

An Outcome Evaluation of UNDP/Moldova's
Program on Environment, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk
Reduction (2013-2017)

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CBD	Cannot be determined
CPD	Country Program Document
DRM	Disaster risk management
EMM	Ecological Movement of Moldova
GEF	Global Environment Facility
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
TOR	Terms of reference
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNPF	United Nations Partnership Framework

Executive Summary

Environment, climate change, and disaster risk reduction are identified in the current United Nations-Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework (UNPF) “Towards Unity in Action” and the current United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Programme Document (CPD) for 2013-2017 as priority areas of concern towards achievement of Moldova’s major development priorities.

Against this background the UNPF and the CPD support the Government of Moldova in strengthening policies and capacities for (a) adaptation to climate change at all levels of governance; (b) sustainable and resilient management of environmental and natural resources; and, (c) energy and disaster risk reduction. To address these objectives UNDP/Moldova’s program on Environment, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Reduction has two intended outcomes and two corresponding indicators:

Outcome 3.1: Improved environmental management in significantly increased compliance with international and regional standards

Indicator: Surface of protect areas managed in line with international standards

Outcome 3.2: Strengthened national policies and capacities enable climate and disaster-resilient, low emission economic development and sustainable consumption

Indicator: Percentage of renewable energy in energy consumption

In an effort to learn what results have been achieved through the program and in anticipation of the development of a new CPD, UNDP/Moldova commissioned this outcome evaluation. Following the UNDP’s *Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators*, “Outcome evaluations move away from the old approach of assessing project results against project objectives towards an assessment of how these results contribute, together with the assistance of partners, to a change in development conditions.” Outcome evaluations emphasize results in terms of whether, why, and how the outcomes of interest have been achieved and the UNDP’s contribution to a change in a given development situation.

The evaluation was conducted in compliance with the United Nations Evaluation Group’s *Standards for Evaluation in the UN System* and its *Norms for Evaluation in the UN System*. The evaluation employed methods intended to: (a) be valid and logically linked to the evaluation’s objectives; (b) be consistent with good practice in evaluation and include, where appropriate, explicit efforts to triangulate among methods and data sources; and, (c) control bias or acknowledge limitations due to uncontrolled bias were implemented and described. In particular, the evaluation included:

- A desk review of relevant documents;
- discussions with UNDP/Moldova’s senior management and programme staff;
- semistructured interviews with government stakeholders who share responsibility for implementing UNDP’s program, representatives of nongovernmental and community-based organizations, and with representatives of the European Union, the World Bank, and the Embassy of Sweden; and,
- two field visits to project sites and discussions with project teams and their beneficiaries.

Key Findings

These methods were used to determine whether UNDP’s program has achieved or is making progress that would lead to achievement of Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2 by the end of the country program in December 2017. Addressing this objective is a challenge. Neither outcome is objectively verifiable, and neither outcome has a baseline or specifies how much improvement (for Outcome 3.1) or how much strengthening (for Outcome 3.2) must occur for success to be declared. In the words of the UNDP’s *Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results*, “If results and indicators are not based on measurable, independently verifiable data, the extent to which an initiative is realistic or achievable is questionable.”

Similarly, while both outcomes have measurable indicators, the indicators do not suitably or comprehensively represent the outcomes to be achieved. Outcome 3.2 has a single indicator, the percentage of renewable energy in energy consumption. Although this is a suitable indicator for one portion of Outcome 3.2, it does not address the outcome’s full range of expected results, which include strengthened national policies and capacities. As a consequence, the lone indicator is not a fully valid indicator of the outcome, and a credible judgment about progress or achievement for Outcome 3.2 is not possible.

The same situation exists with Outcome 3.1. The single indicator is the surface of protected areas managed in line with international standards. The surface of protected areas is not a measure of improved environmental management because it does not reflect how well or even if the protected areas are managed.

The absence of a clear linkage between the two indicators and their outcomes represents an issue of program design, which led the evaluation team to consider whether a coherent theory of change underlies the program. The evaluation team was unable to discern one. A theory of change should govern the choice of a program’s approaches, activities, and outputs. Working backwards from the desired outcomes, those designing a program should ask what outputs and activities are necessary and essential to achieve the expected outcomes. A corollary is that all outputs should contribute to an outcome.

In many instances the evaluation team found that outputs of several of the 11 projects within the overall program are not causally linked to Outcomes 3.1 or 3.2. As an illustration, UNDP/Moldova recently completed a project intended to phase out the use of hydrochloro-fluorocarbons. This is an admirable objective, but it does not contribute to Outcome 3.1, an increase in the surface of protected areas in Moldova. Similarly, it is not clear how and to what extent establishment of an environmental protection agency will improve management of these areas. Nearly half of them are the responsibility of local authorities that have limited capacity and few resources to commit to improved management of these areas. An output for Outcome 3.2 addresses the completion of strategies for disaster risk management, but that output has no related indicator at the outcome level.

The evaluation also found that several of the CPD program outputs have no targets, which precludes any judgment about the relative success in achieving the outputs. In other instances outputs and targets are unclear or dependent on judgments made by UNDP/Moldova rather than independent entities without possible biases or conflicts of interest.

At the program level these findings are disappointing and underscore the judgment of the evaluation team that the program's weak design and problems with its indicators explain the findings just presented. Nonetheless, this conclusion must also be balanced with the realization that implementation of the 11 individual projects within the program on Environment, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Reduction has produced some impressive results.¹ The evaluation team found widespread appreciation for UNDP's support and many meaningful accomplishments. The ESCO Project is expected to lead to a reduction of 68,000 tonnes of direct CO₂ emissions and 240,000 tonnes of indirect CO₂ emissions. UNDP's support for increased reliance on the use of renewable energy helped to improve the national share of renewables to 14.3 percent by 2016, with much of this due to UNDP's support for and the increased use of biomass boilers in public schools and hospitals.

When the CPD was designed, protected areas represented 4.65 percent of Moldova's territory. That percentage increased to 5.6 percent by 2016 due substantially to UNDP's support for the creation of Orhei National Park. The UNDP is also partnering with other development agencies to establish the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. The related feasibility studies have been completed and formalization of agreements with local public authorities is in progress. Similarly, UNDP has a project in the pipeline to create the Lower Nistru National Park. Other key outputs include a national biodiversity strategy and action plan, a draft national disaster risk management strategy and action plan, a national climate change adaptation strategy, and multiple forest and

¹ Consistent with the purposes of an outcome evaluation, the evaluation team was not responsible for making judgments about the relative success of the individual projects, many of which had already been evaluated. In contrast, the team did consider the extent to which the projects provide context or inform an understanding of the likelihood that the program's two outcomes will be achieved.

pasture management plans. With UNDP's support, Moldova's parliament approved a law to promote the use of renewable energy sources and lowered the taxes on the biofuel production chain.

Key recommendations

1. Decide what UNDP's comparative advantage is and where its new program and projects can best add value to Moldova's country context and development priorities.
2. Develop a theory of change when designing the new CPD and for the projects that are intended to support achievement of UNDP/Moldova's outcomes related to Environment, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Reduction.
3. Shift from the prevailing focus on project outputs to one that emphasizes strategic outcomes that create long-lasting effects for communities and improve people's lives, improve the quality of their environment, and reduce the risks of or increase adaptation to disasters and climate change.
4. Focus on the sustainability of program outcomes and projects' achievements.
5. Improve the assessment of implementing partners' institutional capacity and develop a strategy for enhancing this capacity.
6. Ensure that all project documents and implementation plans consider the gender-related dimensions and opportunities for woman and vulnerable groups that the proposed projects offer.

Introduction

Environment, climate change, and disaster risk reduction are identified in the current United Nations-Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework (UNPF) “Towards Unity in Action” and the current United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Programme Document (CPD) as priority areas of concern towards achievement of Moldova’s major development priorities.

Due to its high dependence on agriculture, Moldova is highly vulnerable to climate change and variability. An increase in temperatures and the intensity of extreme events are expected in the future as are changes in precipitation patterns. The National Adaptation Strategy is intended to increase national capacity to adapt and respond to the threats related to climate change but also lays the foundation for mainstreaming of consideration of climate change across sectors.

Moldova is party to the Convention on Climate Change, and it joined the Kyoto Protocol in 2003. In addition, Moldova associated itself with the Copenhagen Accord. Through Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, Moldova aims to achieve a countrywide unconditional target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 64-67 percent below its 1990 level by 2030. Moldova signed the Paris Agreement in autumn 2016 thus creating momentum for further domestic actions towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient future.

Moldova is also confronted with environmental degradation, pollution, and unsustainable use of natural resources that impede its development. The country has the lowest forest coverage in Europe. Biodiversity degradation and loss are further recognized as development challenges. If these challenges are not enough, Moldova also lacks domestic sources of energy. According to Moldova’s National Bureau of Statistics, the country imported 87 percent of its total energy supply in 2013, and this situation is compounded by highly inefficient use of this energy.²

Moldova also lacks a comprehensive national strategy and institutional framework for disaster risk management (DRM). The national and local capacities for responding to disasters are limited as is an understanding of disaster risk, including climate change.

Against this background the UNPF and the CPD for 2013-2017 support the Government of Moldova in strengthening policies and capacities for (a) adaptation to climate change at all levels of governance; (b) sustainable and resilient management of environmental and natural resources; and, (c) energy and disaster risk reduction. In particular, UNPF/CPD Outcome 3.1 seeks to improve environmental management in significantly increased compliance with international and regional standards. Outcome 3.2 focuses on strengthening national policies and

² As reported in Energy Charter Secretariat, *In-Depth Review of Energy Efficiency Policy in Moldova* (Brussels, 2015); available at <http://www.energycharter.org/what-we-do/energy-efficiency/energy-efficiency-country-reviews/>

capacities that enable climate and disaster-resilient, low-emission economic development and sustainable consumption. To achieve the outcomes, UNDP/Moldova has supported the implementation of eleven projects, as shown in table 1, the first of which began in 2009. Four of the eleven projects extend beyond 2016.

In addition to the challenges just described, it is also important to consider the political and developmental context in which the UNDP has operated. During the period of the current CPD's implementation, Moldova has experienced considerable political and economic instability. In late 2014, Moldova's central bank announced the disappearance and theft of over \$1 billion (about one-eighth of the country's GDP) from the state-owned Banca de Economii and two other private banks Unibank and Banca Sociala. The government's failure to investigate the theft as well as an unwillingness to arrest those responsible for the theft affected the credibility of Moldovan public authorities and led to substantial declines in support for public institutions and reforms and a decision by (UNDP)Moldova's largest donor, the European Union, to freeze its budgetary support to Moldova. The government changed three times in 2015. As the Freedom House reported at the end of that year, "In a country where reforms have barely progressed when political stability was ensured, the crisis has rendered them nearly impossible. The economic prognosis is grim. The banking sector theft, endemic corruption, and a worsening regional context will impact quality of life even more in 2016 than in the previous year."³ These and related events affected the UNDP's efforts and created risks to implementation that could not have reasonably been foreseen when the CPD was developed.

In sum, the UNDP operates in an especially challenging environment with limited resources and capacities, mostly driving by external forces but with some political will reflected in agreements with its donors and planned national reforms and one that has more than its fair share of barriers to successful implementation of a country program.

³ Freedom House, Nations in Transition, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2016/moldova>, accessed March 4, 2017.

Table 1: Summary of interventions intended to contribute to the achievement of Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2

Interventions contributing to Outcome 3.1	Project duration	Sources of funding (in U.S. \$)	
		UNDP Funding	Other funding
Improving Coverage and Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Moldova	May 2009 - Dec 2013	\$22,850	\$950,000, GEF \$1,012,820 Government of Moldova (in kind)
National Biodiversity Planning Project to Support Implementation of the Convention on Biodiversity	Jan 2012 - Dec 2014	\$2,000	\$220,000 Global Environment Facility
Strengthening Capacities to Undertake Environmental Fiscal Reform to Meet National and Global Environmental Priorities	Oct 2012 - Oct 2015	\$110,000	\$510,450, Global Environment Facility \$200,000, OECD (in kind) \$250,000 Government of Moldova (in kind)
Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Moldova's Territorial Planning Policies	Mar 2015 - Dec 2018	\$40,000	\$958,904 Global Environment Facility
Implementation of the Hydrochlorofluorocarbon Phase Out Management Plan	Stage 1: Jun 2011 - Dec 2014 Stage 2: Jan 2015 - Dec 2016		Stage 1: \$79,200 Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol Stage 2: \$694,805, European Union
Interventions contributing to Outcome 3.2			
Moldova Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction Project	Oct 2013 - Sept 2016	\$500,000	\$25,000 Government of Moldova (in kind)
Moldova Energy and Biomass Project	Phase 1: Jan 2011 - Dec 2014 Phase 2: Jan 2015 - Dec 2017	Phase 1: \$692,738 Phase 2: --	Phase 1: \$18,169,348 European Union Phase 2: \$10,669,731 European Union
Clima-East: Ecosystem-based Adaptation and Mitigation	Apr 2013 - Dec 2016		\$694,085 European Union
National Climate Change Adaptation Planning	Jun 2013 - Nov 2017		\$970,013 Austrian Development Agency
Low Emission Capacity Building Program	Jan 2014 - Dec 2016		\$642,000 European Union
ESCO Moldova: Transforming the Market of Urban Energy Efficiency	Jun 2014 - Dec 2018	\$179,231	\$1,300,000 Global Environment Facility

Objectives, Scope, and Organization of the Evaluation

This is an outcome evaluation commissioned in accordance with UNDP/Moldova's Evaluation Plan for the current CPD and the UNPF's Action Plan and will be used to inform the formulation of the next CPD, which will be developed in early 2017. Following the UNDP's *Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators*, "Outcome evaluations move away from the old approach of assessing project results against project objectives towards an assessment of how these results contribute, together with the assistance of partners, to a change in development conditions." Moreover, outcome evaluations emphasize results in terms of whether, why, and how the outcomes of interest have been achieved and the UNDP's contribution to a change in a given development situation.

