMRG, and ONM, reinforcing technical legitimacy and institutional reach (Review Report para. 286).

Despite COVID-19-related restrictions, the project demonstrated adaptability by establishing a shared vision and aligning work plans with national priorities. Field missions in Benichab reflected growing commitment from local stakeholders, particularly the Benichab Economic Interest Group (G.I.E), which emerged as a strategic partner. Ministries and directorates appointed focal points under Component 1, actively supporting implementation and dissemination of results. Component 2 also benefited from strong engagement through training and capacity-building activities (Review Report para. 287). While progress was evident, there remain opportunities to further strengthen certain aspects. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted field missions and workshops, affecting the timing and consistency of communication and increasing reliance on online platforms—limiting opportunities for full participation in capacity-building activities. Although representation at PSC meetings remained broad throughout the project lifecycle, strategic engagement was less frequent, reducing opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration (Review Report para. 287). Institutional integration was also influenced by uneven participation among sectors, and the PSC's role was at times perceived as more formal than strategic. These observations highlight opportunities to enhance institutional ownership and foster more active involvement in guiding long-term sustainability (Review Report para. 289ii).

Regarding outcomes, the project achieved meaningful collaboration among stakeholder groups, promoting ownership through workshops, training sessions, demonstration projects, and formal engagement strategies. Partnerships with universities, NGOs, and communities strengthened technical capacity and legitimacy. Local and traditional knowledge was integrated into pilot projects in Inchiri and Hodh el Gharbi, while gender-focused initiatives, such as a microfinance project benefiting 62% women, promoted equity (Review Report para. 288). Demonstration projects targeting vulnerable communities addressed livelihood sustainability and climate resilience, contributing to poverty alleviation and inclusive development. Human rights considerations were implicitly addressed through community representation and participatory decision-making (Review Report para. 288). Despite limitations, the project fostered synergy among ministries, academic institutions, and local actors, reinforcing integration into national sustainable development strategies. MESD maintained strong leadership, and stakeholders demonstrated commitment to sustaining activities beyond project closure. Lessons learned include the value of participatory approaches, voluntarism, and adaptive strategies in overcoming contextual and technical challenges (Review Report para. 289i).

Question: What were the completed gender-responsive measures and, if applicable, actual gender result areas? *(This should be based on the documentation at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent)*

Response:

At CEO Endorsement/Approval (Section A.4 and Annex M), the project committed to integrating gender and human rights considerations throughout its design and implementation. Planned measures included: (1) incorporating sex- and age-disaggregated indicators into MEA and SDG

frameworks to enable gender-sensitive environmental assessments; (2) establishing an Environmental Information System (EIS) capable of collecting socio-economic and gender-specific data; (3) promoting gender-equitable capacity building through inclusive training and awareness activities; (4) supporting a microfinance initiative targeting indigenous women to strengthen livelihoods and resilience; and ensuring gender balance in project teams and activities, including schools and demonstration projects (Review Report paras. 293 and 294).

Although the project document did not include a gender marker rating or a formal gender action plan (nor was this required at the time of design), these commitments were embedded in the project's approach (Review Report para. 295).

During implementation, the project demonstrated strong responsiveness to gender equality and human rights, catalyzing women's leadership and community empowerment, particularly in Benichab. Women were encouraged to initiate environmentally focused activities such as agricultural monitoring, creating spaces for autonomy and agency among underrepresented groups (Review Report para. 296i). A pilot microfinance initiative for women enhanced resilience and adaptive capacity under challenging socio-economic conditions, reinforcing the practical relevance of gender mainstreaming in natural resource management (Review Report para. 296i). Awareness-raising efforts engaged partners on the importance of including women and youth in decision-making processes. Training and meetings promoted inclusive participation, though gender balance in formal governance bodies (e.g., PSC) was not fully achieved due to structural disparities in Mauritania (Review Report para. 296iii).

Nevertheless, the project advanced gender mainstreaming and laid a foundation for more inclusive environmental governance. Women's participation in project activities was significant, even if representation in governance bodies remained uneven (Review Report para. 296iv). Gender-focused initiatives, such as microfinance and educational activities, contributed to equity and resilience. Finally, the project raised awareness of gender and human rights at the national level and integrated these considerations into environmental policies and institutional frameworks (Review Report para. 297).

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. *(Any supporting documents gathered by the Consultant during this review should be shared with the Task Manager for uploading in the GEF Portal)*

Response:

At CEO Approval, the project was classified as low risk, with no activities expected to generate significant environmental or social impacts (Section A.5; Annex M – UNEP ESERN Checklist). The Safeguards Plan included a comprehensive risk analysis and mitigation measures aligned with UNEP's Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework (ESSF). Given its focus on policy development and capacity building, no physical interventions were planned that could pollute, degrade ecosystems, or harm wildlife, reinforcing the appropriateness of the safeguards approach (Review Report paras. 299 and 301).

During implementation, the project consistently maintained its low-risk classification, as confirmed in the 2022 and 2023 PIRs. All safeguard categories (SS1–SS9) were rated low risk, and no mitigation plans were required. UNEP's ESSF principles, covering resilience, human rights, gender equality, accountability, and inclusion, were applied throughout implementation. Grievance mechanisms were established, and complaints from partners and communities were addressed promptly. Special attention was given to marginalized groups, including women's associations and

rural indigenous communities involved in demonstration projects (Review Report paras. 302 and 303).

