**UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub**

**INCEPTION REPORT**

External Terminal Evaluation of the “Technical Support to Eligible Parties to Produce the Sixth National Report (6NR)” Project

**Funded by the GEF (Global Environment Facility)**

**Implemented by UNDP**

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Inception report and work plan

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**Acronyms and abbreviations**

ABT: Aichi Biodiversity Targets

CBD: Convention on Biological Diversity

DAC : Development Assistance Committee

GEF: Global Environment Facility

LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean

M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation

OECD : Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PIR: Project implementation report

RF: Results Framework

TE: Terminal Evaluation

ToC: Theory of Change

ToR : Terms of Reference

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNEG : United Nations Evaluation Group

6NR: Technical Support to Eligible Parties to produce the Sixth National Report project

# Introduction

The UNPD has hired an independent consultant to undertake the Terminal Evaluation of the Project: “Technical Support to Eligible Parties to produce the Sixth National Report to the CBD (6NR)”. The project started on 29th November 2017 for an initial period of two years, up to 29th November 2019. It obtained a seven-months no-cost extension, and ends on 30th June 2020, after 31 months of implementation. The 6NR project is divided into four project documents which each cover one region: Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) I, LAC II, Asia, Mixed Regions. The total budget for the four project documents is US$ 7,392,000 funded by the GEF Trust Fund and US$ 400,000 by UNDP (US$ 100,000 per project document) excluding the government co-financing. According to the project documents the financial table would be as follows:

Table : project budget and co-financing as per project documents

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Project** | **GEF TF** | **Co-finance** | **Co-finance** | **Sub-total** | **Grand total** |
|  |  | **UNDP** | **Government** | **Co-finance** |  |
| LAC I 6114 | $ 1,953,500 | $ 100,000 | $ 1,280,000 | $ 1,380,000 | $ 3,343,500 |
| LAC II 6127 | $ 1,501,500 | $ 100,000 | $ 591,000 | $ 691,000 | $ 2,192,500 |
| Asia 6125 | $ 1,963,500 | $ 100,000 | $ 2,048,902 | $ 2,148,902 | $ 4,112,402 |
| Mixed Regions 6126 | $ 1,963,500 | $ 100,000 | $ 1,722,500 | $ 1,822,500 | $ 3,786,000 |
| **TOTAL** | **7,392,000** | **$ 400,000** | **$ 5,642,402** | **$ 6,042,402** | **$ 13,434,402** |

As the project is coming to completion and in line with UNDP and GEF rules and procedures, the current Terminal Evaluation is being commissioned by UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub (IRH).

# Purpose, scope and objective of the assessment

The purpose of this terminal evaluation is to provide a comprehensive and systematic account of the performance of four GEF projects on the preparation of the 6NR in line with the project Results Framework (RF) as described in each of the project documents (pages 17 to 19). Note that all four projects have similar RFs, the only change being the number of countries involved (e.g. given different number of target countries per project).

The scope of the TE is the full implementation period of the projects (29th November 2017 until the time the evaluation is being carried out, April 2020).

The objective of the evaluation is to assess the achievement of project results, and to draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of the benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming.

# Audience

The TE is meant to provide evidence of results and accountability to the UNDP, the GEF and to the CBD focal points in each country covered by the intervention. It may be published for dissemination and communication purposes. It is undertaken under the oversight of the UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub (IRH). The appointed evaluation manager is Christina Supples who is also the project manager. As such she will ensure that the TE remains on track with its expected work plan and provides the deliverables foreseen in this inception report.

# Project background

The project was initially established with a twenty-four months’ implementation period. It started its activities on 29th November 2017 and received a no-cost extension of seven months until its current deadline of 30th June 2020.

The project’s overall objective is “**To provide financial and technical support to GEF-eligible parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in their work to develop high quality, gender-responsive and data driven sixth national reports (6NR) that will improve national decision-making processes for the implementation of NBSAPS; that report on progress towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (ABTs) and inform both the fifth Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO5) and the Global Biodiversity Strategy of 2021-2030”.**

In order to achieve this objective, the project has identified the following **three specific outcomes**:

1. A functional steering committee is formed to prepare the 6NR, project timelines and methods are developed, funding is mobilized, and training and capacity building activities are complete
2. Stakeholder owned reports for each ABT and/or national equivalent are produced and compiled
3. A stakeholder owned 6th national report is produced and submitted to the CBD

The outcomes are supported by the following outputs:

Outcome 1 outputs:

* 1. The SC is formed, roles for the preparation of the 6NR are assigned, and a production plan and timeline is developed
  2. Necessary project funding and resources are acquired, including the submission of an Annual Work Plan and a Letter of Authorization and the identification of other funding sources as needed
  3. Participation in training and capacity building opportunities on the use of the CBD online reporting tool and the development of data that reports on progress in achieving the targets and activities in the post-2010 NBSAP

Outcome 2 outputs:

2.1. Scoping report/zero draft for each ABT and/or national equivalent is prepared

2.2. Consultations with stakeholders are undertaken to verify data and progress assessments and address information gaps for each ABT.