The evaluation, which was conducted in December 2016, assesses the extent to which UNDP/Moldova's program on Environment, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Reduction has been effective and has contributed to progress related to the program's two primary outcomes and their corresponding indicators:

3.1: Improved environmental management in significantly increased compliance with international and regional standards

Indicator: Surface of protect areas managed in line with international standards

3.2: Strengthened national policies and capacities enable climate and disaster-resilient, low emission economic development and sustainable consumption

Indicator: Percentage of renewable energy in energy consumption

The evaluation also addresses the questions and issues identified in the TOR, which can be found in annex 1. The evaluation draws conclusions and recommendations and identifies lessons learned for further programming and the UNDP's strategic positioning. The primary audience for the evaluation includes UNDP/Moldova as it develops the next country program, the government agencies with which UNDP collaborates, and the organizations that financially support the UNDP's projects, primarily the European Union and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The organization of the evaluation report parallels the UNDP's template and quality standards found in its *Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation for Development Results*. In turn, the template and standards are derived from the United Nations Evaluation Group's *Standards for Evaluation in the UN System* and its *Ethical Standards for Evaluations*.

Evaluation Approach and Methods

The evaluation employed methods intended to: (a) be valid and logically linked to the evaluation's objectives; (b) be consistent with good practice in evaluation and include, where appropriate, explicit efforts to triangulate among methods and

data sources; and, (c) control bias or acknowledge limitations due to uncontrolled bias were implemented and described.

The *Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators* identify four categories of analysis that correspond to the four standard objectives of an outcome evaluation:

- Status of the outcomes
- Factors affecting the outcomes
- UNDP's contributions to the outcomes
- UNDP's partnership strategy

To address these objectives, the evaluation team applied the following approaches for data collection, analysis, and the initial presentation of results:

1. Desk review of relevant documents (project documents with amendments made, review reports - midterm/final, donor-specific, etc.). These documents were reviewed with the aim of understanding what has occurred, what outcomes have been achieved, and which evaluation questions can be answered as a result of the desk review. Annex 2 lists the documents reviewed for the evaluation.
2. Discussions with the senior management and programme staff of UNDP/Moldova. Prior to any interviews with UNDP's partners the evaluation team met with relevant UNDP/Moldova staff in Chisinau to ensure an understanding of the evaluation's purposes and objectives, to be clear about UNDP's priorities among the 17 questions and issues identified in the terms of reference (TOR) for the evaluation, to discuss the ways in which the evaluation can best meet the needs of UNDP/Moldova, and to review the agenda for the meetings with partners that would follow.
3. Semistructured interviews, tailored to the requirements of the evaluation as well as to the responsibilities of those interviewed, were conducted over five days. In addition to UNDP/Moldova project staff, the interviews included representatives of the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Economy, the Energy Efficiency Agency, the Energy Efficiency Fund, Agency Moldsilva, the State Hydrometeorological Service, the Civil Protection and Emergency Situation Service, and nongovernmental and community-based organizations. Interviews were also conducted with representatives of the European Union, the World Bank, and the Embassy of Sweden. Annex 3 lists the people interviewed as well as their organizational affiliations.
4. Two field visits to selected project sites and discussions with project teams and project beneficiaries. These visits permitted the evaluation team to observe several biomass facilities, rehabilitated pastures and reforested areas, and to meet with several mayors and community leaders.

Major Limitations of the Methods

Every evaluation has some limitations, so it is important to identify them and for UNDP/Moldova to be aware how these limitations may have affected the evaluation. Several such limitations come to mind.

First, the time available for the evaluation was limited as was the time available for the document review, interviews, and site visits in Moldova. Several days were allocated for a review of reports and documents, but these items exceeded more than 1,000 pages. The capacity of the evaluation team to review them thoroughly, to assess their relative importance, and to incorporate their key findings into this evaluation was thus constrained. Moreover, due to the wide scope and complexity of outcome evaluations they typically require more time than project evaluations.⁴

Although there were many sites that could have been visited to observe the outputs and implementation of the individual projects, time permitted only two half-day site visits during the team's five days in Moldova. Insufficient time is a common problem in UNDP-sponsored evaluations, at least according to a review of UNDP's evaluation policy. In a survey of 254 independent evaluation consultants that UNDP had hired to conduct evaluations, the predominant issue that affected the credibility of results "was inadequate time to conduct their evaluations, followed by inadequate resources, particularly for fieldwork deemed necessary by the consultants."⁵

Two site visits are not representative of all the sites in which UNDP-funded projects have been or are being implemented. Only one visit involved a community that was developing plans for disaster risk management but no communities implementing disaster risk reduction measures were visited. Several interviews had to be terminated prematurely to adhere to the overall and highly ambitious schedule of interviews.

Triangulation was used to ensure that outliers' opinions are not presented as typical or representative of all people's opinions about the UNDP's projects.⁶ As the Evaluation Office of the GEF has noted, "In the scarcity and/or absence of a reliable set of quantitative data, triangulation can be a useful substitute for obtaining reasonably solid and reliable evaluation results."⁷ To benefit from the use of triangulation the evaluation team considered the criteria of the people believed to be able to provide an objective cross-check of the initial respondent (for example, level of knowledge of and involvement with UNDP projects, etc.).

⁴ UNDP, *Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators* (2002).

⁵ Le Groupe-conseil Baastel Itée, *Review of the UNDP Evaluation Policy: Final Report* (2014). Available at http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/policy/review/BaasterI-UNDP-Evaluation_PR_2014.pdf

⁶ According to O'Donoghue and Punch, triangulation is a "method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data." See T. O'Donoghue and K. Punch, *Qualitative Educational Research in Action: Doing and Reflecting*. London and New York: Routledge Falmer, 2003.

⁷ GEF, Evaluation Office, *Methodological Note on Triangulation Analysis in Country Portfolio Evaluations* (2010).

Second, the evaluation was expected to assess the extent to which the outcomes have been or are likely to be achieved by the end of 2017, when the current CPD expires. Outcomes are typically achieved over the life of an intervention and notably during its last year. In contrast, the evaluation has occurred during the CPD's fourth and penultimate year, so it is not possible to provide conclusive evidence of the outcomes' achievement.

Third, UNDP supports multiple state agencies, institutions and nonstate organizations in Moldova. These organizations, but not the UNDP, have primary responsibility for decision-making and implementation of national policies and strategies. Despite this situation, the UNDP's efforts and contributions are being evaluated. Its efforts and support may be superior but the overall effort may not achieve the desired outcomes because of weak implementation among the Moldovan organizations, especially at the local level, which are known for their limited resources and weak administrative capacity. In turn, these organizations may have the best intentions, but what is expected of them may be beyond their skills or capacities. In recognition of this situation, many of the UNDP's projects have appropriately included efforts to develop the skills and capacities of these institutions and their employees to support achievements of expected outcomes.

Stakeholder Engagement

As noted above, a full range of stakeholders were interviewed. The evaluation team interviewed all of the key implementing stakeholders among government agencies, several representatives of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and donor organizations, a few project beneficiaries, and UNDP project staff. Respondents were given the opportunity to ask questions of the evaluators and were also asked whether they had any recommendations to improve UNDP's efforts. Given the extensive range of those interviewed, the evaluation team is confident that the results of the evaluation have significant credibility. With a few, rare exceptions, the findings that follow represent the opinions of multiple respondents. Among the non-UNDP respondents, there was considerable consistency in the opinions they expressed.

Ethical Considerations

The evaluation was conducted in compliance with the United Nations Evaluation Group's *Standards for Evaluation in the UN System* and its *Norms for Evaluation in the UN System*. In particular, we made our best efforts to be sensitive to cultural norms and gender roles during the evaluation and during interactions with all respondents. Key practices included:

- Ensuring all informants were provided with clear information about the evaluation, who commissioned it, and what would happen to the information they provided;
- Informing all interviewees that their responses would be confidential so that any sensitive information cannot be traced to its source; and,
- Display of data in ways that do not permit identification of the informant unless written approval is first obtained.

To ensure respondents' informed consent and their awareness of the scope and limits of confidentiality of the information they were asked to provide, all respondents were orally informed about the evaluation process before any substantive discussion began. The oral statement in the local language (or English, when appropriate) typically addressed informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. One of the two evaluators is Moldovan, but UNDP/Moldova provided an interpreter for meetings in which respondents did not speak English.

Background Information on Evaluators

Richard Tobin, the team leader, has more than 30 years' experience as an evaluator. He formerly managed an evaluation group and served as a lead monitoring and evaluation (M&E) specialist at the World Bank. Subsequent to his retirement from the World Bank he has worked on evaluation-related tasks for the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, Germany's Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, and Australia's Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Gheorghe Caraseni has worked as an evaluator or capacity-development specialist on projects in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. His clients have included FHI 360, the Equal Rights Trust, the American Bar Association, the International Labour Organization, the European Center for Non-Profit Law, the East Europe Foundation, Help Age International, and the National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova.

Findings

The findings that follow are based on the team's analysis of the data and reports reviewed and the interviews conducted. The findings are organized in four subsections: (a) overall, general findings; (b) findings that address the specific evaluation questions included in the TOR; (c) findings relevant to capacity building, which is one of UNDP's major objectives in Moldova; and, (d) findings related to gender and vulnerable groups. The latter topic is addressed in response to the country office's desire to evaluate how gender issues have been mainstreamed across the outcome areas. In each of these areas the report attempts to identify and explain variances between planned and actual results and identify the factors affecting the achievement of the intended results. The discussion that follows frequently refers to both outputs and outcomes. To ensure a common understanding of these terms and how they are used in this evaluation, table 2 defines them and provides examples from the projects that contribute to Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2.

Table 2: Activities, outputs, and outcomes

	Examples
Activities: interventions; the tasks that need to be completed to produce outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Number of activities implemented ✓ The policy setting for effective climate change finance is strengthened ✓ Training materials elaborated
Outputs: The products, capital goods, or services that result from development interventions. By themselves, outputs do not provide any developmental benefits. Outputs are the necessary ingredients for outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Number of government staff trained ✓ Number of strategies adopted ✓ Biodiversity and sustainable use targets in sectoral planning frameworks ✓ Size of the protected area system
Outcomes: short- to medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs; changes in a development situation or condition; changes in institutional performance or behavior among individuals or groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increase in land area outside protected areas where threats to biodiversity from economic activities are controlled ✓ Number of men and women employed in the biomass industry
For additional information, see UNDP's <i>Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results</i> (2009).	

General Findings

In accordance with UNDP's *Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators*, evaluators should assess the degree to which progress towards achieving the outcome has been made, without attribution of success or failure to any partner. The *Guidelines* suggest the use of the following rating scale:

- Positive change (determined by evidence of movement from the baseline towards the target measured by an outcome indicator)
- Negative change (reversal to a level below the baseline measured by an outcome indicator)
- Unchanged

The key issue for this outcome evaluation is to ascertain whether the program has achieved or is making progress that would lead to achievement of Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2 by the end of the UNDP's country program in December 2017. What must occur for the program to be declared a success and the outcome achieved? Answering this question is a challenge. Neither outcome is objectively verifiable, and neither outcome has a baseline or specifies how much improvement (for Outcome 3.1) or how much strengthening (for Outcome 3.2) must occur for success to be declared.⁸ As a result, the rating scale just mentioned cannot be used.

Although both outcomes have measurable indicators, the indicators do not suitably or comprehensively represent the outcomes to be achieved. For example, outcome 3.2 has a

⁸ In the words of the UNDP's *Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results*, "If results and indicators are not based on measurable, independently verifiable data, the extent to which an initiative is realistic or achievable is questionable."

single indicator, the percentage of renewable energy in energy consumption.⁹ The target is 15 percent by the end of 2017. Although this is a suitable indicator for one portion of Outcome 3.2, it does not address the outcome's full range of expected results and is therefore not a fully valid indicator of the outcome. To know whether Outcome 3.2 has been achieved, a minimum of eight quantitative and/or qualitative indicators (with targets and corresponding objectively verifiable measures) would be required:

- Strengthened national policies on climate change
- Strengthened national policies on disaster resilience
- Strengthened national capacities on climate change¹⁰
- Strengthened national capacities on disaster resilience
- Strengthened national policies on low emission economic development
- Strengthened national capacities on low emission economic development
- Strengthened national policies on sustainable consumption
- Strengthened national capacities on sustainable consumption

In the absence of these indicators and their associated data, including baselines, a credible judgment about progress or achievement for Outcome 3.2 is not possible.

The same situation exists with Outcome 3.1. The single indicator is the surface of protected areas managed in line with international standards. The surface of protected areas is not a measure of improved environmental management because it does not reflect how well or even if the protected areas are managed. Accordingly, the target for protected areas (i.e., 7 percent in the CPD and up to 8 percent of Moldova's surface area in accordance with the government's Environmental Strategy for 2014-2023) could be met (as a result of others' efforts), but meeting the target will not provide the information required to determine whether Outcome 3.1 has been or will be achieved by the end of 2017.

The absence of a clear linkage between the two indicators and their outcomes represents an issue of program design, which led the evaluation team to consider whether a coherent theory of change underlies the program. The evaluation team was unable to discern one.¹¹ Such a theory would map the expected causal linkages between activities, outputs, and outcomes and relevant indicators, which are signposts for change and help to measure progress towards outputs and outcomes. For an outcome-based evaluation, the most useful indicators are for outcomes and their baselines. A corresponding results framework would

⁹ By most definitions, this is an indicator of an outcome, but UNDP/Moldova has identified the indicator as both an output and an outcome.

¹⁰ As UNDP/Moldova noted in its comments on the draft evaluation, it has some reservations with regard to these proposed "strengthening indicators" because it is difficult to measure capacity strengthening. Given this situation, with which the evaluation team agrees, it is not clear why UNDP selected an outcome that is difficult to measure, especially in the absence of a baseline.

¹¹ This finding parallels the results of the *Final Evaluation of the UN-Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework, 2013-2017*. It concluded that the UNPF's "lack of a [theory of change] affected the quality of the Results Matrix (selection of indicators), the monitoring by Results Groups and the reporting on results obtained with the framework of the current UNPF."

reflect a clear understanding and specification of how any planned interventions are causally linked with the outputs and are expected to lead to the desired outcomes.

A theory of change has several implicit assumptions. The expected outcomes should govern the choice of approaches, activities, and outputs. Working backwards from the desired outcomes, those designing a program or project should ask what outputs and activities are necessary and essential to achieve the expected outcomes. A corollary is that all outputs should contribute to an outcome. By themselves outputs never justify a program's or project's existence. If outputs do not contribute to an outcome, there is no justification for the outputs or for any spending for the activities intended to produce the outputs. If the essential outputs are not produced, then claiming contribution to the outcome is unwarranted.

