REPORT

FOR THE TERMINAL EVALUATION (TE) OF THE PROJECT

ENABLING TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION AND INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN THE DNIESTER RIVER BASIN

GEF PROJECT ID: 9359

PROJECT ID: UNDP: 5269

EVALUATOR:

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Project title: ENABLING TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION AND INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN THE DNIESTER RIVER BASIN

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Evaluation time frame: February – April 2021

Date of evaluation report: May 10 2021

GEF Focal Area: International Waters

Executing Partner: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

Other Partners:

United Nations Development Programme (Regional Centre for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS))

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE, Geneva)

Evaluator: Maria Onestini

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DISCLAIMER

This document represents the analysis of the author and does not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the Project, governments or institutions involved.

III. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DBC	Dniester Basin Commission
EECCA	Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia
EMBLAS	EU-UNDP Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea
ENVSEC	Environment and Security Initiative
EU	European Union
EU WFD	Water Framework Directive
EUWI	European Union Water Initiative
FD	EU Floods Directive
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
ha	Hectare
ICPDR	International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
IW	GEF International Waters Focal Area
IW:LEARN	GEF International Waters Learning Exchange and
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
km	Kilometre
m	Metre
MTR	Mid-Term Review
MSFD	EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive
NAP	National Action Plans
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PPG	GEF Project Preparation Grant
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
SAP	Strategic Action Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TDA	Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis
UAH	Ukraine Hryvnia
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USD	United States Dollar
WFD	EU Water Framework Directive
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TABLE 1: PROJECT INFORMATION TABLE

Project Details		Project Milestones	
Project Title	Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Dniester River Basin	PIF Approval Date:	23 Feb 2016 (Preparation Grant Approved/ Concept Approved) 19 April 2017 (Project Approved for Implementation)
UNDP Project ID (PIMS #):	5269	CEO Endorsement Date (FSP) / Approval date (MSP):	20 April 2017
GEF Project ID:	9359	ProDoc Signature Date:	UNDP: 20.07.2017 OSCE: 10.08.2017
UNDP Atlas Business Unit, Award ID, Project ID:	00103544	Date Project Manager hired:	Project Manager: OSCE funded position (Unified Budget) Regional Project Co-ordinator: 8 March 2018
Country/Countries:	Republic of Moldova and Ukraine	Inception Workshop Date:	17 December 2017
Region:	Europe	Mid-Term Review Completion Date:	4 July 2019
Focal Area:	International Waters	Terminal Evaluation Completion date:	5 May 2021
GEF Operational Programme or Strategic Priorities/Objectives:		Planned Operational Closure Date:	10 May 2021 A final report to be submitted within 6 months after the completion or termination of Activities.
Trust Fund:	GEF TF		
Implementing Partner (GEF Executing Entity):	Implementing Agency: United Nations Development Programme Implementing Partner/ Executing Agency: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)		

NGOs/CBOs involvement:	Consultation: Eco-TIRAS International Association of Rivers Keepers Centre for Regional Studies Black Sea Women Club National Ecological Centre of Ukraine Ecospectrum	
Private sector involvement:	11 enterprises operating 32 tailing storage facilities Ifox Vodokanal (Water supply Co in Odessa, Ukraine) Apa Canal (Water supply Co in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova) Ukhydroenegro (Hydropower Co, Ukraine)	
Geospatial coordinates of project sites:	Source: Eastern Beskids (Ukrainian Carpathians): 49°12'44"N 22°55'40"E Mouth: Odessa oblast, Ukraine: 46°21'0"N 30°14'0"E	
Financial Information		
PDF/PPG	at approval (US$M)	at PDF/PPG completion (US$M)
GEF PDF/PPG grants for project preparation	50,000 USD	49,209.37
Co-financing for project preparation	195,000 USD	195,000 USD
Project	at CEO Endorsement (US$M)	at TE (US$M)
[1] UNDP contribution:	300,000 USD	300,000 USD
[2] Government:	3,000,000 USD	3,000,000 USD
[3] Other multi-/bi-laterals:	16,165,000	16,115,000
[4] Private Sector:	n/a	n/a
[5] NGOs:	n/a	n/a
[6] Total co-financing [1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5]:	19,465,000 USD	19,415,000
[7] Total GEF funding:	1,950,000 USD	1,950,000 USD (1,690,960.09 EUR equivalent for the executing agency)
[8] Total Project Funding [6 + 7]	21,465,000 USD	21,365,000