Risk monitoring was systematic and documented through a comprehensive risk log included in the 2023 PIR (Section 4), which tracked risks identified at CEO endorsement and during implementation. A medium-level risk was identified in the management structure due to the transition of CNOEZA, which temporarily disrupted roles and responsibilities (Review Report paras. 304 and 305).

Although the project successfully avoided major environmental or social risks, there are opportunities to further strengthen risk management performance in future initiatives: (1) Enhancing continuity measures: While mitigation strategies were applied, introducing backup focal points may help reinforce institutional resilience and minimize disruptions during organizational transitions; (2) Refining monitoring approaches for pilot activities: Developing systematic methodologies and indicators for initiatives such as ecosystem-based adaptation and women-led microfinance could provide deeper insights into indirect risks and support long-term sustainability planning (Review Report paras. 300 and 306).

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? *(This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval)*

Response:

The project successfully implemented a comprehensive Knowledge Management Approach, delivering 10 outputs that strengthened environmental data governance, institutional capacity, and stakeholder engagement. Key achievements included the State of the Environment Report, a sustainability strategy, and the operationalization of an Environmental Information System (EIS) now used by national institutions. Around 30 technical reports and knowledge products were produced, complemented by six workshops and Training of Trainers sessions that reached over 200 stakeholders through targeted programs on environmental assessment, GIS, and data management. Demonstration projects were fully implemented, including a climate-resilient agriculture prototype and a microfinance initiative for women. Education and awareness activities engaged 11 schools and 1,500 students, supported integration of environmental education into national curricula, and disseminated awareness products via mass media. In total, 37 environmental indicators were collected, supporting long-term monitoring and informed decision-making (Review Report paras. 121 - 161).

While the project made strong efforts to prioritize knowledge management and communication, some aspects could be further enhanced in future initiatives. The communication plan outlined at CEO Approval provided a solid foundation but could have benefited from more detailed strategies to engage marginalized and gender groups (Review Report paras. 319 and 323). Feedback mechanisms were limited, with only one workshop including a survey to assess impact and monitoring focused mainly on process indicators rather than outcome-based metrics. (Review Report paras. 324 and 327). Additionally, communication activities slowed during the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the timing of some stakeholder engagement activities (Review Report para. 326).

Despite these constraints, the project achieved notable success in generating and disseminating knowledge. Key audiences were well-informed about the project's objectives, and communication activities were frequent, interactive, and adequately resourced. The State of the Environment Report served as a strategic knowledge product, providing accessible information for decision-

makers and linking environmental issues to poverty reduction (Review Report para. 322iii). Public awareness initiatives, such as school-based programs, national environmental events, and media campaigns, were recognized as good practices for promoting environmental knowledge and behavioral change (Review Report paras. 322 iv and 325). Capacity-building activities strengthened technical skills for EIS use and knowledge management, contributing to institutional ownership and sustainability (Review Report para. 326). Lessons learned highlight the value of inclusive communication strategies, integrating feedback mechanisms, and complementing process indicators with outcome-based metrics to better assess impact. The project demonstrated that proactive engagement, experience-sharing, and transparent dissemination are essential for fostering collaboration and ensuring the long-term relevance of knowledge systems (Review Report paras. 321, 323, and 327).

Question: What are the main findings of the review?

Response:

The evaluation confirmed the project's strong strategic relevance, fully aligning with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategies, GEF priorities, and Mauritania's national frameworks. It advanced environmental governance, data transparency, and evidence-based policymaking while supporting MEA commitments (UNCCD, CBD, Paris Agreement) and SDGs 13, 15, 16, and 17. Complementarity was evident through partnerships with GIZ, universities, and local communities (Review Report para. 5).

All 10 outputs and 2 outcomes were achieved, contributing to improved environmental governance through integrated information systems and policy coordination. Key achievements included the State of the Environment Report, GIS-based databases, a cloud-based EIS, and capacity-building initiatives. Approximately 80% of planned actions were completed by project closure, and stakeholder feedback confirmed relevance and utility. Impact is rated as Likely, contingent on continued institutional commitment and system integration (Review Report paras. 8 and 13).

The project faced significant external challenges, including COVID-19 disruptions and the dissolution of CNOEZA, which weakened ownership and caused delays. Two no-cost extensions totaling 19 months were required. Adaptive management strategies included revising work plans, prioritizing virtual activities, and supporting vulnerable communities through microprojects that maintained food security and social cohesion during the crisis (Review Report paras. 7 and 10).

Financial management was rated highly satisfactory, with 100% budget utilization, strict adherence to UNEP standards, timely disbursements, and transparent reporting. Efficiency was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and institutional changes; however, adaptive strategies such as remote implementation and leveraging partnerships helped ensure delivery within the revised timeline (Review Report paras. 9 and 10).

Monitoring was satisfactory, guided by a results-based approach with SMART indicators and participatory frameworks. The system tracked 37 indicators and maintained regular reporting, enabling adaptive management. Reliance on process indicators, combined with the lack of gender-specific metrics, suggests opportunities to strengthen the assessment of long-term institutional change. (Review Report para. 11).