Tables 3a and 3b show the outputs and corresponding indicators that are assumed to contribute to Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2. Do they meet the requirements just noted? If not, then there are problems with the program's design. If a program or project is not well designed, it is difficult to monitor and evaluate its effects, and the best implementation cannot provide relevant information about how it contributed to the desired outcomes – because causal linkages are absent or because assumptions are flawed. The tables also shows the ratings for each output by assessing the degree to which its targets have been met or are likely to be achieved by December 2017 using the scale that the *Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators* suggest:

- No (not achieved)
- Partial (only if two thirds or more of a quantitative target is achieved)
- Yes (achieved)

The UNDP also has a long-standing expectation that indicators for its programs will be SMART (i.e., specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound).¹² One desirable trait of measurable indicators is that they be objectively or independently verifiable. The indicator should be measured unambiguously either quantitatively or qualitatively (for example, yes or no) and not be dependent on an advocate's or project manager's personal judgment about whether success has occurred. Terms that are not easily measured or that require a subjective judgment, especially by someone affiliated with the project's development or implementation, should be avoided. When different people collect data on the same indicator, their findings should be consistent.

¹² UNDP, *Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results*, 2009. The country office operates under an additional constraint that restricts the ability to judge and evaluate the program's effectiveness. UNDP's headquarters has imposed limits on the number of outputs and indicators that can be included in country program documents. The consequence is a poor match between the expansive objectives included in Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2 and their indicators. This problem is exacerbated when the indicators that are chosen do not provide suitable measures of the outcomes as is the situation here.

Table 3a: CPD Outputs and Indicators for Outcome 3.1

Outputs and Indicators for Outcome 3.1 (Improved environmental management in significantly increased compliance with international and regional standards)	Target	Rating	Is the indicator:			
			Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant
<u>Output 1:</u> Better capacities of institutions for environmental management and planning at all levels, in line with Multilateral Agreements and EU acquis <u>Indicator:</u> Environmental Protection Agency established and functional	Same as indicator	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<u>Output 2:</u> Central, local authorities effectively manage biodiversity and ecosystem services, biodiversity conservation is integrated in land use and spatial planning <u>Indicator:</u> Surface of protected areas managed in line with international requirements	7 percent and in line with international standards	Partial	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<u>Output 3:</u> Effective information/ participation policies/ mechanisms enable better environment decision-making <u>Indicator:</u> Public information and participation mechanisms in place	Information and participation mechanisms in place	CBD	No	No	Yes	Yes

CBD: cannot be determined.

Table 3b: CPD Outputs and Indicators for Outcome 3.2

Outputs and Indicators for Outcome 3.2 (Strengthened national policies and capacities enable climate and disaster-resilient, low emission economic development and sustainable consumption)	Target	Rating	Is the indicator:			
			Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant
Output 4: Stronger national and local capacities to develop and integrate climate change adaptation and disaster risk management into policies as well as implement them at all levels <u>Indicator:</u> none provided	Not applicable; no target	CBD	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Output 5: Enhanced local capacities to address climate and disaster risks and to access information and knowledge on adaptation <u>Indicators:</u> Number of national, sector, and local policies or plans adopted/revised with climate change and disaster risk management mainstreamed	-- DRM/climate change strategies adopted (but no numeric target)	Partial	No	Yes	N/A	Yes
	-- Climate screening framework for sector policies adopted (but no numeric target)	Partial	No	Yes	N/A	Yes
	--100 local plans	Partial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Output 6: Communities, private sector, and farmers (including the vulnerable and women) with access and knowledge to use renewable energy sources and green technologies (biomass) <u>Indicators:</u> (a) Percentage of renewable energy in energy consumption; (b) number of biomass heating installations; and (c) number of biomass producers (disaggregated by sex)	-- 15 percent	Partial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	-- 200	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	-- 120	Partial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

CBD: cannot be determined.

Several points are readily apparent. First, and most important, several of the outputs do not appear to be causally linked to Outcomes 3.1 or 3.2. As an illustration, UNDP/Moldova recently completed a project intended to phase out the use of hydrochlorofluorocarbons, which can destroy the earth's ozone layer. This is an admirable objective, but it does not contribute to an increase in the surface of protected areas in Moldova. Similarly, it is not clear how and to what extent establishment of an environmental protection agency will improve management of protected areas (Outcome 3.1). Nearly half of the protected areas are the responsibility of local authorities that, accordingly to the key informants and program documents, have limited capacity and few or no human and financial resources to commit to improved management of these areas. An output for Outcome 3.2 addresses the completion of strategies for disaster risk management, but that output has no related indicator at the outcome level. The same outcome focuses on *national* policies and capacities, but two of the three outputs address local capacities and the private sector.

Second, several of the indicators and outputs are ambiguous, unclear, and are not independently verifiable. These include “better capacities” (better than what?), “effective information/participation,” “better environmental decision-making,” and climate change and disaster risk management “mainstreamed.” Each of these outputs and indicators require subjective judgments, each of which would be a challenge in the absence of valid baselines. The baseline of 4.65 percent for the indicator on the surface of protected areas “managed in line with international requirements” is misleading. That percentage represents the total area identified as protected for environmental reasons, but *not* the area that is managed in accordance with international standards, whatever they might be.

There is at least one instance in which an ambiguous term was questioned but seemingly neglected. UNDP/Moldova's project document on Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation mentions the need for an “adaptive approach...*employing acceptable limits of change*, which will, in turn, require putting in place a sound environmental monitoring and data management system that is currently lacking” (emphasis added). When the GEF's Secretariat reviewed the project document it questioned the meaning of “acceptable limits of change” and asked how it is defined.¹³ The project document was not subsequently revised in response to the GEF's concern.

Third, several CPD outputs have no targets, which precludes any judgment about the relative success in producing the outputs. Examples include farmers with access and knowledge to use renewable energy sources and “stronger national and local capacities to develop and integrate climate change adaptation and disaster risk management into policies as well as implement them at all levels.” Both of these outputs also lack baselines. In other instances outputs and targets are unclear or dependent on judgments made by UNDP/Moldova. Self-assessments of progress and achievements reflect a conflict of interest

¹³ GEF Secretariat Review for Full/Medium-sized Projects. Available at https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/project_documents/5355-2015-02-27-082520-GEFReviewSheetGEF52.pdf

and tend to be biased in the observer's favor. Strategies for disaster risk management represent one output, but the number of strategies required to declare success is unclear.

The evaluation team also found several of the results frameworks for the individual projects to be confusing. Some results frameworks identified outcomes but had no corresponding indicators. In other instances outputs were used inappropriately as indicators of outcomes or activities were used inappropriately as indicators of outputs. The ESCO Project, with 25 indicators, does not include an indicator related to one of its most impressive outcomes. The project is expected to lead to a reduction of 68,000 tonnes of direct CO₂ expected emissions and 240,000 tonnes of indirect CO₂ emissions during the period of project influence. This project thus provides an illustration of a situation in which a results framework neglects an important intended outcome and UNDP's key role in achieving it.

Weak, unclear, and invalid indicators are a recurring issue within the program. The findings of the present evaluation are similar to those of the terminal evaluation of the Environmental Fiscal Reform Project. That evaluation, which was completed in late 2015, concluded that the project's monitoring and evaluation "was marginally satisfactory due mostly to a weak set of indicators and targets to measure the performance of the project." The evaluators justified this finding by observing that the project's indicators:

were not really SMART indicators; in most cases, these indicators were somewhat ambiguous and not specific enough. There were also difficult to measure and not relevant enough to monitor the performance of the project; some of them were too focused on activities to be conducted – such as indicators to monitor the second outcome - and not enough on expected development results. Furthermore, indicators at the objective level were somewhat too general and in most cases difficult to be attained during the lifetime of the project. Finally, the targets identified in this M&E plan were not fully related to the list of indicators, but could be seen as another set of indicators to be monitored.¹⁴

Fourth, a recurring theme in the 11 projects associated with Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2 is funding for the completion of a plethora of national codes, policies, strategies, policy and planning frameworks, regulatory and operational guidelines, and action, sectoral, adaptation, development, and procurement plans. The evaluation team assumes that there is justification for each of these items, but they raise the questions of efficiency and how best to allocate UNDP's scarce resources.¹⁵ Are these resources best used to develop more plans and strategies, which seems to be the current approach, or are the resources best used to enhance implementation of existing plans and strategies when the known capacity to do so is weak

¹⁴ John-Joseph Bellamy and Victor Cotruta, *Terminal Evaluation of the UNDP-supported-GEF-financed Project "Strengthening capacities to undertake environmental fiscal reform to meet national and global environmental priorities"* (2015).

¹⁵ In comments on the draft report UNDP/Moldova noted its support for the development of the legal and regulatory framework because this was needed at that point in time and considered by the government as a priority. UNDP further noted that all of its projects provide upstream policy support, which is substantiated by implementing small-scale pilots and demonstration projects intended to serve as incubators for new ideas, innovative solutions, and evidence to inform policy making.

and underfunded? The country office can point to efforts to do the latter, but too often these efforts reflect activities and outputs with uncertain or undefined outcomes. To illustrate, the ESCO project identifies “awareness raising,” which is an activity, as an indicator of an outcome. Several projects have indicators related to the percentage of project budgets spent on advancing gender equality but there is no corresponding outcome that describes the expected benefits of these expenditures.

Finally, although targets for outputs can and often do change as a result of experience gained during implementation, the changes should have a rationale. One target found in the CPD but not shown table 2 addresses the “number of communities that implement disaster risk management measures in line with national strategies.” This target provides still another example of ambiguity. Who determines what an acceptable measure is and whether the implemented measures are “in line” with national strategies? The initial target was 40 percent of Moldova’s 1,681 communities. Sometime in 2014 or 2015 the target percentage was changed to only 10 percent or 168 of these communities. The evaluation team asked about but was unable to determine the reason for the change. By the end of 2016, only 18 communities had implemented climate change measures at the local level.¹⁶ In another instance both the targets and the accomplishments varied inconsistently from one year to the next. Consider the number of biomass heating installations in public buildings and private residences, as shown in table 4.

In sum, in many instances the relation between the CPD outputs and Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2 is unclear or uncertain. The causal linkage between the outputs and outcome is opaque as is the program’s theory of change. This situation is not unique to UNDP/Moldova. An evaluation of UNDP’s corporate evaluation policy identified “difficulties in reconstructing the logic model and theory of change behind the investment under evaluation in the absence of clear results frameworks.”¹⁷ The evaluation added that the use of these instruments would be a useful exercise, informing the evaluation design and subsequent data collection strategy in a context where time and resources are always short.

The next step in process of assessing the validity of the program’s theory of change is to consider the extent to which UNDP’s individual projects have contributed to the CPD outputs and, subsequently, to Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2. These projects and the resources devoted to them are shown in table 1. Consistent with the purposes of an outcome evaluation, the evaluation team was not responsible for making judgments about their relative success. In contrast, the team did consider the extent to which the projects provide context or inform an understanding of the likelihood that the program’s two outcomes will be achieved. No less important, these projects support all the activities that are expected to contribute to the CPD outputs and outcomes. What can be said about these projects?

¹⁶ *United Nations-Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework, 2013-2017: Country Results Report 2015* (2016) and information provided by the country office.

¹⁷ Le Groupe-conseil Baastel Itée, *Review of the UNDP Evaluation Policy: Final Report* (October 2014). Available at http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/policy/review/Baasterl-UNDP-Evaluation_PR_2014.pdf

Table 4: Number of biomass heating installations in public buildings and private households

Date and source	Baseline	Target	Number achieved
2013 Source: <i>United Nations-Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework, 2013-2017: 2013 Progress Report</i> (2014)	90 public buildings; less than 100 private households	200 public buildings; 500 private households	199 public buildings; 50 private households
2014 Source: Jan H. A. van der Akker and Pavel Gavrilita, <i>Final Evaluation of the Project: Moldova Energy and Biomass Project</i> (December 2014)		130 public buildings; 600 private households	141 biomass heating facilities in public buildings; 612 private households
October 2015 Source: <i>United Nations-Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework 2013-2017: Midterm Review Final Report</i> (October 2015)	90 public buildings; less than 100 private households	280 public buildings; 700 private households	199 public buildings; 620 private households
December 2015 Source: <i>United Nations-Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework, 2013-2017: Country Results Report 2015</i> (2016)	90 public buildings; less than 100 private households	280 public buildings; 700 private households	490 public buildings; 250 private households (almost a 60 percent decrease from what was reported just a few months earlier)
September 2016 Source: TOR for the evaluation	30 (Number of biomass heating installations)	200 (not disaggregated by public versus private)	N/A

On the one hand, the team's review of project-related documents, including several evaluations of the projects, plus interviews with the stakeholders, demonstrated widespread appreciation for UNDP's support and many meaningful accomplishments both at the policy and grass-roots levels. Many respondents confirmed that UNDP/Moldova is a well-respected and much appreciated development partner. All of the projects are or have been well anchored and highly relevant to the country's needs. Furthermore, the projects are entirely consistent with Moldova's sectoral strategies, including those for energy, the environment, and biological diversity. The projects have focused attention on issues that otherwise might have been ignored or neglected for lack of resources or institutional capacity.

UNDP/Moldova has facilitated the government's access to national and international expertise and assisted other donors, notably the GEF and the European Union, to implement projects that these donors themselves could not implement or administer as effectively as the UNDP because of its in-country presence, its familiarity with government agencies, and other comparative advantages. UNDP/Moldova and its implementing partners are justifiably proud

of what these projects have achieved, and terminal evaluations of several projects confirm their success and effectiveness.

Two examples illustrate this point. First, UNDP's support for increased reliance on the use of renewable energy helped to improve the national share of renewables to 14.3 percent by 2016, with nearly all of this due to the increased use of biomass boilers. During the CPD cycle the number of public institutions that benefited from biomass and solar based heating reached 189, while contributing to the comfort of more than 150,000 people. By 2015, the percentage of women-headed households with access to renewables had increased to 38 percent. More than 30,000 people in 24 rural communities benefited in the same year from affordable heating, following the installation of 17 biomass heating and solar or renewable energy hot water systems in hospitals, public schools, and government offices.¹⁸

Second, When the CPD was designed, protected areas represented 4.65 percent of Moldova's territory. That percentage increased to 5.6 percent by 2016 due substantially to UNDP's support for the creation of Orhei National Park. The UNDP is also partnering with other development agencies to establish the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. The related feasibility studies have been completed and formalization of agreements with local public authorities is in progress. Similarly, UNDP has a project in the pipeline to create the Lower Nistru National Park. Both of these examples demonstrate that UNDP's interventions have contributed to the achievement of the indicators associated with the program's two outcomes, although, as noted earlier, these indicators insufficiently measure the outcomes themselves.