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The *Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the Dniester River Basin Project* objective has been to support "i*ntegrated water resources management in the Dniester river basin to strengthen sustainable development, through the update of the TDA, development and endorsement of the SAP and initiation of its implementation*". It had a planned implementation period of three years and a total planned project cost of USD 21,415,000. Planned GEF financing was to be USD 1,950,000 with co-financing in the amount of USD: 19,465,000 from various sources. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) implemented the Project in close co-operation with UNDP and UNECE.

The main work guidelines for the Project included:

- Undertaking a detailed situation analysis of the transboundary Dniester basin (TDA) and agreeing on a joint Strategic Action Programme (SAP) to support the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to implement the EU Water Framework Directive (EU Association Agreements signed in 2014 by both countries), the National Environment Strategies for the Republic of Moldova for the period 2014 -2023 and the National Environmental Policy Strategy of Ukraine to 2020.

- Support to the transboundary management bodies, and facilitating national inter-sectoral and stakeholder dialogues, falling under the obligations of the two states to implement the UNECE Water Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the EU WFD.

- Addressing the issue of water quantity taking into account the needs of various upstream and downstream stakeholders (working with the hydropower sector, in water balance, and addressing adaption to climate change) which are reflected in the National Adaptation Strategy for the Republic of Moldova (2014), and the bilateral Strategic Framework for Adaption to Climate Change in the Dniester River Basin (2015).

- Implementing pilot projects on some of the most crucial issues on the basin such as degradation of small rivers and loss of biological diversity. The Republic of Moldova's Strategy for Biodiversity Conservation for 2015-2020, the National Environmental Policy Strategy of Ukraine to 2020, the bilateral Strategic Framework for Adaption to Climate Change in the Dniester River Basin (2015), and the management plans for several wetlands of international importance (the Ramsar sites) located along in the Dniester river prescribe the actions to be taken regarding these issues.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

FINDINGS

- The Project was well designed in terms of outputs, components, intermediate processes and products attending to regional and local specificities.

- Although complex and multi – layered institutionally, management and implementation architecture and oversight was effective and efficient.

- The Project faced some management challenges regarding financial flow as well as in staffing. These challenges however did not alter outcomes since there were adaptive strategies put in place (either

explicitly or implicitly). For instance, regarding the financial flow, project management ensured funds availability (even at times when potential delays may have been encountered) through advance requests. Furthermore, recruitment gaps were filled by other staff taking on the roles of vacant positions.

- The ownership of the Project was also a factor that fostered achievement of results and will be a key factor for implementation of results and products as well as for overall sustainability in the near future.

- Some of the main reasons for project success included its relevance regarding priorities of both countries, not only in the transboundary management of the Dniester River Basin, but also in ensuring the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine fulfil each individual country's Association Agreements with the EU within the framework of the European Water Framework Directive.

- The Project had to withstand a number of issues that caused delays of some activities and of some products and outcomes, such as a number of political rotations and the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The Project Coordination Unit was very proactive, linking very well internally with OSCE, with the national – level partners, as well as with other institutions. PCU had an excellent working relationship, outreach and approach with national level partners.

- The extent that the expected outcomes and objectives were achieved has been met in some components while in others they have been overly achieved.

- Although no institutional, socio-political, nor environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results are foreseen, and the likelihood of sustainability in the near future is quite high, financial risks – in particular financial risks of public investments for infrastructure as well as national funds from both countries to run the Dniester Commission are at uncertain at some levels due to the economic situations in both countries.

- While the Project is well appreciated regarding its technical inputs, there could be an expansion in scope and in technical extent, with some aspects that could be reinforced in the future (innovative technical issues, etc.).

- The Project had a very strong and applied information, dissemination, and communication strategy which was applied throughout the implementation process.