2.3. Report for each ABT and/or national equivalent are developed, which strive to be gender responsive, considering the resources and timeframe of the project in each country.

Outcome 3 outputs:

* 1. The draft 6NR is compiled, undergoes a technical peer review, revised and finalized
  2. The 6NR is validated and officially submitted to the CBD

# Evaluability

Each project is a thirty-five-page document (excluding annexes) that contains a strategy and a project results framework (RF). Three of the projects (LAC I, Mixed Regions and Asia) have the same number of target countries in the RF, namely 17, while the LAC II project document mentions as target 13 countries, bringing the total number of countries covered by the project to 64.

Each project’s RF indicates the targets and indicators to appraise progress at the objective and outcome levels. Each project also has a brief intervention strategy mentioned under III. of the project document. However, the strategy consists of two paragraphs, one of which refers to another project which is supporting the “achievement of the Strategic Plan” through the GEF-funded “Global Support to NBSAP” project. This is not equivalent to a fully-fledged Theory of Change (ToC) that indicates how the different outputs contribute to the outcomes and how the outcomes contribute to the objective. As mentioned in the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines of 2019, point 4.2 table 1 Evaluability, the first point on the evaluability checklist is for the project is to have a clearly defined ToC. However, it is also noted by the evaluator that the UNDP does not have a guidance document on the development of the ToC. The only guidance on ToC available for the UNDP is the UNDAF Theory of Change companion guidance of June 2017, but it does not contain a practical example of unravelling the ToC. In the case of the 6NR project, the objective is clearly defined: it is also clear that this is a capacity development project in its essence, to enable 64 countries to submit their 6th National Report to the CBD. But the different steps and steppingstones towards achieving the objective could have been better explained, and a ToC diagram would also help visualize better the assumptions and conditions necessary to bring about the desired change process. The use of a problem tree analysis and solution pathway as recommended in guidance documents would have clarified the rationale for the different entry points used in the project architecture.

As regards to the structure of the project RF, the outcome statements are technically not written as outcome statements, but as outputs. Each outcome is actually written as a completed activity or set of activities, but it does not evidence the change in institutional capacity as defined in the UNDG RBM guidance 2012 and the UNDP PME Handbook of 2009 (and addendum of June 2011).

The eight different outputs are all outputs except for output 1.3. which is actually an activity in the way it has been written.

Despite these shortfalls the project is easy to evaluate in terms of the RF contents. The baselines are easily established in view of the objectives of the project. The targets are particularly ambitious as they are considering a 100% achievement rate of all outcomes across the four projects in all 64 countries by the time of its completion, including for aspects such as the number of countries with gender-responsive reports for each ABT and/or national equivalent include a gender section. It is well-known that some of the participating countries are not yet adopting gender-responsive policies as part of their national objectives so it is highly probable that some of the results may be challenged regarding the level of gender-responsiveness in the reports submitted.

Indicators are simple and easy to collect: number of countries having submitted the 6NR to the CBD Secretariat, number of countries with functional Steering Committees, percentage of countries that have produced reports for each ABT and/or national equivalent, percentage of countries having submitted the 6NR. These indicators focus on what each country is expected to produce as a result of the technical support provided by the 6NR project.

These indicators should be considered as proxy indicators of capacity development of the 64 countries benefiting from the technical support of the project.

According to the “Supporting Capacity Development: the UNDP approach” publication of 2007

evaluating capacity development requires measurement to be based on “clear evidence of change in an institution’s performance, adaptability and stability to meet its goals. Changes in capacity are reflected by changes across the core issues of institutional arrangements, leadership, knowledge, and accountability”[[1]](#footnote-1).