On the other hand, and despite the positive comments just noted, the projects do raise concerns with respect to the CPD's outputs and Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2. As noted earlier, a valid theory of change and its desired outcomes should guide and, indeed, determine the selection of individual projects. Accordingly, only those projects that contribution to achievement of outcomes should be pursued. This does not appear to have been UNDP/Moldova's approach to the development of its project portfolio. Five projects are part of the country office's efforts to achieve Outcome 3.1. Although the current country program extends through 2017, four of the projects have already been completed.

The project on Improving Coverage and Management Effectiveness of Protected Areas is the only one intended to increase the surface of protected areas, but the project ended in 2013.¹⁹ In the absence of any related activities or interventions, it is unclear how UNDP expects to contribute to further increases in the surface of protected area with its current project portfolio. Similarly, one output is the establishment of an environmental protection agency within the Ministry of Environment. No UNDP-funded project provided any support to the ministry in 2016 to support efforts to create the agency.

¹⁸ United Nations - Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework 2013-2017, *2015 Country Results Report* (2016).

¹⁹ UNDP/Moldova was instrumental in the creation of Orhei National Park in 2013, which added 33,792 hectares to the country's protected areas. Orhei is Moldova's only national park and has been nominated for inclusion in UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites.

One active project, Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation, is supporting important work to rehabilitate pastures and degraded forests, but the project intentionally focuses on areas *outside* of Moldova's protected areas. Interviews with project beneficiaries suggest that the project is successful, but this success is not linked to and will not contribute directly to improved management of protected areas, the indicator for Outcome 3.1.

These findings raise the question of why the projects were developed and funded if it is not clear how they contribute to the program's expected outcomes. The financial data in table 1 suggest a possible explanation. Across UNDP/Moldova's overall portfolio of projects, it relies on other donors to provide almost all of the projects' funding. In several projects, especially those related to Outcome 3.2, non-UNDP sources provided 100 percent of the funds, which UNDP/Moldova then administered on behalf of the donors. Donors actually provided all of the funding identified as UNDP funding in the table, but these funds were first given to UNDP headquarters and then to UNDP/Moldova. In short, like all UNDP country programs, UNDP/Moldova is entirely dependent on donors for all the funding for all its projects. It can develop and implement only those projects that these donors are willing and able to finance. The donors' priorities and their agendas thus determine much of what UNDP can do. As the UNDP's Evaluation Office has observed,

reliance on largely unpredictable noncore resources results in challenges to maintaining programme focus. This is especially true when country offices struggle to maintain a critical mass of staff with limited core resources, making the imperative to mobilize resources very strong.²⁰

The Evaluation Office added that some country programs reflect a programming approach dominated by the search for funds rather than programmatic logic. The thematic area subject to this evaluation may provide an example of this situation.²¹

There is a further reason for the gaps and misalignment, which UNDP/Moldova acknowledges, between the individual projects and the CPD outputs and the two program outcomes. Outputs are typically defined when projects are designed, but UNDP/Moldova was required to identify CPD outputs, program outcomes, and their targets for the current CPD in 2012 without knowing what projects would be developed and funded and with what level of resources, such as the Mainstreaming Biodiversity Project, which began in 2015. Nonetheless, the mismatch between the project and the CPD outputs does not explain the mismatch between these outputs and the indicators for Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2.

Specific Evaluation Questions

The TOR for the evaluation identified a series of questions and issues that the evaluation team was asked to address in three areas: outcome analysis, output analysis, and

²⁰ UNDP, Evaluation Office, *Evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008–2013* (2013).

²¹ The *Final Evaluation of the UN-Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework, 2013–2017* supports this finding: "In several cases, [UNDP/Moldova's] interventions were dictated by opportunities, rather than by a foreseeable contribution towards planned results."

resources, partnerships, and management analysis. Tables 5a, b and c respectively include these questions and the team's responses to them.

Outcome analysis

Table 5a: Questions and issues related to the analysis of outcomes

Outcome analysis	Evaluation team's response
Are the outcomes and associated projects relevant, appropriate, and strategic to national goals and the UNDP mandate?	Yes. The outcomes are appropriate, strategic, and highly relevant to national goals and the UNDP mandate. The evaluation team considers that the projects' relevance to these goals is one of the outstanding features of the Environment, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Reduction pillar. As noted above, in contrast, not all individual projects are relevant to the Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2. Several of the projects lack a meaningful link with the outcomes.
Were the actions to achieve the outputs and outcomes effective and efficient?	Judging the effectiveness project-related actions is beyond the scope of this outcome evaluation, especially in view of the separate evaluations of several of the completed projects. Evaluations typically assess a project's efficiency, but this evaluation is not examining individual projects but rather the extent to which these projects contribute to the achievement of Outcome 3.1 and 3.2. Assessment of the efficiency of the individual projects is beyond the scope of this outcome evaluation.
Were there multilevel interventions conducted (environment, organization, individual)?	Yes. The individual projects have conducted activities with the national government, local public authorities, environmental organizations, public schools, and with the private sector.
Are the outputs and outcomes leading to benefits beyond the life of the existing projects?	Yes and No. For example, although the biomass projects intend to increase the use of renewable energy, the projects have also saved the new biomass users considerable funds that they otherwise would have spent on coal or natural gas. In contrast, a few respondents voiced concern about the sustainability of several of the UNDP-supported interventions. In several instances these interventions ended without having achieved all of their objectives and much remained to be done. ²² See additional discussion below.
Which findings may have relevance for eventual adjustments and/or future programming?	The evaluation team believes that all of its findings, especially those related to program design, are relevant and should be considered for future programming.
Are the stated outcome, indicators, and targets appropriate for the development situation in Moldova and UNDP's program of assistance in this field?	The outcomes and targets are appropriate for Moldova's development situation. As noted above, however, not all of the indicators and outputs are appropriate or well-matched to the outcomes. Some of the initial targets were unrealistically high and were reduced during the country program's implementation. This is not uncommon. Adjustments to program goals are appropriate in response to changes in the development landscape, of which there have been many in Moldova.

²² The project on Strengthening Capacities to Undertake Fiscal Reform to Meet National and Global Environmental Priorities" (2012-2015) provides an example

What is the current status and prospects for achieving the outcomes with the indicated inputs and within the indicated time frame?	This question was addressed in the previous subsection. In the absence of the necessary data and relevant and objectively verifiable outcome indicators it will not be possible to judge whether the outcomes will be achieved by the end of 2017.
What are the main factors (positive and negative) within and beyond UNDP's interventions that affected or are affecting the achievement of the outcomes? How have these factors limited or facilitated progress towards the outcomes?	The first question was addressed in the previous subsection. Moldova has experienced political turmoil in recent years with considerable turnover among its ministers and other senior officials. ²³ This situation has affected achievement especially at the policy level and provides part of the explanation why an environmental protection agency has not yet been created or why a strategy for disaster risk management or environmental fiscal reform was not developed. In addition, the national government is being reorganized with the goal of reducing the number of ministries. Changing organizational responsibilities and the leadership of these organizations is likely to have slowed implementation. On the positive side, the evaluation team was impressed with the competence, commitment, and dedication of the government officials, environmental organizations, and the UNDP project leaders interviewed for the evaluation.
Were UNDP's proposed contributions to the achievement of the outcomes appropriate, sufficient, effective and sustainable?	The UNDP's contributions, both financial and technical, have been appropriate. The evaluation team cannot make a judgment about the sufficiency of the contributions (with the caveat that government agencies rarely decline additional resources). The contributions have not always been effective for the reasons noted previously, namely the absence of the data necessary to judge effectiveness in achieving the outcomes Sustainability was briefly described above and is discussing further below. Sustainability is always a concern with donor-funded interventions.

At least one of the questions above merits additional comment. First, concern for sustainability is a recurring issue in development projects, including some of the UNDP's in Moldova.²⁴ Governments may not have the resources or technical skills required to continue the projects or their interventions and to sustain the assumed benefits once donor funding ends. This may be a particular concern for UNDP's projects that rely on the generosity of other donors. Although a project might benefit from an extension designed to promote or even ensure sustainability, the donors may be unwilling or unable to provide additional resources that would permit an extension. As the UNDP Evaluation Office has explained, "Since UNDP has no control over its resources in the long term, sustainability of the benefits is often related to the sustainability of the intervention itself and is therefore often at risk."²⁵ In many community-based interventions, the Evaluation Office concluded, support is often withdrawn before community-level capacity can be established.

²³ Five governments were changed during the 2014-2016 period.

²⁴ The *Final Evaluation of the UN-Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework, 2013-2017* observed that several projects reviewed for the evaluation did "not have a clear sustainability plan (exit strategy) to make sure that results and impacts of assistance are taken over and enhanced by the relevant national stakeholders and mainstreamed in policies and practices."

²⁵ UNDP, Evaluation Office, *Evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2013* (2013).

The latter situation may have occurred with the project on Improving Coverage and Management Effectiveness of the Protected Areas System in Moldova. Meetings with the representatives of local public authorities found that few of them have the capacity to manage the protected areas for which they are responsible in compliance with international standards. Furthermore, the evaluation team found little evidence of current government-led efforts to maintain any local capacity that might have been created or strengthened when the project was active between 2009 and 2013.

In contrast to the example just cited, several evaluations of UNDP's projects have concluded that some of the projects' outcomes would likely be sustained. These include continued financial and institutional sustainability for the Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction Project (2011-2016), continued use of biomass boilers in public facilities, and continued efforts to strengthen capacities to undertake environmental fiscal reform.

These examples are commendable, but they do not address the issue of sustainability for Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2. The key question is this: are the two outcomes sustainable? In the absence of suitable indicators of the outcomes (and whether the outcomes have been or will be achieved), what is it that would or could be sustainable at the outcome level and how would we know in the absence of indicators that match the two outcomes closely? "Sustainable consumption" is one part of Outcome 3.2, but whether it has been or will be achieved is unknown, particularly in the absence of a definition of what it means or how it might be measured.

Output analysis

Table 5b: Questions and issues related to the analysis of outputs

Output analysis	Evaluation team's response
What are the key outputs that have been produced by UNDP to contribute to the outcome?	UNDP/Moldova has produced an impressive array of products, capital goods, and services with the support of its staff as well as with consultants that have been hired to work with various government agencies. In every instance the accountability for these products is shared with national partners. Key outputs include a national biodiversity strategy and action plan, a draft national disaster risk management strategy and action plan, a national climate change adaptation strategy, and multiple forest and pasture management plans. With UNDP's support, Moldova's parliament approved a law to promote the use of renewable energy sources and lowered the taxes on the biofuel production chain. Through the Clima East project, over 150 ha was reforested in and around Orhei National Park between 2013 and 2016. Anticipated UNDP-supported key outputs in 2017 include a new forest code, a national climate change adaptation roadmap, and a report on the allocation of public financial resources to forestry, agriculture, and rangeland.
Are the UNDP outputs relevant to the indicators?	All of the key outputs just noted are relevant to the project-specific indicators.
Are the M&E indicators appropriate to link these outputs to the outcomes, or is there a	As noted above, the evaluation team is concerned about the weak linkage between the indicators associated with the individual projects and Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2. This concern is

need to improve these indicators?	especially germane to the latter outcome; two of the three associated CPD outputs (#4 and 6 in table 2b) are not specific, measurable, or time bound. In the absence of baselines or targets for these outputs, uncertainty exists about whether they are achievable.
Is sufficient progress been made with regard to UNDP outputs?	Although there have been some delays, which is not unexpected or a sign of flawed implementation, there has been sufficient progress with regard to the project-specific outputs, but not for all of the CPD outputs. For example, it unclear whether public information and public participation mechanisms are in place to enable better environmental decision making (output #3 in table 2a), and an environmental protection agency has not yet been created (CPD output #1 in table 2a). Creation of the agency depends on the government, but UNDP/Moldova has acknowledged shared accountability for this output.

Resources and partnerships

The partnership framework crafted by the United Nations in Moldova is reflected in the *UN – Moldova Partnership Framework 2013-2017*, which was developed through consultation with the UN country team, nonresident UN agencies, the Government of Moldova, civil society, and other stakeholders. The Framework defines the roles and responsibilities of the national and international partners for Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2.

UNDP developed productive partnerships with all key actors within the projects listed in table 1. These partnerships were assessed during the evaluations of several projects as being among the key driving forces of the CPD. This hypothesis was confirmed by all partners consulted during the field mission. These partners expressed their strong appreciation for the actions developed in cooperation with UNDP and were supportive of the projects' outputs. Less desirably, many of these partners lacked an outcome orientation, focusing exclusively on the processes and results achieved at the output level. Given this situation, is not feasible to determine whether there is consensus among UNDP actors, stakeholders, and partners that the partnership strategy designed was the best one to achieve the program's two outcomes and to extent to which the partnership strategy affected the achievement of or progress towards these outcomes.

Table 5c: Questions and issues related to resources, partnerships, and management analysis

Resources and partnerships	Evaluation team's response
Have UNDP's partnership arrangements with local partners proved to be successful and relevant?	Yes, UNDP scored well in establishing productive partnerships with the relevant partners, including public authorities and NGOs. This is confirmed by project evaluations as well.
Do the size of resources, both financial and human, and partnership strategies continue to be cost-effective and can they be applied in continuation and/or revised/changed?	Mostly, Yes. UNDP managed to mobilize more financial resources for the program's implementation than initially estimated, but donors seemed to favor projects associated with Outcome 3.2 rather than Outcome 3.1. UNDP has a partnership strategy other than the UNPF, which rules out the needs and cooperation priorities for other partnerships at the operational/projects level. Additionally, UNDP/Moldova has a Partnership and Resource Mobilization Implementation Plan, which is updated annually and is an annex to the country office's Strategy Note.
Determine whether the best possible synergies have been established among partners and the steering role played by UNDP within this context.	Some synergies have been established among key strategic and local partners and the steering role is played by UNDP, which is the leader in setting arrangements for coordination among partners and maintaining ongoing dialogue.
Assess whether other stakeholders and/or sponsors should be included and/or excluded from the programme in continuation as well as referring to the next phase of the CPD.	UNDP/Moldova has included key national public authorities, other stakeholders, sponsors mostly at the policy level interventions, and local stakeholders, i.e., local public authorities and community-based organizations mostly at the grass-roots level. These organizations are often responsible for a large portion of management of the protected areas and the implementation of local plans for managing the risks associated with disasters.

Capacity Building

The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) published a methodology for assessing capacity development in 2008.²⁶ This document makes several points about the importance of such development. Foremost among these points is the idea that capacity development “is key to the achievement of national development strategies.” As the UNDG added, capacity development is critical for ensuring national ownership of development plans and effective resource management; for enhancing the absorptive capacity of program countries; for maintaining effective national institutions; for empowering communities and civil society; and for scaling up and sustaining progress over time.