- The linking at implementation of the different strategies (gender, communication, stakeholder participation) aided in creating and connecting the different parts of the Project, avoiding internal operation in silos.

The Project has met with its objective of supporting integrated water resources management in the Dniester River Basin. For this, while implemented by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in close co-operation with UNDP and UNECE, it has attended both the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in generating capacity, knowledge and policy instruments for transboundary cooperative management of the Basin and its associated resources. There have been several factors for the generation of outputs and products as expected out of this project. Among them have been the appropriate design and a very proactive, open and positive project management modality. The

institutionality and associated governance of the Project was complex and multi layered. Nevertheless, through open communications and based on the previous work of different institutions in the region as well as in the Basin, implementing partners worked well together in an effective and efficient manner. Another factor for achievement rests within the high relevance that the management of Dniester River Basin has for both countries, not only regarding national priorities but even with regional priorities and aspirations of the Republic of Moldova and of Ukraine. Countries' ownership regarding Project achievements and future sustainability of these remains not only on national and transboundary issues, but also in inserting both countries further into regional agreements and accords.

But perhaps even as important as achieving products, or perhaps more important at some levels have been the expect and also the unplanned effects that the Project has had and will, seemingly, have in the near future. Both countries have signed a regional agreement which will open the way for the implementation of the Strategic Action Programme developed with the help of the Dniester Project, which is a very clear signal of effect. Other achievements that the Project has had have been the instilling of true basin-level approach for river management and capacity building at very diverse levels. Lastly an effect has been the activation and bolstering of a functioning basin – level commission and through engendering support for collaboration and cooperation between the two countries.

As the Project is about to end, its achievements and learning should be highlighted in order to evolve towards the application of instruments that can equitably aid in managing the Dniester River Basin within a framework of cooperation.

SYNTHESIS OF THE KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- Projects that are developed around strategic issues ensure political buy – in from the different countries involved.
- Constant working relationships, consultations (formal and informal) with beneficiaries, with networks of professionals, and with different stakeholders, engenders good working relationships and fosters ownership.
- Having the institutional and project implementation stakeholders take a neutral stance is a positive standpoint since it ensures transparency, and continues to build confidence amongst relevant institutions and project participants.
- Gender strategies are effective if they are developed early on in an inception process in order to guide gender mainstreaming throughout the implementation process.
- All types of strategies (gender, communication, conflict resolution) are more applicable and have more potential to be applied if a project incorporates relevant expertise in implementation and if they are mutually supportive.
- Capacity generation and capacity upgrading (individual as well as institutional) are key factors for sustaining results.
- The value of integration of different actors to engender participation, transparency, and cooperation should not be underestimated, since –as seen in the development of this project— these factors are significant for prompting ownership.
- Informal ways to engender cooperation between the parties should not be underestimated since –as seen in this project—these are also means to foster collaboration.

- Acknowledge that transboundary water management can at times be conflictive, and include relevant expertise in conflict resolution if these issues arise.
- The wearing away of ownership due to high rotation of policy-makers, decision-makers and relevant staff in the countries involved in a project can be circumvented to some extent by constant engagement with relevant stakeholders.
- Openeness in communication and in constant information sharing from a project contributes greatly to fostering ownership, increase transparency, and for easing divergences.
- Increasing the number of pilots as necessary might prove helpful to generate demonstrational factors and / or to incorporate new innovative issues.

TABLE 2: RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY TABLE

Note: These are summarized recommendations. Full recommendations are found further along this report.