A major challenge in evaluating this project is to address the criterion of impact as indicated in the TOR, particularly the following clause: “Key findings that should be brought out in the evaluations include whether the project has demonstrated: a) verifiable improvements in ecological status, b) verifiable reductions in stress on ecological systems, and/or c) demonstrated progress towards these impact achievements”.[[2]](#footnote-2) It seems contradictory for a capacity development project to evaluate the impact on the ecological systems, since the technical support is a pre-requisite to the creation of the national capacities that will eventually lead to such a result. It is in the view of the evaluator the impact criterion should be reformulated in line with the revised and published OECD/DAC evaluation criteria as follows:

“Impact: what difference does the intervention make?

**The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects**.

Note: Impact addresses the ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects of the intervention. It seeks to identify social, environmental and economic effects of the intervention that are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion. Beyond the immediate results, this criterion seeks to capture the indirect, secondary and potential consequences of the intervention. It does so by examining the holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms, and potential effects on people’s well-being, human rights, gender equality, and the environment.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

The evaluation will request from the technical specialists involved in the project if there is anecdotal evidence regarding significant change at the ecological systems level, but it is not to be expected that this evaluation will be able to provide a significant contribution by itself and only from this project to such a result.

The evaluation will not apply the unedited GEF M&E policy of June 2019 aspects regarding additionality (point 4.b) nor point 4.d regarding the value added since there is a lack of availability of relevant data to undertake this assessment which goes beyond the scope of the evaluation.

# Approach and methodology

As requested in the TOR, the evaluation follows the “Guidance for conducting terminal evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects” established by the UNDP Evaluation Office in June 2012, which are compatible with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) evaluation norms and standards (2017 revision). The TE also adheres to the UNEG ethical guidelines for evaluation. The TE also uses the recent IEO UNDP evaluation guidelines of January 2019 as reference.

The five criteria for undertaking the assessment are mentioned in the ToR and are the standard criteria used for project evaluations and as requested in the GEF M&E policy: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

The definition of each of the evaluation criterion has been given by the OECD/DAC glossary of key terms in evaluation and results-based management in 2002 and have been reviewed in 2019 as follows[[4]](#footnote-4) :

“Relevance: The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries’, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change

Efﬁciency: The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an

economic and timely way

Effectiveness: The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.

Impact: The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.

Sustainability: The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

**Tools and methodology**

The evaluation will use a mixed methods approach which is based on the following:

1. Review/analysis of the project documentation
2. Key Informant Interviews (KII) with the project team, GEF operational focal points (where possible), UNDP Country Offices, UNDP GEF Technical adviser, UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub, UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as defined further under the sampling strategy.

Key informant interviews are semi-structured in-depth interviews with respondents using a questionnaire to ensure coherence, consistency and comparability of results. It will also include a perception-based rating scale in line with GEF requirements (six-points for some criteria, four points or binomial for others) and obtain qualitative justification of the ratings from the KII. The evaluator will further provide an evidence-based analysis and interpretation of the findings and ratings obtained to give the evaluation’s ratings regarding the project.

For appraising the potential change process generated by the project, contribution analysis will be used to infer the causality between the identified effects and the factors that led to such effects.

No travel or data collection in any country is expected to take place, and all interviews will be done through communications software from the evaluator’s home office location.

**Sampling strategy**

Considering the nature of the project and its objective to support technically 64 countries in the production of the 6NR, the evaluator, in agreement with the project team, proposed a purposive sampling strategy of 8 of the 64 countries, based on the following criteria:

1. Best case scenario for learning and replication purposes (based on documentary review and discussion with the project team), from four countries (one per geographical region covered under each project)
2. Difficulties experienced in achieving the results for learning purposes and replication (based on documentary review and discussion with the project team), from four countries (one per geographical region covered under each project).

These 8 sample countries have been identified as:

Costa Rica, Haiti, Viet Nam, Algeria, Jamaica, Venezuela, Samoa and Afghanistan.

For these eight Project countries, the evaluator will contact the UNDP CO as the entry point, and as one of the KII for the evaluation. To the extent possible, the CBD Focal Point will also be included in the KII. In some countries UNDP has two identified contacts, so the total number of KII from the eight sample countries will be up to a maximum of 24, excluding the interviews with the project team and GEF Technical Adviser and UNDP IHR, which can increase the number of KII up to 30. The respondents list will be reviewed with the project team to ensure all KII have been correctly identified in the sample countries and are available for the interviews that will take place during March/April 2020.