No less important, the UNDG methodology also emphasized that thinking about capacity development has undergone significant change:

Conceptually, there has been a paradigm shift whereby the notion of capacity development is no longer limited to human resource development, but rather covers a broader scope that includes societal and organisational transformation and the issues

²⁶ UNDG, *Capacity Assessment Methodology, User Guide for National Capacity Development* (2008).

of national ownership, policy-level impacts, and sustainability. *Operationally, it no longer emphasizes outputs* (emphasis added).

The last point, about the shift away from emphasis on outputs, is noteworthy. Development of capacity is not measured by the number of workshops conducted or the number of people trained. Progress is measured in terms of outcomes achieved. These outcomes should reflect an assessment of existing capacity before UNDP's interventions as well as a strategy that identifies the characteristics or attributes of success – capacity for what and whom?

UNDP/Moldova's country program recognizes the importance of capacity development. "Capacity" is mentioned almost 25 times in the CPD, including four times in one paragraph about the discussion of the thematic area subject to this evaluation: environment, climate change and disaster risk management. In addition, three of the six CPD outputs shown in tables 2a and 2b relate to capacity development.

Despite this emphasis the evaluation team was not able to discern a consistent approach to or a strategy for capacity development (or its assessment) within this thematic area. The various project documents typically mention capacity, and some in considerable detail. In other project documents, however, consideration of capacity is weak or superficial, assessment of existing capacity is brief, and identification of the capacity to be developed or strengthened is generic. Similarly, training is often assumed to be equivalent to training. Training may contribute to the development of individual capacity, but training is not equivalent to strengthened capacity.

Moreover, rather than assessing the outcomes of the training and whether capacity-related progress has been achieved, the evaluation team noted the prominence of output indicators primary at the individual level. This finding is of concern. It was previously brought to the attention of UNDP/Moldova. In the 2013 terminal evaluation of the project on Improving Coverage and Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Moldova, the evaluators recommended that UNDP/Moldova "improve capacity development indicators to move beyond simple output indicators (for example, number of people participating in a training) to a results-based approach that more effectively assesses the uptake and application of capacity development activities."²⁷ There is little evidence that this recommendation has influenced the design of subsequent initiatives, including UNDP's projects in the thematic area subject to this evaluation.

The evaluation team reviewed the results frameworks from the original project documents associated with Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2. The purpose was to identify the indicators associated with capacity development and to assess which focused on outputs or outcomes and at what level (for example, individual, institutional, or both). For the sake of brevity, table 6 provides an illustrative sampling of indicators and targets for several projects. The information in the table confirms an emphasis on outputs rather than outcomes, an

²⁷ Josh Brann and Andrei Isac, *Terminal Evaluation: Improved Coverage and Management Effectiveness of the Protected Areas System in Moldova* (2013).

assumption that training is equivalent to capacity development, and targets that are either vague or not objectively verifiable. Some indicators do address outcomes but the corresponding targets represent outputs or activities. Examples include, respectively, the first referenced indicators for the ESCO and Clima East Projects. Several of the indicators do not identify what capacities will be developed or how they would be measured (for example, Clima East: number of people involved in capacity building and awareness activities).

Table 6: Capacity-related indicators and targets for projects supporting the country program

Project	Capacity-related indicator	Target
Environmental Fiscal Reform	Capacity development scorecard ratings increase in a consistent manner	Capacity scorecard ratings show improvement at final evaluation
		A set of training sessions are implemented in line with training needs assessment
Mainstreaming Biodiversity Capacity	Number of government staff trained in collection of biodiversity information	At least 20 officers trained
Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction	Number of policy and decision makers familiarized with DRM objectives and priorities	National Commission for Emergency Situations is fully capacitated to assume its coordination, policy development, planning and monitoring function
	Number of curricula and training or education modules improved with international best practice	At least one gender-sensitive curricula/training and/or education programs or modules improved
	Number of NGOs capacitated to deliver trainings on disaster risk reduction in the region	At least six NGOs have completed the training of trainers
National Climate Change Adaptation	Moldova has operational individual, institutional and systemic capacities in place required to develop and advance medium- to long-term National Adaptation Plans	Yes
	Percentage of sectoral planners at national, regional, and local levels trained (disaggregated by sex)	No target
	Policy- and decision-makers have increased knowledge and skills necessary for addressing climate change adaptation in planning and budgeting	At least 70 percent confirm increased knowledge and skills
	Data management and service quality in the State Hydrometeorological Service improved	Yes
ESCO	Number of municipal staff members capable of implementing projects and evaluating results related to energy performance contracts	Three target beneficiary groups and three training sessions

	Number of building managers trained on ESCO business model	At least 20 energy service providers are trained on the ESCO business model
		At least 20 public building managers and maintenance managers are trained on the ESCO business model
Clima East	Increased level of understanding at local, regional and national level about sustainable grassland and forest management	A training program developed and facilitated for sustainable grassland and forest management
	Number of people involved in capacity building and awareness activities at the national, regional, and local levels	At least two workshops organized

Among all of UNDP/Moldova's projects, the cluster on energy and the environment was the first to use the United Nations' Harmonized Approach for Cash Transfer for two projects. The purpose of the approach is to "support a closer alignment of development aid with national priorities and to strengthen national capacities for management and accountability, with the ultimate objective of gradually shifting to national systems."²⁸ UNDP/Moldova is to be commended for this initiative, but the evaluation team is unable to comment on the effectiveness or capacity-related benefits of the approach in Moldova. The evaluation team did not learn of the approach's use in Moldova until after it had completed the field work and interviews in Moldova.

The evaluation team is *not* concluding that UNDP/Moldova's efforts to enhance capacity are without merit or effectiveness. They are clearly well-intended, and they may be substantially effective, but such a judgment cannot be made in the absence of data based on clear evidence on the outcomes of these capacity-building efforts showing what kind of knowledge, abilities, and practices or systems were developed as a result or because of UNDP's project-related interventions.

Gender and Vulnerable Groups

The TOR for the evaluation asked the evaluation team to address the program's implications for women and men, their participation in design and implementation of the outcome and particular projects in the outcome area, whether the latter has addressed the issues of gender inclusion, equality, and empowerment and contributed to strengthening the application of these principles to various development efforts in Moldova, and how UNDP/Moldova has mainstreamed gender issues across the two outcome areas.

At the corporate level the UNDP has a long-standing commitment to gender-related issues, and especially to girls and women. The agency's current strategic plan similarly highlights the need for attention to these issues. According to the agency's corporate website,

²⁸ United Nations Development Group, *Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer (HACT) Framework* (2014).

“Women are disproportionately impacted by climate change and disasters, both through loss of livelihood and physical harm, and they also play central roles in rebuilding homes and communities after disasters.” UNDP/Moldova’s website echoes this sentiment and notes that the country office works to support the country:

in meeting the gender equality commitments it assumed in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals and the European integration agenda. *We do so by incorporating gender equality principles in all the work we do to strengthen national capacities and systems....*A particular focus is placed on promoting measures that offer more opportunities for women to participate in decision making, be more employable and take leadership positions in the private sector (emphasis added).

How well is this commitment reflected in what the country office does in its efforts to achieve outcomes 3.1 and 3.2? The answer is mixed. On the one hand and to its considerable credit, UNDP/Moldova has increased its commitment to gender-related issues in recent years and has the evidence to support its achievements. UNDP’s headquarters has established a “Gender Equality Seal” program to recognize country offices that meet a range of standards for integrating gender equality into their work. Four levels of seals are awarded based on a self-assessment of results achieved: bronze, silver, gold, and platinum. To receive a seal, standards must be met in seven areas: management systems; in-house capacities; enabling environment; communications and knowledge management; programs; partnerships; and gender results. UNDP/Moldova was awarded a silver-level seal for its work in 2013-14 with the Ministry of Justice to enact an equality law, to increase women’s representation in decision-making processes and reduce gender inequality in employment. The country office recently applied for and is likely to receive gold-level status in the near future.

On the other hand, and focusing only on the projects related to Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2, other evidence suggests room for improvement in the country office’s attention to gender. The evaluation team reviewed all project documents for the projects associated with the two outcomes. The objective was to determine: (a) the extent to which these documents analyzed the projects’ gender-related dimensions; (b) whether these documents identified the different needs and priority for males and females; and, (c) whether there are sex-disaggregated data that can be used to assess the projects’ contributions to gender equality.²⁹

²⁹ Several of UNDP/Moldova’s documents, including its 2016 gender audit, incorrectly refer to gender-disaggregated data. Some country staff believe that sex and gender are equivalent and interchangeable. To the contrary, data are often disaggregated by sex (male or female) but infrequently by gender. According to the United Nations Statistics Division, the “word ‘sex’ refers to biological differences between women and men. Biological differences are fixed and unchangeable and do not vary across cultures or over time. ‘Gender’ refers to socially constructed differences in the attributes and opportunities associated with being female or male and to social interactions and relationships between men and women. The term ‘gender’ has often been wrongly used in association with data. ‘Gender disaggregation’ or ‘data disaggregated by gender’ are incorrect terms. Gender statistics are disaggregated by sex, an individual-level characteristic commonly recorded in censuses, surveys and administrative records, not by gender, a social concept relevant at the level of a population group.” See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/genderstatmanual/What-are-gender-stats.ashx>

To address the extent of the program’s attention to gender, each original project document was searched for the word “gender.” For four projects, shown in table 7, there was no mention of gender, and thus no analysis of how the problems that justified UNDP’s interventions might affect men and women differently or how the projects would address these differences. One project document had a single reference to gender, and seven projects in total had no indicators related to gender or made an effort to collect sex-disaggregated data.

Table 7: References to gender in selected project documents

Project	Number of references to gender in project document	Gender-relevant indicators?
Improving Coverage and Management Effectiveness of Protected Areas	None	No
Energy and Biomass, Phase 1	None	No*
Clima East	None	No
ESCO	None	No
Environmental Fiscal Reform	One	No
National Biodiversity Planning	Four	No
Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation	Four	No*

* There are gender-related indicators in phase 2 of the Energy and Biomass Project and in the revised results framework for the project on Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation Project.

When the GEF’s Secretariat reviewed a proposal to cofund the Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation Project, which had four references to gender in its project document, the Secretariat commented that “the description provided both on socio-economic benefits and gender elements are very general and lack specificity.”³⁰ This is a telling comment. The GEF’s guidelines are explicit in requiring that project designs for GEF funding must address the socioeconomic aspects of a project, including gender elements. These elements include a gender analysis or similar methods to assess “the potential roles, benefits, impacts and risks for women and men of different ages, ethnicities, and social structure and status.”³¹ For the ESCO Project, for which the GEF is providing over 85 percent of the funding, its review of the project failed to address or consider the project’s gender dimensions even though such consideration is required. As noted in table 6, however, no gender-related dimensions were discussed in the UNDP’s project document for the ESCO Project, so there was nothing related to gender for the GEF to review.

UNDP/Moldova completed a midterm review of its partnership strategy in October 2015. Gender was a frequently mentioned topic for two of the country office’s three thematic pillars: (a) Democratic Governance, Justice, Equality, and Human Rights and (b) Human

³⁰ GEF Secretariat Review for Full/Medium-sized Projects. Available at https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/project_documents/5355-2015-02-27-082520-GEFReviewSheetGEF52.pdf

³¹ GEF, *Policy on Gender Mainstreaming* (2012). Available at https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Gender_Mainstreaming_Policy-2012_0.pdf

Development and Social Inclusion. In contrast, gender received no attention in the review's discussion of the third pillar, Environment, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Management.

Phase II of the Energy and Biomass Project (2013-16) represents a partial exception to the concerns just noted. The project document included multiple references to gender-related issues, pledged to adopt a gender-sensitive approach during project implementation and to ensure equal participation and representation of women in all consultations and decision-making bodies, and promised to initiate a study on gender-specific impacts of climate variability and risk and an analysis of disaster vulnerabilities. In spite of this accent on gender, the project's indicators do not address the assumed benefits of attention to gender. One gender-related indicator focuses on the percentage of the project's budget spent on advancing issues of gender equality (without explaining how such expenditures would be measured or how they would contribute to equality of outcomes). A second gender-related indicator addresses the number of technical tools, detailed gender-responsive methodologies and guidelines (by sector) to support the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction that are produced.

As noted above, UNDP/Moldova's attention to gender has increased in recent years. One indication of this change is the completion of two gender audits, one in 2014 and another in 2016.³² The UNDG has a self-rating system for so-called gender markers. Ratings are assessed at the output level. The higher the score, the better the rating:

- GEN0: not expected to contribute to gender equality
- GEN1: contributes to gender equality in a limited way
- GEN2: gender equality is a significant objective
- GEN3: gender equality as a principal objective

The two highest ratings are assigned only when indicators explicitly measure progress toward gender equality. The gender audit for 2016 rated eight projects related to Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2. All were rated as GEN1. In the opinion of the evaluation team, such a rating underestimates the potential contribution of several projects to gender equality. The Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation and the Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction projects provide examples. As an illustration, considerable evidence suggests that the effectiveness of low-emissions development can be increased when it is designed using a gender-informed approach.³³

In response to the 2016 gender audit, the country office reviewed its projects (with the exception of those ending in 2016) to determine whether their results frameworks could be amended to incorporate gender-relevant indicators. This process led to the revision of

³² UNDP/Moldova, *Gender Audit Report in Selected UNDP Projects* (2016). The country office was unable to provide the gender audit completed in 2014, so it is not possible to compare the results of the two audits. The UNDG's *Gender Equality Marker Guidance Note* (2013), available at <https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/UNDG-Gender-Equality-Marker-Guidance-Note-Final-Sep-2013.pdf>, states that each agency should rate their outputs annually.

³³ World Bank, *Gender and Climate Change: Three Things You Should Know* (2011).

indicators for four projects: ESCO, Energy and Biomass, National Climate Change Adaptation, and Mainstreaming Biodiversity. The changes represent some progress in attention to gender. Nonetheless, several of the revised gender-related indicators continue to emphasize activities and outputs rather than outcomes. Examples include the number of women and men involved in trainings or meetings as well as development of a checklist of gender-sensitive indicators for the ESCO Project. Perhaps more important, the output and related interventions do not seem well tailored to the particular needs and circumstances of women, who are notably vulnerable to disasters, climate change, and other environmental perils. Providing the same interventions and the same “dosages” of interventions to men and women assumes that their needs as well the solutions are identical.