Sustainability is rated moderately likely. The EIS has been integrated into MESD structures and supported by capacity-building and a validated sustainability strategy. While progress has been significant, sustaining results will benefit from continued attention to stakeholder engagement, data integration, and financial planning. Strengthening legal mandates, structured follow-up, and

resource mobilization could further support long-term viability and reduce risks of discontinuity. (Review Report para. 12).

Performance benefited from strong preparation, UNEP oversight, and MESD leadership. Inclusive stakeholder engagement, gender-focused initiatives, and knowledge-sharing strengthened ownership. While the project maintained alignment with UNEP's ESSF and overall risk was rated low, there is scope to strengthen impact through deeper PSC engagement, diversified focal point arrangements, and enhanced feedback mechanisms (Review Report para. 13).

Overall, the project laid a solid foundation for improved environmental governance and data integration in Mauritania. It achieved its outputs, strengthened institutional capacity, and promoted inclusive participation despite external challenges. Sustaining and scaling its impact will require stronger institutional anchoring, interministerial coordination, and long-term financing strategies.

ANNEX XII. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Project Title and Reference No.: Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania (GEF ID: 9747)

Contact Person (TM/PM): Jochem Zoetelief

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
Strengthening Legal Mechanisms and Institutional Agreements to Ensure Environmental Data Governance and Long-Term Sustainability of the EIS in Mauritania	Yes	During the GEF-funded Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) 2023 Knowledge Exchange Session, the Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit shared a recommendation with the government to reframe the EIS from a time-bound project into a continuing national initiative. The recommendation emphasized the importance of anchoring the EIS within a legal framework and integrating it into formal government systems to ensure long-term sustainability. To further support the adoption of this recommendation by the Executing Agency, the Task Manager will share the validated MLTR report.	Completed in 2023	UNEP Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit
Strengthen the Strategic Role of the Project Steering Committee through Clear Mandates, Regular Engagement, and Structured Documentation to Promote	Yes	As outlined in the UNEP 2024 Programme and Project Manual , the onset of project implementation is a critical phase for establishing effective operating conditions through key inception activities, including the establishment of the Project Steering	Completed in 2024	UNEP Policy and Programme Division (PPD) UNEP Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSNSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
Intersectoral Coordination, Institutional Continuity and Ownership		Committee (PSC). During this phase, clear roles and responsibilities are agreed upon within a common accountability framework covering the PSC, the Technical Advisory Committee, the project team, and external partners. The project inception meeting should include representatives of all relevant stakeholders, including host country government representatives, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, and other national, subregional, and regional stakeholders. The project document must specify the composition of the PSC, the UNEP divisions and regional offices involved, and the terms of reference for key project and contractual positions, including the Results-Based Management (RBM) competencies of the proposed Project Manager. Key monitoring and oversight mechanisms for partnership management include regular PSC meetings and other agreed governance arrangements. The Project/Task Manager should also obtain confirmation of project completion from the PSC at its final meeting. As a best practice, a final validation or closure workshop involving all project partners and stakeholders is required to support sustainability,		

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
		knowledge transfer, and uptake of approaches developed during the project. The Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit follows these guidelines throughout ongoing and future project implementation and development. The Terminal Review report will be shared with the Executing Agency upon validation by the Evaluation Office.		
Develop and Implement a National Strategy for Continuous and Monitored Capacity-Building	Partially	There is currently no formal agreement or follow-on project in place, and no funding is available. Therefore, the responsibility for any follow-up actions related to this recommendation lies with the Executing Agency. The UNEP Task Manager will ensure that this recommendation is clearly communicated to the Executing Agency. Once the report is validated by the Evaluation Office, it will be shared with the Government of Mauritania.	February 2026	UNEP Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit Executing Agency (Government of Mauritania)
Strengthen existing monitoring mechanisms in future projects by establishing an impact-focused monitoring and evaluation system at project level to measure long-term results and enhance sustainability	Yes	In line with the UNEP 2023 Programme and Project Management Manual , UNEP's projects adopt the Results-Based Management (RBM) approach. This includes the use of indicator tracking tools, which provide one of the strongest forms of evidence of project progress when the data comes from reputable sources and is accurate. The Manual also emphasizes	Completed in 2023	UNEP Policy and Programme Division (PPD)

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
		that results-based reporting is a key component of monitoring, focusing on results rather than activities and describing changes in Behaviour, Action/Attitude, Condition, Knowledge, and Skills (BACKS).		
Integrate inclusive and context-specific communication strategies into project design, with dedicated resources for implementation	Yes	As outlined in the UNEP Project Cycle Management (PCM) section of the 2023 Programme and Project Management Manual and further reiterated in UNEP 2024 Programme and Project Manual , a project's communication strategy should be developed during the initial stages of the project cycle. This should be described in the Project Document (ProDoc) and the resources required to deliver communication activities allocated in the project budget. The strategy should cover all elements of a project's communication work, including awareness raising, planned publications, advocacy, social mobilization, social media and digital work, and behaviour change activities planned for the project.	Completed in 2024	UNEP Policy and Programme Division (PPD)