# Risks and limitations

The project is a capacity development project to 64 countries, but it covers a very wide and critical subject matter regarding ecological systems. However, the evaluator is not a subject matter expert and will not be undertaking a review of the technical specifications or technical materials as the people providing the support in the project team are recognized experts in their field. Some have been involved in earlier GEF-funded projects. Therefore the evaluator will concentrate the evaluation on the capacity development process to achieve the project objective, and will only tangentially address the issue of the potential ecological impact of the project, since it will require a longer timeframe to be appraised and is not the overall objective of this project- the production of quality 6NR to CBD is.

Another limitation is that sustainability in the context of this project should be seen as the degree to which the technical capacity can be maintained after the end of the project. This will be addressed through the qualitative perspective from the KII supported and triangulated by the available data.

# TE work plan

The current inception phase is undertaken until the date of the inception report, 20th March 2020. The KII interviews will take place during the months of March/April 2020 and the presentation of the initial findings from the research and the data analysis and KII will take place latest by 30th April 2020. The timeframe has been revised from the TOR to take into consideration the additional constraints caused by the measures against the COVID-19 in many countries. A power point summarizing these initial findings will be shared with the project management and the UNDP IRH. A full report will be provided by 23rd May 2020 at latest, and a revised final evaluation report will be provided within ten days from the date of receipt of the consolidated comments from the evaluation manager, but in any case, not later than 20th June 2020.

# Key evaluation questions and framework

The key questions to be addressed by the evaluation have been structured along both the main purpose of the evaluation and the lines of enquiry.

Table 2 : evaluation framework and key questions

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS** | **ISSUE** | **DATA SOURCE & METHODS** | **MEANS OF VERIFICATION** |
| 1. **Relevance** |  |  |  |
| * 1. Does the project support other regional or international conventions | Responsiveness to global needs | Prodocs, national policies, int. conventions website | Document analysis, KII |
| * 1. Is the project relevant to the GEF Biodiversity focal area and how does the project support it? | Relationship and alignment with GEF Biodiversity F.A. | Project documents,  GEF F.A. strategies and document | Document analysis, GEF website, KII |
| * 1. What gaps were filled by the project? | Responsiveness, priority level | Project documents | Document analysis, KII |
| 1. **Efficiency** |  |  |  |
| * 1. Is the project bringing value for money | Value for money | Budget analysis, KII with UNDP | Financial reports, audits, KII |
| * 1. Has it been efficiently managed and implemented | efficiency | Workplan analysis | Workplan, budget, PB minutes, KII |
| * 1. How well was the project designed? | RBM value and compliance | Documentary analysis of project documents | Document analysis, KII with project team |
| 1. **Effectiveness** |  |  |  |
| * 1. Has the project achieved its outputs and outcome level objectives? | Key results | Results Framework analysis | Document analysis, KII |
| * 1. To what extent is the project objective achieved? | Achievement of objective | Document and RF analysis, KII with sample countries | Document analysis, KII, triangulation |
| * 1. What are examples of good practice | Good practice | Documentary analysis, KII with sample countries | Document analysis, KII |
| * 1. What capacities have been developed as a result of the project? | Capacity development | Documentary analysis, KII with sample countries | Document analysis, KII |
| 1. **Impact** |  |  |  |
| * 1. What are the effects generated by the project? | Project effects | Documentary analysis, KII with sample countries, interpretation | Documentation and data analysis, KII |
| * 1. To what extent has the project changed the quality of national reporting? | Institutional effect | Documentary analysis, KII with sample countries, interpretation | Documentation and data analysis, KII |
| * 1. What, if anything, has changed as a result of the project? | Ownership and commitment | Documentary analysis, KII with sample countries (MSC approach) | Documentation and data analysis, KII |
| 1. **Sustainability** |  |  |  |
| * 1. To what extent will stakeholders sustain the benefits of the project? | Ownership and capacity | Documentary analysis, KII with sample countries, interpretation | Documentation and data analysis, KII |
| * 1. Is there evidence of longer-term stakeholder commitment through policy or budget allocations in the participating countries | Ownership | Documentary analysis, KII with sample countries, interpretation | Documentation and data analysis, KII |

1. Supporting Capacity Development, the UNDP approach, 2007, point 5 p.12 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. TE TOR, p. 4 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Better Criteria for Better Evaluation, Revised Evaluation Criteria, Definitions and Principles for Use,

   OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The TE TOR mention these terms as “concepts” and use a definition which is more specifically tailored to the UNDP mandate. They can be used as defined in the TOR except where the more recent definitions (e.g. efficiency) is found to be more adequate. For impact, as mentioned, it will address essentially the project objective and attempt to gather evidence of the changes at the global development level, if it is available and considering the GEF 6NR project does not work in a vacuum but alongside a number of other interventions. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)