Finally, the evaluation team was also tasked with considering the extent to which UNDP/Moldova has advocated for the principle of equality and inclusive development and has contributed to empowering and addressing the needs of the disadvantaged and vulnerable population. The evaluation team did not encounter any information suggesting that the country office either did or did not advocate for the principles of equality and inclusive development.

To assess whether the program addressed the needs of the disadvantaged or vulnerable populations, the project documents were searched for the word “vulnerable” in the context of groups or individuals. Several mentions were found in the project documents on the Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction Project and the National Climate Change Adaptation Planning Project. Both of the documents noted that “specific attention will be given to addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, such as boys and girls, elderly and people with disabilities.”³⁴

In other project documents “vulnerable” groups are mentioned but it is not clear who is or is not included in these groups. The project document on the Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction Project cited a study completed for UNDP/Moldova that also identifies the rural population, people of Roma, Ukrainian, and Bulgarian ethnicity, people with incomes of under 55 Moldovan lei per day, and the unemployed as vulnerable.

Among the project documents that do mention vulnerable group there is attention to *activities* related to vulnerable groups, but not much else. It is difficult to determine through project reports whether that attention has mitigated or eliminated the risks to which these groups are exposed. The results framework for the Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction Project has a relevant indicator: “share of the population (disaggregated by gender and vulnerable groups getting early warning information.” The results framework does not identify who is included in the vulnerable groups. The project’s 2015 annual report does not

³⁴ In comments on the draft report, UNDP/Moldova noted that the project on Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation added attention to vulnerable groups after having received comments on the original project document from the GEF Secretariat. That document had not discussed attention to vulnerable groups.

provide any data relevant to the indicator (or any disaggregated data) and reports on only a few of the indicators in the results framework.³⁵

Other than changing the tense (and without providing any evidence), the project's final review employs the same wording found in the project document: "specific attention *was* given to addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, such as boys and girls, elderly and people with disabilities."³⁶ Furthermore, the final review does not discuss the results of this attention (or compare the results achieved with the expected results included in the results framework). The latter omission suggests that the results framework did not guide the project's implementation or play any role in monitoring its progress.

Conclusions

UNDP/Moldova jointly plans and implements its commitments in challenging conditions. Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe and has experienced political instability, financial crisis, and economic turmoil during the life of the CPD. Moreover, the outcomes associated with the pillar on Environment, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Reduction are especially challenging. The issues being addressed are complex, and not all the solutions can be found within Moldova. Climate change and many natural disasters are beyond the control or even the influence of well-intentioned policy makers, even those who have access to abundant resources and admirable institutional capacity.

Given these circumstances, a coherent and well-crafted programmatic strategy is essential if success is to be achieved. In the opinion of the evaluation team, however, that strategy has not been evident in UNDP/Moldova's program on Environment, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Reduction. The team believes that the program's design provides much of the explanation. Although the individual projects are relevant to Moldova's situation and appear to be successful, not all have contributed directly or causally to Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2, thus undermining the program's efficiency and effectiveness.³⁷

The evaluation team encountered many dedicated and conscientious people within UNDP/Moldova, within the government, and among Moldova's environmental NGOs and local authorities. At the operational level and within the individual projects, people are planning and doing the "right" things, but the right things have not always been what needs to be done to achieve the program's outcomes. There is an issue of inconsistency between the interventions at the project level and the outcomes at the program level. As a result, key actors have been operating in an environment in which their outputs are not well linked and do not always contribute to the expected outcomes. In many instances indicators have

³⁵ UNDP Moldova and Civil Protection and Emergency Situations Service, *Annual Report: Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction Project (Phase II)*, (2016).

³⁶ Stanislav Kim, *Final Review: Moldova Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction Project, Phase II* (2016).

³⁷ In response to this conclusion, UNDP/Moldova noted that a "significant number of outputs were produced, which ultimately [were] in line with country priorities and contribute to the two outcomes."

emphasized activities and outputs to the neglect of outcomes, and baselines and targets have not been consistently available, thus precluding assessments of change and progress.

The next CPD offers an opportunity to address these issues. They are all manageable and all amenable to change. Achieving change will require a transformation from what appears to be an activity-based approach to one that begins with identification of desired outcomes and then decides what projects and what outputs are required to achieve these outcomes. A narrowing of ambitions may also be desirable; doing less but doing better may serve as a useful organizing principle for the next CPD.

Lessons Learned

Based on the evaluation team's review of program documents, interviews with key state and nonstate informants, and analysis of the information collected in Moldova, the evaluation team suggests several lessons that may be of value to the country office:

- ✓ *Coherent and consistent program design is critical for a successful outcome-based evaluation.* If programs are not well designed, and there are “grey zones” between the programmatic and projects levels as is the case in Moldova, the value of excellent implementation can be negated. The appropriate design of a program requires sufficient effort, relevant actors, and expertise because its quality and coherence affect implementation, the outputs and achievement of outcomes, and, subsequently, outcomes-based evaluation. For an outcome-based approach (planning, implementation, and evaluation), it is insufficient to produce good and tangible results at the output level but to neglect their linkages to outcomes. Outputs should clearly, causally, and demonstrably contribute to planned outcomes. The theory-of-change approach and a corresponding results framework are prerequisites a successful country program. In a challenging environment, as in Moldova, it is also important for the country program to be flexible during its implementation and to adjust the initial design as necessary but still remain coherent with clear links between the strategic outcomes and project-based outputs.
- ✓ *SMART indicators (with baselines and linked targets) are essential for measuring the program's performance.* Such indicators represent the key ingredients for a results-based approach as opposed to management by process. It should be possible know whether a program has achieved its outcomes because relevant data on SMART indicators have been collected.
- ✓ *Capacity development is not a one-off intervention but an iterative process of assessment – design – intervention – adjustment – reinforcement– measurement of results achieved – and exit.* Approaching capacity development through this process and using appropriate development interventions can contribute to rigorous and systematic capacity building. It is not enough to design a coherent program with SMART indicators and results-based approach; it is also important to ensure that key actors have the skills and abilities they need to achieve desired outcomes.

The evaluation team recognizes that there may be additional country-specific lessons. Nonetheless, given the weaknesses identified in the program's theory of change and the frequent misconnection between outputs and outcomes as well as indicators that are not SMART, the team has restricted itself to lessons that are overarching and that are the most striking. However "generic" the lessons may be, their application offers the opportunity for UNDP/Moldova to increase the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of its future program and projects.

Recommendations

The recommendations that follow are intentionally few in number, but the evaluation team believes that their implementation can substantially improve the results UNDP/Moldova achieves in its program on Environment, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Reduction. The recommendations follow directly from the conclusions and lessons learned. The recommendations further reflect the team's belief that projects under the current CPD (a) have focused too much on outputs and not enough on outcomes and the links between the outputs and outcomes – even when it has been possible to demonstrate that meaningful outcomes are being achieved and (b) have not always been consistent in the absence of a unifying theory of change at the program level.

1. *Decide what UNDP's comparative advantage is and where its new program and projects can best add value to Moldova's country context and development priorities.*

UNDP/Moldova has devoted considerable resources to the development of many national plans, policies, and strategies. The country office should consider whether this is the best use of its resources and best way to contribute to Moldova's development needs. There is considerable evidence that implementation of existing policies and strategies at the community level is weak, poorly funded, and occasionally nonexistent. It is at the community level, however, where UNDP's intended beneficiaries live. As an example, a National Disaster Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan is of no value unless it provides observable benefits to people and their communities. The evaluation team recommends that the next CPD direct less attention to the development of additional national plans and strategies but substantially increases its attention to the effective implementation of existing ones and ensures the linkages between the national commitments and local priorities. It is understandable that the ultimate responsibility for the implementation of legal, policy, and budgetary frameworks rests with the national counterparts not with UNDP or other development partners. Nonetheless, the development partners and their resources can be used to encourage and leverage the focus of the national partners on the effective implementation of the commitments and to provide capacity-building support to ensure they are able to implement the many plans and strategies that have been developed.

2. *Develop a theory of change when designing the new CPD and for the projects that are intended to support achievement of UNDP/Moldova's outcomes related to Environment, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Reduction.*

Had this approach been used for the current portfolio of projects, there would have

been a separate theory of change for each outcome at the program level, and the theory would have encompassed all projects related to each outcome. Such a theory would map the expected results chain and *causal linkages* between activities, outputs, and outcomes, and be matched with relevant indicators. When designing the new program, plan backwards from the desired programmatic outcomes to project-related outputs and activities that are necessary to achieve these outcomes. All indicators should be SMART, independently and objectively verifiable, and linked to the outcomes and outputs.

Before developing a new UNDP project, work with the national and local state and nonstate actors to assess the extent to which the project will be linked with the program's overall outcomes and how the expected project outputs will contribute to the achievement of the CPD outcomes. UNDP/Moldova should focus on the country program framework and reinforce this focus during project development with public and civil society actors. All projects related to a single programmatic outcome should reflect an overall coherence with that particular outcome. This would mean that individual UNDP projects would share similar frameworks, and their prospective contributions to the programmatic outcomes would be demonstrably obvious. In other words, the process of portfolio development will be focused on and will be within the strategic framework set in the country program.

Only those projects that contribute to programmatic outcomes should be initiated. These outcomes should identify clearly: (a) the primary individual or organizational target group(s); (b) the specific and measurable benefits that the group(s) will receive; and, (c) the expected changes in behavior, situation, or performance of the target group(s). The program's outcomes should then be matched with SMART indicators (for outputs and outcomes) that promote and permit effective monitoring and evaluation as well as objective judgments about results achieved.

3. *Shift from the prevailing focus on project outputs to one that emphasizes strategic outcomes that create long-lasting effects for communities and improve people's lives, improve the quality of their environment, and reduce the risks of or increase adaptation to disasters and climate change.*

This recommendation is also applicable to UNDP/Moldova's efforts to develop national capacity and to mainstream gender into its projects. Planned and achieved performance should be measured; the achievement of project outputs is not always an indicator of the success to which UNDP aspires. Ensure that indicators of outcomes actually reflect outcomes rather than using activities or outputs as invalid proxies for outcomes.

Concurrently with the internal shift in focus, UNDP should emphasize to its implementing partners that their focus should also be on jointly developed outcomes. Project narratives and monitoring and evaluation reports from these partners, in addition to describing projects' achievements, should assess the extent to which these achievements contribute to the program's measurable qualitative or quantitative outcomes.

All periodic progress reports and evaluations of projects should distinguish outputs from outcomes and report results (outcomes and outputs) achieved against the results

anticipated or expected and that are included in projects' results frameworks. It is also recommended to highlight not only the contextual challenges but also the key driving forces and how those forces are being accommodated.

4. *Focus on the sustainability of program outcomes and projects' achievements.*

During development of activities for the next CPD, UNDP/Moldova should emphasize the planning, producing, and assessing of the sustainability of its achievements and highlighting national ownership and sustainable prospects in four key areas. These include: (a) financial sustainability (for example, financial commitments or allocations); (b) institutional sustainability (for example, establishing or developing organizational skills and abilities); (c) policy sustainability (for example, existence and functionality of national and local policies and regulations); and, (d) environmental sustainability (positive, long-lasting effects on the environment, climate, DRM, etc.). Each project should have a well-crafted step-by-step exit strategy, developed in consultation with key stakeholders, that identifies postproject requirements and commitments for the four dimensions of sustainability. The exit strategy should address how the dimensions will be addressed and identify the resources required and the responsibilities and the expected or required commitments of the stakeholders that will assume responsibility for the continued flow of benefits.

UNDP should provide space for innovation and prototyping to pilot new approaches for DRM, climate change, and environmental protection, but they should be within country program outcomes. If it appears that a potential project and its intended benefits are not likely to be sustainable once UNDP's support ends or it is not clear to what extent intended results will be sustainable, then a project should not be initiated unless there is a compelling reason to proceed. A donor's willingness to fund a project should not be considered such a reason.

UNDP/Moldova has noted its disagreement with this recommendation. As the country office explained: "There are some times when ad-hoc requests from the government or even donor opportunity in line with national priority, and the absence from the CPD document should not prevent proper actions responding to emerging challenges or an opportunity."

In response to this objection, the evaluation team believes that in a resource-scarce environment, UNDP/Moldova should attempt to do few things well rather than dissipating its resources, including its managerial capacity, in response to ad-hoc requests that are only marginally consistent with or marginally contribute to the achievement of outcomes in the CPD.

5. *Improve the assessment of implementing partners' institutional capacity and develop a strategy for enhancing this capacity.*

When UNDP/Moldova seeks to enhance capacity, its interventions should be based on a sound understanding of what capacity already exists, what capacity should be strengthened, for whom, and how. Doing so will enable both UNDP and targeted institutions to measure changes in capacity and to design a tailored plan for capacity building. The emphasis should be placed on strengthening and sustaining institutional capacity rather than individual capacity. Training events should not be equated with capacity building, although training may be a means to contribute to enhanced capacity. Measurable and objectively verifiable

outcome-based targets should be established so that it is possible to recognize success (or failure) when it occurs. The UNDP's *Capacity Assessment Methodology: User's Guide* could be helpful. It provides information not only on how to assess existing capacity but also describes approaches to support and measure its development.

6. *Ensure that all project documents and implementation plans consider the gender-related dimensions and opportunities for woman and vulnerable groups that the proposed projects offer.*

Analysis in project documents and proposals submitted to prospective donors should consider the potential roles, benefits, impacts, and risks for girls and women and members of vulnerable groups. Based on this analysis, project documents should identify measures to increase the anticipated benefits and to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse impacts on girls, women, and members of vulnerable groups – after first identifying who these members are, what are their situations, what are the factors affecting them, how they should be approached, and what tailored actions the intervention should consider and implement. The expected outcomes for girls and women and members of vulnerable groups should also be specified and matched with suitable indicators. When appropriate, data should be disaggregated by age and sex, not by gender.

Although UNDP/Moldova conducted a self-assessment of its attention to gender in 2016, the evaluation team encourages the country office to consult with UN Women to identify ways in which attention to girls' and women's needs and circumstances can be enhanced so that meaningful gender-related outcomes are achieved and sustained.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Job title:	A team of International Consultant and National Consultant for Environment, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Outcome Evaluation, Moldova United Nations Partnership Framework/ Country Programme Document 2013-2017
Duty station:	Chisinau, Republic of Moldova
Reference to the project:	n/a
Contract type:	Individual Contract (IC)
Duration of Employment:	September-December 2016
Expected workload	International consultant- 30 days (5 in country, 25 home-based) National consultant – 25 days
Starting date:	15 September 2016

A. BRIEF NATIONAL and PROGRAMME CONTEXT

Environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction are identified in the current 2013-2017 UNPF/CPD cycle as one of the priority areas of concern towards achievement of the major development priorities set by Moldova while implementing its vision to be a prosperous and modern European country in line with the 2014 EU-Moldova Association Agreement.