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

Lesson Learned #1:	Institutional Sustainability of the Environmental Information System Requires Legal Mandates, Clear Roles, and Long-Term Capacity Strategies
Context/comment:	The project demonstrated that the sustainability and effective use of EIS depend not only on technical achievements but also on institutional clarity, legal frameworks, and long-term capacity-building. While the project successfully made available a cloud-based EIS hosted by the DPCS (paras. 151, 155ii, and 253), and achieved strong institutional uptake through the creation of the National Observatory for the Environment and the Coastal Zone (para. 170i), challenges remain regarding the system's long-term integration into national decision-making structures. The lack of clearly defined institutional mandates and responsibilities poses risks to data consistency and credibility (para. 257i). Without formal agreements or legal frameworks, sustaining the EIS as a national platform for environmental reporting and planning is difficult. Fragmented data, overlapping mandates, and limited interministerial coordination can undermine the system's legitimacy and operational continuity (para. 167, 257i, 258, 258, and 259). Under activity 1.2.5, the project delivered a proposal and agreement on an Environmental Information Charter among the involved institutional stakeholders. This Charter represents an important institutional milestone, signalling commitment to shared principles and responsibilities. It also includes terms of reference for stocktaking and mapping of existing databases and GIS systems managed by ministries and public bodies involved in environmental and natural resource management (para. 130). However, as a non-binding document, the Charter does not establish enforceable obligations, and its influence on actual data-sharing practices and institutional behaviour remains limited. To ensure institutional sustainability and operational effectiveness, the Charter must be complemented by formal mechanisms, such as MoUs and legal mandates, that translate shared principles into stronger operational enforceable commitments. The project's success in mobilizing and establishing a directorate for data and statistics (para. 151) illustrates the importance of positioning data governance within influential government bodies. However, limited institutional capacity and influence (para. 167ii) highlight the need to embed data management into long-term strategies supported by human resource planning and interministerial collaboration (para. 257ii). The UNEP GEF CCCD Knowledge Exchange Session emphasized that branding the EIS as a time-bound "project" may weaken its institutional sustainability. Reframing it as a permanent national function embedded in government structures is essential to foster ownership and continuity (para. 260). Participants also stressed the importance of formal agreements (e.g., MoUs) and legal mandates to ensure regular data provision and system legitimacy (para. 258). Despite challenges due to Mauritania's vast geography and fragmented data (para. 126ii, 171, and 195), the project adopted efficient practices such as the "train-the-trainers" model to mitigate risks related to staff turnover and ensure knowledge dissemination (para. 195, and 258). These efforts must be institutionalized to avoid reliance on external support and ensure long-term system functionality. Evidence from the exit meeting indicated that project studies uncovered major national, institutional, and technical weaknesses in environmental management, reinforcing the need for targeted, data-driven interventions and ongoing assessments to inform policy (para. 155v). This lesson is related to Conclusion 1 and Conclusion 2 (para. 332 and 333).

Lesson Learned #2:	Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement and Integration of Traditional Knowledge Strengthen Ownership and Sustainability in Environmental Governance
Context/comment:	The project demonstrated that inclusive stakeholder engagement and the integration of traditional knowledge are essential for fostering ownership, legitimacy, and long-term sustainability of environmental initiatives. Involving a wide range of actors, from government ministries and academic institutions to local communities and women-led groups, enabled the project to align with national priorities while remaining responsive to local realities (para. 238i, 286, and 287). As discussed during the exit meeting, the enthusiasm showed by stakeholders, including public institutions, civil society, and technical partners, was identified as a decisive factor in the project's success (paras. 167 and 290). This engagement highlighted the importance of mobilization and communication strategies that recognize the role of local actors and foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility. It was also noted that the adoption of a participatory approach throughout the project significantly contributed to meeting deadlines and achieving targets (paras. 157i, 236, and 290). The active involvement of beneficiaries and partners in prioritizing and implementing actions led to greater efficiency, stronger ownership of results, and better alignment with the real needs of the territory. Community-based demonstration projects, such as the ecosystem-based adaptation initiatives in Benichab and Hodh el Gharbi, and the women-led microfinance pilot in Inchiri, empowered local actors to take leadership roles in environmental management (paras. 119, 195, and 288). These initiatives promoted food security, strengthened family microeconomies, and supported social inclusion, particularly during the socioeconomic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic (paras. 119 and 287). The participatory validation of the sustainability strategy (para. 236i) and the active involvement of the Benichab Economic Interest Group (G.I.E) as a strategic partner (para. 287) illustrate how inclusive processes can reinforce community representation and mutual accountability. The project also leveraged partnerships with national academic and scientific institutions (para. 286), enhancing technical credibility and expanding the reach of environmental knowledge. Stakeholder engagement was further strengthened through capacity-building workshops, joint planning, and knowledge exchange activities involving universities, NGOs, and local institutions (para. 289i). The adoption of a "train-the-trainers" model (para. 195) facilitated broader dissemination of knowledge and reduced dependency on external support. The project's success in promoting inclusive engagement and integrating traditional knowledge highlights the importance of culturally sensitive, community-driven approaches in environmental governance. These practices not only enhance local ownership but also contribute to the resilience and sustainability of project outcomes. This lesson is related to Conclusion 1 (para. 332).

Lesson Learned #3:	Strengthened Governance Mechanisms and Consistent Steering Committee Engagement Enhance Strategic Oversight and Institutional Continuity
Context/comment:	The project demonstrated the value of establishing inclusive governance structures, such as the Project Steering Committee (PSC), to support strategic oversight and institutional ownership. The PSC was composed of representatives from UNEP, MESD, relevant ministries, academia, civil society, and the private sector (para. 269), and it contributed to key decisions related to work plans, budgets, and sustainability strategies (para. 274i–iii). While the PSC fulfilled its formal oversight role, its strategic engagement could have been further enhanced. The committee met three times during the project cycle (para. 274), and although relevant topics were addressed, participation varied over time (para. 287), and some sectors were less consistently involved (para. 289ii and 315v). Meeting documentation, while useful, could have been more detailed to support knowledge sharing and institutional learning (para. 229v). At the December 2023 exit meeting, participants identified administrative delays in forming the PSC as a key challenge during project implementation (paras. 270 and 274). The project team made commendable efforts to promote stakeholder ownership and alignment with national priorities (paras. 309, 310, 311, 312, and 313), and the PSC’s composition was revised to include additional relevant actors (para. 116). Ministries and directorates appointed focal points who actively contributed to implementation and dissemination of results (para. 313i.a). However, the transition of CNOEZA and resulting role misalignments (para. 252 and 316) highlighted the importance of stable governance structures and clearly defined responsibilities³. Interview feedback and PIRs suggest that the PSC’s involvement was more procedural than strategic, indicating opportunities to strengthen its role in future initiatives (para. 282v and 290). A more consistent and proactive engagement from governance bodies could help reinforce cross-sectoral coordination, institutional commitment, and long-term sustainability. This lesson highlights that Steering Committees should be empowered not only with broad representation but also with clear mandates, regular engagement routines, and meaningful roles in guiding implementation. Strengthening governance mechanisms, through structured meeting protocols, strategic integration, and alignment with national systems, can significantly enhance project effectiveness and institutional resilience. This lesson is related to Conclusion 2 (para. 333).

Lesson Learned #4:	Direct Access to Local Partners and Diversification of Interlocutors Strengthen Coordination and Institutional Resilience
Context/comment:	The project demonstrated that maintaining direct relationships with local partners, including decentralized authorities, civil society organizations, and community actors, can significantly enhance coordination and institutional resilience. The direct relationship between UNEP and the local executing agency (MESD) allowed for greater reach of activities, improved understanding of local dynamics, and increased responsiveness to operational and political challenges (paras. 277 and 282iv). The project team was widely recognized for its professionalism and technical competence. As lesson learned, it was emphasized during the exit meeting that the project team demonstrated a high level of volunteerism, creativity, and resilience in the face of various challenges, including administrative, structural, and financial constraints (para. 290). This proactive attitude was crucial to maintaining the pace of implementation and achieving the expected results, highlighting the importance of committed leadership and operational flexibility in complex contexts. Interview feedback highlighted the positive experience with project management, particularly the first project manager's familiarity with UNEP and GEF processes, which facilitated smoother coordination with the implementing agency (paras. 155iii, 179i, 184, and 282i). Beyond operational efficiency, the human dimension of the team, its receptiveness, courtesy, and responsiveness, was especially appreciated and contributed to a collaborative working environment. However, the project also revealed vulnerabilities linked to excessive reliance on a single focal point. While centralizing communication around the project manager helped streamline coordination in the early stages, it also created risks during institutional transitions, such as the dissolution of CNOEZA (paras. 115, 116, and 305). This approach limited the resilience of project management and underscored the need to diversify communication channels and build a broader network of interlocutors (para. 282vi). The transition of responsibilities to MESD and the reorganization of governance structures posed challenges in clearly defining roles and maintaining continuity (para. 116). These experiences highlight the importance of engaging multiple national team members and institutional actors to ensure stability and mitigate risks associated with staff turnover and structural changes. This lesson is related to Conclusion 2 (para. 333).

Lesson Learned #5:	Structured and Frequent Coordination Between Financial and Operational Teams Enhances Oversight and Responsiveness
Context/comment:	The project demonstrated that regular and well-structured coordination between financial and operational teams contributes significantly to effective project oversight, timely problem-solving, and strategic alignment. Interview feedback emphasized that the combination of weekly internal meetings, direct access to stakeholders, and a proactive approach to addressing challenges created a responsive and collaborative implementation environment (para. 188 and 282iv). Co-location of teams and the absence of hierarchical barriers facilitated informal interactions and quick resolution of issues. Weekly meetings provided a consistent space to raise concerns, which were often addressed within the same week depending on urgency (para. 188). In addition to internal coordination, quarterly meetings with implementing partners and the Financial Management Officer (FMO) supported progress tracking and strengthened follow-up (para. 224iii and 282iv). This collaborative dynamic was further supported by UNEP's organizational culture, which encouraged open communication and direct engagement with the ministry, avoiding delays caused by intermediary systems (para. 188). The willingness to hold additional meetings during critical moments reflected a flexible and responsive management style. This lesson underscores that structured, recurring coordination mechanisms between financial and operational teams are not only beneficial but essential for maintaining momentum, anticipating risks, and aligning financial planning with programmatic goals. This lesson is related to Conclusion 1 (para. 332).