Due to its dependence on the agriculture which employs almost 40% of the people and from which 12% of GDP derives, Moldova is highly vulnerable to climate variability and change. The projections show that an increase in temperatures and intensity of extreme events is expected in the future in the country, as well as changes in the precipitation patterns. The National Adaptation Strategy adopted in 2014 is intended to increase national capacity to adapt and respond to the climate change-related threats, but also lays the foundation for mainstreaming of climate change consideration across sectors.

Further, the country is party to the Convention on Climate Change since 1995, and it joined the Kyoto Protocol in 2003. In line with the provisions of the given Convention, the Republic of Moldova is part of the group of non-annexed countries which are not bound to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but may benefit from support offered by developed countries for the implementation of technologies with an advanced level of energy efficiency and reduced GHG emissions.

The Republic of Moldova associated itself with the Copenhagen Accord (COP 2009) and through the submitted Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, it aims to achieve a country-wide unconditional target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 64-67 percent below its 1990 level in 2030. The reduction target could be increased to 78 percent below the 1990 level, conditional to a global agreement on low-cost financial resources, technology transfer and technological cooperation. The country expressed its intention to sign the Paris Agreement in autumn 2016 creating a momentum for

further domestic actions towards low-carbon and climate-resilient future.

Moldova lacks its own energy resources with 95% of energy consumption being covered from imports. The energy efficiency is 3 times higher than the EU average and the residential area is the main energy consumer (44%), followed by transport (18%) and industry (13%). Energy sector is also the main source of GHG emissions, with a share ranging between 67.3% to 79.8% over 1990-201. As such, being a member of the Energy Community since 2010, it committed to ensure sustainable development of the energy sector, by increasing interconnectedness of power and gas lines and of the renewable energy in the total energy mix by 20% in 2020. The country also targets to reduce energy efficiency by 10% in 2020.

Moldova is also confronting with environmental degradation, pollution and unsustainable use of natural resources which impede Moldova's development agenda. The country has the lowest forest coverage in Europe of only 11.1% and scarce grassland ecosystem identified in 2% of the natural and semi-natural habitats. Although creation of the National Park Orhei has increased the representativeness of protected areas system in Moldova from 4.58 to 5.5% in 2013, the coverage rate is far below the existing European average. Biodiversity degradation and loss is further recognised as a development challenge in the 2014 National Environmental Strategy, urging for scaling-up of financial flows in this area and also for strengthened policy coherence in support to cross-sectoral biodiversity mainstreaming.

The country lacks a comprehensive national strategy and institutional framework for disaster risk management. The national and local capacities for disaster preparedness for response are limited as well as understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions which makes for the climate change and disaster risk management to be approached in isolation.

Overall, the environmental sector is still not recognised as a priority and continues to be underfinanced with weak linkage between strategic and finance planning.

Against this background the United Nations – Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework (UNPF) “Towards Unity in Action” and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Programme Document (CPD) 2013 – 2017 response is aimed at supporting the Government of Moldova in strengthening policies and capacities for sustainable and resilient management of the environment and natural resources and adaptation to climate change at all levels, but also in implementation of country's priorities and European integration objectives in the area of energy and disaster risk reduction. Results achieved with UNDP assistance will contribute to the achievement of UNPF/CPD *Outcome 3.1, which refers to improved environmental management in significantly increased compliance with international and regional standards and Outcome 3.2, focusing on strengthening national policies and capacities which enable climate and disaster resilient, low emission economic development and sustainable consumption*. These interventions are implemented with donor co-funding such as the EU, GEF and Austrian Government in close collaboration with Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Energy Efficiency Agency, Energy Efficiency Fund, Agency Moldsilva, State Hydro-meteorological Service, Civil Protection and Emergency Situation Service, NGOs and CBOs, and LPAs.

B. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

This evaluation exercise is commissioned according to the UNDP Evaluation Plan for the current CPD and UNPF Action Plan (2013-2017) in the Republic of Moldova. The evaluation covers Outcome 3.1. and Outcome 3.2. of the of the UNPF/CPD 2013 – 2017 and will put a major focus on assessing the impact and overall contribution of the UNDP Environment & Energy Cluster towards progress in achieving *improved environmental management in significantly increased compliance with international and regional standards and strengthening of national policies and capacities which*

enable climate and disaster resilient, low emission economic development and sustainable consumption. In addition the evaluation will assess the impact produced so far under the area of intervention, as well as draw conclusions and recommendations for eventual adjustments, and, to the extent possible, lessons learnt for further programming and implementation of programme. The evaluator shall also give importance to assessing efficiency and to a possible extent effectiveness of the UNPF/CPD Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2. whether the size of resources, both financial and human, and partnership strategies continue to be cost-effective and may be applied in continuation and/or revised/changed.

The following Outputs falling under this Outcome, as stated in UNDP CPD 2013 – 2017, are to be part of this evaluation:

CPD/UNPF Outcome	CPD Outputs	UNDP Programmes/Projects
<p>Outcome 3.1: <i>Improved environmental management in significantly increased compliance with international and regional standards.</i></p> <p>Indicator: <i>Surface of protected areas managed in line with international standards.</i></p>	<p>1. Better capacities of institutions for environmental management and planning at all levels, in line with Multilateral Agreements and EU acquis</p> <p>Indicator: Environment Protection Agency established and functional</p> <p>Baseline: draft NES foresees creation of EPA</p> <p>Target: EPA established and functional.</p> <p>2. Central, local authorities effectively manage biodiversity/ ecosystem services, biodiversity conservation is integrated in land use and spatial planning</p> <p>Indicator: Surface of protected areas managed in line with international requirements</p> <p>Baseline: 4.65% (2011)</p> <p>Target: 7 % and in line with international standards</p> <p>3. Effective information/ participation policies/ mechanisms enable better environment decision-making</p> <p>Indicator: Public information and participation mechanisms in place</p> <p>Baseline: None</p> <p>Target: Information and participation mechanisms established.</p>	<p>Improving coverage and management effectiveness of the protected areas system in Moldova (2009-2013)</p> <p>National Biodiversity Planning Project to support implementation of the CBD 2011-2020 Strategic Plan In Moldova (2012-2014)</p> <p>Strengthening capacities to undertake environmental fiscal reform to meet national and global environmental priorities (2012-2015)</p> <p>Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Moldova's Territorial Planning Policies and Land-Use Practices (2015-2019)</p>
<p>Outcome 3.2: Strengthened national policies and capacities enable climate and disaster- resilient, low emission economic development and sustainable consumption.</p>	<p>1. Stronger national and local capacities to develop and integrate CCA and DRM into policies as well as implement them at all levels.</p> <p>Baseline: 0% of 1,681 communities</p> <p>2. Enhanced local capacities to address climate and disaster risks and to access risk information and knowledge on adaptation.</p>	<p>Implementation of the Hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC) Phase-out Management Plan, stage 1 and 2 (2011-2016))</p> <p>Moldova Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction Project (phase I and II) (2011-2016)</p> <p>Moldova Energy and Biomass Project, phase 1 and 2 (2011-2017)</p>

<p>Indicator: Percentage of renewable energy in energy consumption</p>	<p>Indicator: Number of national, sector and local policies/plans adopted/revised with climate change and DRM mainstreamed</p> <p>Baseline: 0;</p> <p>Target: DRM/CC Strategies adopted; climate screening framework for sector policies adopted and implemented; 100 local plans.</p> <p>3. Communities, private sector and farmers (including the vulnerable and women) with access and knowledge to use renewable energy sources and green technologies (biomass).</p> <p>Indicator: Percentage of renewable energy in energy consumption; number of biomass heating installations and biomass producers (disaggregated by gender)</p> <p>Baseline: 5%, 30, 0;</p> <p>Target: 11%, 200, 20%</p>	<p>Clima-East: Ecosystem-based adaptation and mitigation (2013-2016) National Climate Change Adaptation Planning (2013-2017) Low Emission Capacity Building Programme (2014-2016) ESCO Moldova- Transforming the market of urban energy efficiency in Moldova by introducing Energy Service Companies (2014-2018)</p>
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C. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

This is a summary progress evaluation, aiming to assess the extent to which programme and project activities implemented with partners during 2013-2016 have contributed to the progress under **UNPF/CPD Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2. for UNDP**, as well as to achievement of set targets, whether existing UNDP's partnership arrangements with local partners proved to be successful and relevant and overall whether UNDP-supported activities have contributed to improved management of environmental and natural resources in compliance with international/EU standards. The evaluation shall identify changes that happened within the last 3 years as they relate to the development outcomes, the degree and levels of these changes, i.e. enabling environment, organizational and/or individual levels. It shall also assess whether UNDP's strategic positioning in this area can be improved.

Since this is an evaluation carried out at the end of the development interventions planned for the current UNPF/CPD, the evaluation team shall give greater importance to assessing efficiency and to a possible extent the effectiveness of UNDP's Environment and Energy Portfolio CPD Outcome 3.1. and 3.2., whether the size of resources, both financial and human, and partnership strategies continue to be cost-effective and may be applied in continuation and/or revised/changed.

The evaluation team shall take into account and rank the following items:

- Status of and degree of change in the outcomes, and factors influencing the outcomes
- Level of incurred changes: Enabling environment, Organizational and/or Individual levels
- UNDP strategic positioning on achieving the outcomes
- Relevance of the outcomes and outputs
- Partnership strategy
- Sustainability: whether there is ownership and capacity to maintain and manage development in the outcomes

The International Consultant will work in a team with a national consultant that will provide necessary support, as per the TORs.

The main partners to be involved in the evaluation are: Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Energy Efficiency Agency, Energy Efficiency Fund, Agency

Moldsilva, State Hydro-meteorological Service, Civil Protection and Emergency Situation Service, NGOs and CBOs, and LPAs.

Worksheet on Outcome Evaluation: Categories of Analysis/Scope

Category	Notes
Progress to outcome realization	Review indicators and benchmarks to determine extent/degree of contribution in the outcome realization by assessing progresses made to-date vis-à-vis baseline. Focus on the how and why outputs and strategies contributed to achieving outcome. Focus on questions of relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and impact.
Factors affecting outcome	These are social, political and economic factors. As such, the evaluation scope shall be as broad as possible so as to take all factors into account
UNDP's contribution to outcome	Conduct quantitative and qualitative assessments of contributions from UNDP's interventions vis-à-vis outcome indicator baseline. Assessment should focus on determine the continued validity of the strategies applied to-date by UNDP and so as to decide whether they should be revised and/or changed for the next programming cycle
Partnership strategy	Determine whether the best possible synergies have been established among partners and the steering role played by UNDP within this context. Assess whether other stakeholders and/or sponsors should be included and/or excluded from the programme in continuation as well as referring to the next phase of CPAP.

Specifically, the outcome evaluation should address, but not be limited to, the following *questions and issues*:

1. Outcome analysis
 - Are the outcomes and associated projects relevant, appropriate and strategic to national goals and the UNDP mandate?
 - Were the actions to achieve the outputs and outcomes effective and efficient?
 - Were there multi-level interventions conducted (environment, organization, individual)? How many?
 - Are the outputs and outcomes leading to benefits beyond the life of the existing projects?
 - Which findings may have relevance for eventual adjustments and/or future programming?
 - Are the stated outcome, indicator and target appropriate for the development situation in Moldova and UNDP's programme of assistance in this field?
 - What is the current status and prospects for achieving the outcome with the indicated inputs and within the indicated timeframe?
 - What are the main factors (positive and negative) within and beyond UNDP's interventions that affected or are affecting the achievement of the outcome? How have these factors limited or facilitated progress towards the outcome?
 - Were UNDP's proposed contributions to the achievement of the outcome appropriate, sufficient, effective and sustainable?

2. Output analysis
 - What are the key outputs that have been produced by UNDP to contribute to the outcome?
 - Are the UNDP outputs relevant to the outcome?
 - Are the monitoring and evaluation indicators appropriate to link these outputs to the outcome, or is there a need to improve these indicators?
 - Is sufficient progress been made with regard to UNDP outputs?
3. Resources, partnerships, and management analysis
 - Was UNDP's resource mobilization strategy in this field appropriate and effective in achieving this outcome?
 - Was UNDP's partnership strategy in this field appropriate and effective in achieving this outcome?
 - Are UNDP's management structures and working methods appropriate and effective in achieving this outcome?
 - Overall, assess the scope, relevance, efficiency and sustainability of UNDP's resources mobilization, partnership and management arrangements in achieving this outcome.
4. Recommendations
 - Based on the above analysis, recommendations should be provide as to how UNDP should adjust its programming, partnership arrangements, resource mobilization strategies, working methods and/or management structures for an efficient and effective implementation of the current CPAP and to the extent possible for the next country programming cycle.

To the extent possible, answers to the above questions shall address the implications for women and men, their participation in design and implementation of the outcome and particular programmes and projects in the outcome area, whether the latter had addressed the issues of gender inclusion, equality and empowerment and contributed to strengthening the application of these principles to various development efforts in the country, and how gender issues had been mainstreamed across the outcome area by UN/DP.

Evaluation shall also address the extent to which UN/DP had advocated for the principle of equality and inclusive development, and has contributed to empowering and addressing the needs of the disadvantaged and vulnerable population.

D. METHODOLOGY

Overall guidance on outcome evaluation methodologies is provided in the UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results and the UNDP Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators. Based on these guiding documents, and in consultation with UNDP in Moldova, the evaluators should develop a suitable methodology for this outcome evaluation.

During the outcome evaluation, the evaluators are expected to apply the following approaches for data collection and analysis:

- Desk review of relevant documents (project documents with amendments made, review reports -midterm/final, donor-specific, etc);
- Discussions with the Senior Management and programme staff of UNDP Country Offices;
- Briefing and debriefing sessions with UNDP, and the Government, as well as with other donors and partners

- Interviews with partners and stakeholders (including gathering the information on what the partners have achieved with regard to the outcome and what strategies they have used); other donors, including European Commission, SIDA, SDC, ADA, WB, etc.
- Field visits to selected project sites and discussions with project teams, project beneficiaries;
- Consultation meetings.