Lesson Learned #6:	Tailored Capacity-Building Strategies and Localized Tools Enhance Technical Competence and Policy Engagement Across Stakeholder Groups
Context/comment:	The project demonstrated that capacity-building strategies tailored to diverse stakeholder groups (government institutions, academic bodies, civil society, and local communities) can significantly strengthen technical competencies and promote meaningful engagement with environmental policies and multilateral agreements. The project made steady progress toward Outcome 2, enhancing national capacities to develop and implement policies aligned with MEAs and SDGs (para. 152 and 155iii). During the exit meeting, it was recognized as a lesson learned that the project fostered significant capacity building through workshops, exchanges, and critical review of documents (paras. 236 and 290). The interaction among local, regional, and national actors created a collaborative learning environment that contributed to skill development and the sustainability of the project's outcomes. Foundational activities such as the development of the Natural Resources Atlas, training on MEA mainstreaming, and the creation of a national environmental education strategy laid the groundwork for broader institutional engagement (para. 152i). Public-private partnerships and streamlined data collection processes further reinforced MESD's role in sustainable development planning (para. 152ii and 152iii). By 2023, stakeholders, including ministries, academic institutions, and NGOs, recognized the project's contributions to capacity development (para. 152iv). The project adopted localized and cost-effective approaches, such as the "train-the-trainers" model and community-driven demonstration projects, which enabled broader dissemination of knowledge and reduced reliance on external support (para. 195). These initiatives empowered communities, particularly women-led groups, to apply environmental conventions like the UNCCD in practical decision-making (para. 155iii), showcasing the project's reach beyond institutional boundaries. Environmental education and outreach activities reached over 1,500 students across 11 schools, and a national strategy for integrating environmental education into curricula was validated (para. 156iv). However, the lack of gender-sensitive design in some outreach efforts and the absence of robust feedback mechanisms limited the inclusiveness and evaluative depth of these initiatives (para. 323). Only one workshop was identified as having conducted a feedback survey (para. 323), and communication efforts, though well-funded, were not systematically monitored for impact (para. 324). This lesson is related to Conclusion 1 and Conclusion 2 (para. 332 and 333).

Lesson Learned #7:	Adaptive Management, Hybrid Work Models, and Strategic In-Country Presence Are Essential for Project Continuity in Times of Crisis and Institutional Transition
Context/comment:	The project in Mauritania demonstrated that a combination of adaptive management, hybrid work models, and strategic in-country presence is vital to sustaining implementation amid external shocks and institutional change. The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant delays, requiring two extensions and adjustments to execution strategies (paras. 109 and 190i). Government-imposed restrictions limited in-person engagement, postponed workshops, and disrupted recruitment and field activities (paras. 111i, 111iii, 113, 114, and 190i). These challenges were compounded by the dissolution of CNOEZA during a government reorganization, which weakened institutional ownership and disrupted coordination (paras. 115, 116, 118iv, and 190i). To overcome these constraints, the project adopted a hybrid work model. Remote engagement enabled continuity for several activities and reduced operational costs (paras. 111v and 191), while in-person presence, when feasible, was critical for strategic alignment, stakeholder trust, and effective coordination, especially during transitions such as the change in focal point (para. 224v). The presence of UNEP in-country, even if intermittent, proved vital for maintaining relationships, facilitating coordination, and reinforcing institutional commitment (paras. 111iv and 277). The project also prioritized community-focused microprojects, which proved essential for maintaining relevance and cohesion during the crisis, supporting livelihoods and food security (paras. 111ii and 119). Interview feedback emphasized that although technical workshops and field missions were heavily impacted (paras. 118i and 118ii), the project's ability to sustain core activities with only two extensions was commendable (para. 118iii). This lesson is related to Conclusion 2 (para. 333).

Lesson Learned #8:	Insufficiently Specific and Impact-Oriented Indicators Limit the Ability to Demonstrate Institutional Change and Long-Term Results
Context/comment:	Although the project implemented a functional and adaptive monitoring system that supported regular reporting, strategic oversight, and decision-making (paras. 201, 221, 224i, 224ii, and 224iv), the formulation of many indicators, particularly those linked to the outcomes, lacked specificity, objective measurement criteria, and a clear distinction between outputs and outcomes (paras. 159, 204, 205, 207, 208, and 210). This limited the project's ability to assess institutional, behavioral, and systemic changes, which were central to its broader objectives. A significant portion of the indicators focused on process-oriented metrics, such as the number of reports produced, training sessions held, or charters signed (paras. 205 and 206). While these indicators captured operational delivery, they did not assess whether outputs were effectively used or led to meaningful transformation. For example, tracking the number of training sessions did not reveal whether participants applied the knowledge gained, and counting signed charters did not indicate changes in data-sharing practices (para. 205). Some indicators, such as those related to demonstration projects and microfinance initiatives, showed potential for impact but could have been strengthened by incorporating criteria that assess adoption of sustainable practices or improvements in beneficiaries' livelihoods (para. 206). Outcome indicators, while conceptually aligned with project goals, often relied on vague terms like "quality" or "capable," without mechanisms to verify actual implementation or integration of MEAs, SDGs, and gender considerations (paras. 159, 207, and 208). For instance, indicators could have been reformulated to include thresholds or percentages that reflect measurable change, such as "Percentage of MEA reports meeting predefined quality criteria" or "Percentage of institutions implementing policies with MEA and SDG integration" (paras. 159 and 209). The project did report on GEF Core Indicators, such as the number of hectares under improved management and the number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (paras. 212i and 213ii). These indicators were relevant and measurable, aligning well with GEF-6 goals (para. 213). However, the absence of more outcome-focused indicators hindered the project's ability to systematically monitor and demonstrate real-world change (para. 220), and reporting was limited in its capacity to reflect broader impacts (para. 230). Finally, particularly for the demonstration projects, the initiative could have benefited from planning outputs aimed at developing and implementing systematic monitoring frameworks during and beyond the project's lifetime, to mitigate risks and ensure sustainability (para. 300, 303, and 306). This lesson is related to Conclusion 2 (para. 334).