E. DELIVERABLES

The key product expected from the evaluation team is a comprehensive evaluation report that includes, but not limited to the following components: (see the UNDP Guidelines for outcome evaluators for detailed information):

- Executive summary
- Introduction
- Description of the interventions
- Evaluation scope and objectives
- Evaluation approach and method
- Development context
- Data analysis and key findings and conclusions
- Recommendations and lessons learned for the future (including viable project ideas and other recommendations)
- Annexes: ToRs, field visits, people interviewed, documents reviewed, etc.³⁸

The international evaluator, with support from the national consultant, should provide a proposed report structure to UNDP prior to the start of fieldwork. The report should be prepared in English. The UNDP Evaluation Focal Team will ensure that report is translated into Romanian. It should take into account the opinions/voices of people from Moldova, government representatives, donors and NGOs. The evaluators will prepare a presentation of the preliminary findings to be discussed at a roundtable in Chisinau with UNDP and its partners. Consultation process, entirely or in parts, might be undertaken separately by UNDP.

An outline for the future UNDP interventions in the respective area (if still deemed relevant) based on the recommendations of the mission is to be produced. The format of the outline will be agreed between UNDP, and the evaluator prior to the start of the evaluation.

The evaluators are required to discuss the full draft of the evaluation report prior to the mission to Moldova. Both products shall be submitted in electronic form.

Dissemination mechanisms

The results shall presented at a round-table to all key stakeholders (representatives of Government, relevant Parliamentary Committees, projects and specialized NGOs) and shared through specialized local and regional networks. The final evaluation report will be placed on the UNDP web-site and distributed through regular Government channels to interested parties.

Evaluation ethics

The evaluation shall be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'. The Evaluation team will take every measure to safeguard the rights and confidentiality of key information providers in the collection of data.

³⁸ See the *UNDP Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators* for a detailed guidance on the preparation of an outcome evaluation report.

F. REQUIREMENTS FOR EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

For international consultant:

1. Academic Qualification

- Advanced university degree in environment, energy, disaster risk reduction- related sciences, public administration, international development or other related field
- Trainings in project management and monitoring and evaluation is an advantage

2. Years of experience

- At least seven years of work experience in the field of environment, energy and disaster risk reduction--relates sciences, public administration, including participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation
- Experience in conducting complex evaluations, especially in the environmental, energy and disaster risk reduction fields
- Working experience in the Eastern Europe region

3. Competencies

- Good understanding of the environmental, energy and disaster risk reduction issues
- Sound knowledge about results-based management (especially results-oriented monitoring and evaluation)
- Proven knowledge of monitoring and evaluation policies and procedures of international financing agencies
- Excellent analytical skills and report writing abilities
- Availability to work with UNDP during the indicated period;
- Good communication skills
- Excellent proficiency in English (the knowledge of Russian and Romanian is an advantage);

For national consultant:

1. Academic Qualification:

- University degree in environment, energy and disaster risk reduction--relates sciences, public administration, international development or other related field

2. Years of experience:

- At least 5 years of professional experience/technical knowledge in providing management or consultancy services in the area of environment, energy, disaster risk reduction and/or in other related fields
- Demonstrated experience in conducting/supporting evaluations, especially in environment, energy and disaster risk reduction fields
- Previous experience with practical use of monitoring and evaluation methodologies;
- Experience in managing, monitoring and evaluating projects for UN or other international development agencies in the region will be an asset;

3. Competencies:

- Fluent in English and Romanian both written and spoken. Knowledge of Russian is an advantage;
- Proven commitment to the core values of the United Nations, in particular, respecting differences of culture, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, language, age, HIV status, disability, and sexual orientation, or other status.

Timeframe

The detailed schedule of the evaluation and the length of the assignment will be discussed with the evaluation team prior to the assignment. The estimated duration of evaluators' assignment is up to 30 working days for the international consultant and 25 working days for the national consultant. The final evaluation report should be delivered by December 1, 2016.

G. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

the International consultant will work in a team with a local consultant that will help with the analysis and research of the available relevant documentation, with setting up the meetings with the external actors and with the needed ad-hoc translations/ interpretation. To facilitate the outcome evaluation process, UNDP Moldova will set up an Evaluation Focal Team (EFT). The EFT with support from the Environment and Energy Portfolio Manager will assist in connecting the evaluation team with the senior management, and key stakeholders. In addition, the EFT will assist in developing a detailed evaluation plan; conduct field visits; and organize meetings. During the evaluation, the EFT will help identify key partners for interviews by the evaluation team. However, the evaluation will be fully independent and the evaluation team will retain enough flexibility to determine the best approach in collecting and analyzing data for the outcome evaluation.

Indicative Schedule

Activity/Deliverables for the international consultant	Activity/Deliverables for the national consultant	Place
Evaluation design, methodology and detailed work plan 2 days	Provide inputs to the methodology and work plan 2 day	On-line
Desk review (home-based) 5 days	Background materials for the international consultant collected 3 days	On-line
Visit to Moldova: Project site visits, interviews with partners and key stakeholders conducted. Summary key findings presented to the UNDP CO 5 days	Field visits and meetings with relevant parties for the International Consultant arranged. Participation in the meetings and follow-up on agreed actions 7 days	In Chisinau
Preparation and submission of 1 st draft of the evaluation report 10 days	Inputs to the draft Evaluation Report provided. 6 days	On-line
On-line presentation of the evaluation report; incorporation of comments 4 days	Presentation of the Outcome evaluation report to UNDP and key stakeholders. Collection of comments and inputs for final adjustment of the report 5 days	On-line

Finalization of evaluation report. Final Outcome Evaluation report submitted and approved 4 days	Inputs to the final evaluation report and provided. 2 days	On-line
Total estimated number of working days - 30	Total estimated number of working days- 25	

DOCUMENTS FOR STUDY BY THE EVALUATOR

1. UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for results
2. UNDP Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators
3. Ethical Code of Conduct for Evaluation in UNDP
4. UNDP Result-Based Management: Technical Note
5. Government's Activity Program 2011-2014 and 2015-2018
6. Moldova National Development Strategy 2020
7. Development Partners' Briefing Book for the Government of Moldova
8. Project documents and progress reports, project evaluation reports
9. UNDP Assessment of Development Results, 2012
10. United Nations – Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework (UNPF) “Towards Unity in Action” (2013 – 2017)
11. UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) 2013 - 2017

Annex 2: Key Supporting Documents Reviewed

- Bärisch, Susanne and Merten Minke. *Assessment of Carbon Monitoring Activities in the Clima East Pilot Project* (2016).
- Bellamy, John-Joseph and Victor Cotruta. *Terminal Evaluation of the UNDP-supported-GEF-financed Project “Strengthening capacities to undertake environmental fiscal reform to meet national and global environmental priorities”* (2015).
- Brann, Josh and Mark Anstey. *Clima East Pilots Project Mid-term Evaluation* (2015).
- Brann, Josh and Andrei Isac. *Terminal Evaluation: Improved Coverage and Management Effectiveness of the Protected Areas System in Moldova* (2013).
- Caraseni, Gheorghe. *Final Evaluation of the Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction Project Implemented by UNDP Moldova* (2013).
- Energy Charter Secretariat, *In-Depth Review of Energy Efficiency Policy in Moldova* (Brussels, 2015); available at <http://www.energycharter.org/what-we-do/energy-efficiency/energy-efficiency-country-reviews/>
- GEF. *Policy on Gender Mainstreaming* (2012).
- _____. Evaluation Office, *Methodological Note on Triangulation Analysis in Country Portfolio Evaluations* (2010).
- GEF Secretariat Review for Full/Medium-sized Projects. Available at https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/project_documents/5355-2015-02-27-082520-GEFReviewSheetGEF52.pdf
- Gheorghe, Camelia, Serghei Ostaf, and Olesea Stamate. *Final Evaluation of the UN-Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework, 2013-2017* (2016).
- Kim, Stanislav. *Final Review: Moldova Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction Project, Phase II* (2016).
- Le Groupe-conseil Baastel Itée. *Review of the UNDP Evaluation Policy: Final Report* (2014).
- O’Donoghue T. and K. Punch, *Qualitative Educational Research in Action: Doing and Reflecting*. London and New York: Routledge Falmer (2003).
- Republic of Moldova. *Decision Number 301, On the approval of the Environmental Strategy for the years 2014-2023 and the Action Plan for its implementation* (2014).
- _____. *Energy Strategy of the Republic of Moldova until 2030* (2013).
- _____. *On the Approval of the Strategy on Biological Diversity of the Republic of Moldova for 2015-2020 and the Action Plan for Enforcing It* (2015).

UNDG. *Capacity Assessment Methodology, User Guide for National Capacity Development* (2008).

_____. *Gender Equality Marker Guidance Note* (2013).

_____. *Results-Based Management Handbook. Harmonizing RBM concepts and approaches for Improved Development Results at Country Level* (2011).

United Nations Evaluation Group. *Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System* (2016).

UNDP. *Changing with the World: UNDP Strategic Plan: 2014 – 17* (no date).

_____. *Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017* (2014).

_____. *Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation for Development Results* (2009).

_____. Evaluation Office, *Evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008–2013* (2013).

_____. Evaluation Office, *Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators* (2002).

_____. Independent Evaluation Office, *Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment* (2015).

UNDP. Capacity Development Group, *Capacity Assessment Methodology: User's Guide* (2008).

UNDP/Moldova. *Draft Country Programme Document for the Republic of Moldova (2013-2017)* (2012).

_____. *Gender Audit Report in Selected UNDP Projects* (2016).

_____. *Progress Report: Moldova Energy and Biomass Project (Phase II), Reporting Period 1 January 2016 – 30 June 2016* (2016).

_____. Project Documents for the following projects:

- Improving Coverage and Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area system in Moldova
- National Biodiversity Planning Project to Support Implementation of the Convention on Biodiversity
- Strengthening Capacities to Undertake Environmental Fiscal Reform to Meet National and Global Environmental Priorities
- Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Moldova's Territorial Planning Policies
- Implementation of the Hydrochlorofluorocarbon Phase Out Management Plan
- Moldova Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction Project
- Moldova Energy and Biomass Project
- Clima-East: Ecosystem-based Adaptation and Mitigation

- National Climate Change Adaptation Planning
- ESCO Moldova: Transforming the Market of Urban Energy Efficiency

_____. *United Nations-Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework, 2013-2017: 2013 Progress Report* (2014).

_____. *United Nations-Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework 2013-2017: Midterm Review Final Report* (2015).

_____. *United Nations-Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework. 2013-2017: Country Results Report 2015* (2016).

UNDP Moldova and Civil Protection and Emergency Situations Service, *Annual Report: Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction Project (Phase II)*, (2016).

UNDP/Moldova, Ministry of Environment, and the GEF, *Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Moldova's Territorial Planning Policies and Land Use Practices: Inception Report* (2015).

van der Akker, Jan H. A. and Pavel Gavrilita, *Final Evaluation of the Project: Moldova Energy and Biomass Project* (2014).

World Bank. *Gender and Climate Change: Three Things You Should Know* (2011).

Annex 3: List of Individuals Interviewed and Sites Visited

Nr.	Name	Organization	Title or position
1	Silvia Pana-Carp	UNDP/Moldova, Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Cluster	Programme Analyst
2	Cătălin Corman		Programme Associate
3	Alla Skvortova	UNDP/Moldova	Gender Focal Point, Programme Specialist/ Cluster Leader, Governance, Justice and Human Rights
4	Viorel Albu		Project Manager, Confidence Building Measures Programme
5	Victor Cotruta		Project Manager, Energy and Biomass Project
6	Nicolae Zaharia		Project Manager, ESCO Project
7	Alexandru Rotaru		Project Manager Clima East and Mainstreaming Biodiversity Projects
8	Ecaterina Melnicenco		Project Manager, Disaster and Climate Risk Reduction Project
9	Stefan Liller		Deputy Resident Representative
10	Alexander Iscenco	Moldovan Environmental Governance Academy	Strategy and Research Co-ordinator
11	Tatiana Lujanskaya	Alliance for Energy Efficiency and Renewables	Executive Director
12	Gabriel Margineanu	Biotica Ecological Society and Association Pro Innovation and Transparency	Project Co-ordinator
13	Lilia Curchi	Association of Environmental and Ecological Tourism Journalists in Moldova	Project Co-ordinator
14	Andrei Isac	EcoContact,	President of Association
15	Calin Negura	Ministry of Economy	Head, Directorate-General for Energy
16	Irina Rotari		Specialist, Energy Department
17	Denis Tumuruc		Head, Department for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Policies
18	Mihail Stratan		Director, Energy Efficiency Agency
19	Octavian Crestin	Energy Efficiency Fund	Acting Executive Director
20	Gheorghe Morozan	Local Public Authority, Morozeni, Orhei District	Mayor. Morozeni, Orhei District
21	Andrei Leunte		Director, Community Health Center
		Site Visit: December 13	
22	Ion Cebanu	Moldsilva	General Director
23	Dumitru Galupa		Vice Director, Scientific Research Institute of Academy of Science

24	Alexei Poloncean		Forestry Engineer
25	Viorica Caiuc		Consultant
26	Anatol Gobjila	World Bank	Senior Agricultural Economist
27	Nicolae Nastasi	Local Public Authority, Stefan Voda District	Environmental Expert
28	Vasile Tintar		Mayor, Copceac, Stefan Voda District
		Site Visit: December 14	
29	Tatiana Marin	Ecological Movement of Moldova (EMM), Stefan Voda Branch	Head of Branch
30	Galina Iuras		Member of EMM, Stefan Voda Branch
31	Patricia Uta		Volunteers EMM, Stefan Voda Branch
32	Ana Bevziuc		
33	Valeria Prisac		
		Site Visit: December 14	
34	Alexandre Darras	European Union	Project Manager
35	Henno Putnik		Project Manager
36	Inga Podoroghin	Ministry of Environment	Secretary of State
37	Raisa Leon		Deputy Chief, Public Policy Analysis and Monitoring Office
38	Ala Rotaru		Head, Natural Resources and Biodiversity Department
39	Annelie Gabrielson	Sweden Embassy	Senior Specialist, Environment and Energy
40	Virginia Bilici		National Programme Officer
41	Alexandru Teleuta	Botanic Garden Institute of Academy of Science	Director
42	Svetlana Drobot	Civil Protection and Emergency Situation Service	Head, International Cooperation Division
43	Lidia Trescilo	State Hydrometeorological Service	Specialist
44	Mihail Roibu		Director
45	Vasile Scorpan	Climate Change Office	Manager, Ministry of Environment
46	Ala Druță		Project Manager, Supporting Moldova's National Climate Change Adaptation Planning Process