ANNEX XIII. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE REVIEW REPORT

Review Title: Building core capacity for the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania" (GEF ID 9747)

Consultant: Elaine P. Varela Alberte

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

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 review object - review objectives, scope and methodology - the overall project review rating - a summary of main review findings, including key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) - summary responses to key strategic review questions - summary of main conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> All required elements are addressed <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The executive summary presents a good summary of the report while covering all the expected elements.	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	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report covers all the expected element of the project section. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report present a concise summary that situates the evaluand in its institutional context. The report also defines all parameters (time, budget, geography and results) of the evaluand.	6
Section C: Review 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 <i>review methodology</i>? Consider how well it presents the following elements, and their adequacy based on the scope of the review: • statement of the purpose of the review and the key intended audience for the review findings • data collection methods and information sources • justification for methods used (e.g. electronic/face-to-face interviews, qualitative/quantitative analysis) • criteria and sampling strategies used to select stakeholders for consultations, and for sites/countries visited • number and types of respondents (<i>including in a table broken down by gender</i>) • strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and response rate • methods used to include the voices/experiences of different and potentially excluded groups (e.g. women, marginalised) • data verification methods (e.g. triangulation) • data analysis methods (e.g. scoring, thematic analysis) • review limitations and mitigation measures (e.g. how these were addressed by the evaluator) • consideration for ethics and human rights issues, including how anonymity and confidentiality were protected	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report includes a section on the review methods with most of the expected elements included in the writeup. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> This section of the report presents the review methods and addresses all the expected elements. The report provides justification for the data collection methods used, the selection criteria for respondents and methods used to analyse and triangulate the data. Also included are the ethics and human rights issues.	5
4. Does the report describe an assessment and reformulation of the <i>Theory of Change</i>, and present an adequate articulation of the TOC causal pathways that were used to assess project performance (<i>narratively and diagrammatically</i>)? Consider how well the report presents: • whether the project design included a TOC • how the <i>TOC at Review</i>¹⁴⁸ was designed (e.g. who was involved, etc) • confirmation/reconstruction of results in accordance with UNEP definitions (<i>including reformulation table, which may have initially been presented in the Inception Report and should appear in the Main Review report.</i>) • articulation of causal pathways • identification of drivers and assumptions • identification of key actors in the change process	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report presents the Theory of Change in both text and diagrammatic format. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report includes text and diagrammatic presentation of the ToC that includes refining the intervention logic, assumptions and drivers. The causal pathways and well-articulated and the key actors in the change process defined.	5
Section D: Evidence and Analysis	Assessment	
5. Is the report based on <i>sufficient and adequate data</i> and <i>clear and credible evidence</i>? Consider how well the report presents: • sufficient evidence that is consistent throughout the report	<u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The presentation of findings in the report is clear, based on evidence and is consistent. Findings are also based on	5

¹⁴⁸ During the Inception Phase of the evaluation process a *TOC at Review Inception* is created based on the information contained in the approved project documents (these may include either logical framework or a TOC or narrative descriptions), formal revisions and annual reports etc. During the 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
- evidence that is supported by data sources (e.g. quotes, reports, etc) - evidence that is explicitly triangulated, unless noted as having a single source - gaps in data are explained and justified - data sources that are reliable, adequate, sufficient for the scope of the review	triangulation of multiple data sources.	
6. Does the report include <i>rigorous analysis</i> and <i>logical findings</i>? Consider the extent to which the findings are: - supported by clear analysis that is consistent with the evidence presented - logical, clear and coherent - aligned with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix - aligned with the review framework - more than descriptions and provide insights into 'how' and/or 'why' the project performed a certain way - balanced, presenting both successes and weaknesses	<u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The findings in the report are supported by analysis that is consistent with the evidence presented and aligned with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix. The analysis in the report also balanced and includes both strengths and weaknesses in projects performance.	5
Section E: Review 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/mobilisation¹⁴⁹), with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups.	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report includes a section on strategic relevance. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report presents a detailed analysis of the relevance of the of the evaluand to UNEP, GEF, regional and national priorities and complementarity with existing interventions.	6
8. Does the report present a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the Quality of Project Design, based on the detailed assessment presented in the Inception Report?	<u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report presents a detailed analysis of the quality of project design including a balanced assessment of strengths and weaknesses in project design.	5
9. 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 upheaval¹⁵⁰), and how they affected performance?	<u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report includes an analysis of the negative externalities to project implementation and	5

¹⁴⁹ A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.

¹⁵⁰ 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
	how these affected project implementation.	
10. 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).	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report included a section on the availability of outputs. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report presents a detailed evidence-based analysis on availability of outputs including their quality, timeliness of delivery and availability to intended users. The analysis also compares achievement of project outputs with project targets.	6
11. 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).	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report includes a section on achievement of Outcomes. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report presents detailed analysis of achievement of project outcomes as compared to project targets. Also included is an analysis of the assumptions and drivers.	5
12. Does the report present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to Likelihood of Impact? Consider how well the report presents: • an explanation of how causal pathways emerged and the resulting change processes • an explicit discussion of how drivers and assumptions played out • an explanation of roles played by key actors and change agents • identification of any unintended negative effects of the project, especially on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> A section on likelihood of impact is included in the report. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report includes a detailed and well-reasoned analysis of the likelihood of impact that includes the assumption, drivers and the actors involved in the change process.	5
13. 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:	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report includes an analysis of financial management as expected.	6

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
• <i>adherence</i> to UNEP's financial policies and procedures • <i>completeness</i> of financial information, including the actual project costs and actual co-financing used and explanation of any variances between planned and actual expenditures	<u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The analysis of financial management covers both dimensions of financial management i.e. adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures; and completeness of financial information.	
14. 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.	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report includes a section on efficiency as expected. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The analysis presented in the report on efficiency tackles both dimensions of cost-effectiveness and timeliness and measures put in place by the project to building on pre-existing relationships and institutions. The report also analyses the impact of delays and no cost extensions on project performance. The report however doesn't discuss any measures put in place by the project to minimise UNEP's environmental footprint.	5
15. Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the project's Monitoring and Reporting? Consider how well the report addresses the following: • the quality of <i>monitoring of project implementation</i> (including use of monitoring data for adaptive management) • the quality of <i>project reporting</i> (e.g. PIMS and donor reports)	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report covers both sub criteria under Monitoring and Reporting. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report presents a good analysis of both the quality of monitoring of project implementation and quality of project reporting.	5
16. Does the report present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under Sustainability (i.e. the endurance of benefits achieved at outcome level)? Consider how well the report addresses the following: • socio-political sustainability • financial sustainability • institutional sustainability	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> The report includes a section on likelihood of sustainability. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report present a well-reasoned and evidence based assessment of the likelihood of sustainability for each of the three dimensions.	5

Report Quality Criteria	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
17. Does the report present a well-evidence analysis of the Factors Affecting Performance, <u>either in this section or in cross-referenced sections?</u> <i>These factors are not always discussed in stand-alone sections and may be integrated in the other performance criteria as appropriate. However, if not addressed substantively in this section, a cross reference must be given to where the topic is addressed, and that entry must be sufficient to justify the performance rating for these factors.</i> Consider how well the report addresses the following cross-cutting issues: • quality of project management and supervision¹⁵¹ • stakeholder participation and co-operation • responsiveness to human rights and gender equality • environmental and social safeguards • country ownership and driven-ness • communication and public awareness	<u>Coverage/omissions:</u> All 'factors affecting performance' are covered in adequate detail. <u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report presents a balanced analysis of the factors affecting performance.	5
Section F: Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations	Assessment	
18. 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 review process • provide clear and succinct response to the key strategic questions • address the human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention explicitly (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on) • provide lessons that are rooted in real project experiences, describe the context from which they are derived, and do not duplicate recommendations	<u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report presents a balanced summary of the prominent aspects of the performance of the evaluand and includes lessons rooted in real project implementation experiences. Responses to the strategic questions are also included.	5
19. 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	<u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report includes actionable recommendations that seek to solve or cure identified problems in project implementation. However, the recommendations do not include one that seeks to	5

¹⁵¹ 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
- are feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when - include at least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions - represent a measurable performance target in order that the Evaluation Office can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations. NOTES: (i) In cases where the recommendation is addressed to a third party, compliance can only be monitored and assessed where a contractual/legal agreement remains in place. Without such an agreement, the recommendation should be formulated 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.	strengthen the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions.	
Section G: Report Structure and Presentation	Assessment	
20. Is the report <i>well-structured and complete</i>? Does it: - follow the Evaluation Office structure and formatting guidelines - include all required sections and annexes, as applicable - not exceed 50 pages in length from the Executive Summary to the end of the Conclusion Does the report present information clearly and appropriately? Is it written: - in clear and accessible language - largely free from grammar, spelling and punctuation errors - in an adequate and professional tone - with the use of visual aids, such as maps, graphs tables and photos	<u>Strengths/weaknesses:</u> The report largely follows the UNEP Evaluation Office structure and includes all expected annexes. The report is written in clear English language and grammar in an adequate and professional tone. Information is also well presented in tables and figures as necessary. However, the report could have shorter.	4
OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING	Satisfactory	5

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

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.