Rec #	TE Recommendation	Entity Responsible	Time frame
	For Dniester Project		
1	PCU and partners should concentrate in helping both countries follow through with all phases necessary in order to transition to the full implementation of the endorsed SAP's strategic directions.	PCU and partners	Project Closure
2	Efforts should be made to produce whatever documents, products, KM, information packets, monitoring tools, etc., remain in order to finalize those, give the Project the full visibility it merits, and transition to new projects/activities with these products as institutional history back up.	PCU and partners	Project Closure
	For Future Programming		
3	It is recommended that a new project for implementing the developed SAP be approved in order to facilitate implementation of this instrument by advancing integrated water resource management in the Dniester River basin.	GEF/UNDP	ASAP
4	Future projects should also be attuned to countries' changing needs, for example incorporating issues and subjects that the riparian countries' indicate as crucial for transboundary water management at a certain point in time.	GEF/UNDP	Future projects
5	When there is high turnover of national level staff and/or of policy makers, a project should make every effort to engage constantly with new personnel or policy makers in order to initiate their engagement and transfer knowledge, which is a way in which new stakeholders' ownership is fostered.	GEF/UNDP	Future projects
6	Future programming should fully acknowledge and incorporate the idea that these projects are not exclusively technical nor exclusively policy oriented, that they are a proper combination of both areas, that these areas should be mutually supportive, and should integrate cooperation factors with technical factors.	GEF/UNDP	Future projects
7	Increasing the number of pilots as necessary might prove helpful to generate demonstration factors and / or to incorporate new innovative issues to transboundary basin – level water management.	GEF/UNDP	Future projects
8	Projects should stress public awareness and involvement in a project of different types of stakeholders in order to strengthen their capacity.	GEF/UNDP	Future projects
9	Informal ways to engender cooperation between the parties should be fostered.	GEF/UNDP	Future projects
10	Capacity generation should not only be carried-out by formal training/capacity building processes, but also be done through informal interaction with and exposure to other experiences in transboundary water management	GEF/UNDP	Future projects
11	At some level it would be helpful to have a mechanism that exchanges information between and among different projects in the countries involved that could either wholly or tangentially relate to the same issues as does a transboundary water management project.	GEF/UNDP	Future projects
12	Acknowledging that transboundary water management can at times be conflictive, a project should fully incorporate --as soon as this is detected-- conflict resolution and conflict management expertise.	GEF/UNDP	Future projects
13	Financial provisions need to be reviewed and streamlined between the implementing and executing agencies in order to avoid delays and burdensome bureaucratic administrative processes and to guarantee the timely flow of funds for fluid continuous implementation.	GEF/UNDP	Future projects
14	Time frame planned for implementation needs to be commensurate with a project's scope.	GEF/UNDP	Future projects
15	When procurement process for staffing prove to be difficult to fulfil due to offer factors and is hindered by the lack of suitable personnel in a particular situation, then a fast track process needs to be implemented as to boost hiring within an adequate time scope so that implementation is not delayed due to staffing issues	GEF/UNDP	Future projects

TABLE 3: EVALUATION RATINGS TABLE FOR THE PROJECT

1. Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)	
M&E design at entry	**HS**
M&E Plan Implementation	**S**
Overall Quality of M&E	**S**
2. Implementing Agencies (IAs) Implementation & Executing Agency (EA) Execution	
Quality of UNDP Implementation/Oversight	**S**
Quality of Implementing Partner Execution	**HS**
Overall quality of Implementation/Execution	**S**
3. Assessment of Outcomes	
Relevance	**HS**
Effectiveness	**HS**
Efficiency	**S**
Overall Project Outcome Rating	**S**
4. Sustainability	
Financial sustainability	**ML**
Socio-political sustainability	**L**
Institutional framework and governance sustainability	**L**
Environmental sustainability	**L**
Overall Likelihood of Sustainability	**ML**

Note: Accounts of these ratings are imbedded in this report's narrative in each of the pertinent sections. See Annex 5: Rating Scales.

2. INTRODUCTION

SUMMARY PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The *Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the Dniester River Basin Project* objective has been to support "*Integrated water resources management in the Dniester river basin to strengthen sustainable development, through the update of the TDA, development and endorsement of the SAP and initiation of its implementation*" and has been designed to deal with important water - environment issues within the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The Project had a planned implementation period of three years. It had a total planned project cost of USD 21,415,000. Planned GEF financing was to be USD 1,950,000 with co-financing in the amount of USD 19, 465,000 from various sources.

The main work guidelines for the Project included:

- Undertaking a detailed situation analysis of the transboundary Dniester basin (TDA) and agreeing on a joint Strategic Action Programme (SAP) to support the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to implement the EU Water Framework Directive (EU Association Agreements signed in 2014 by both countries), the National Environment Strategies for the Republic of Moldova for the period 2014 -2023 and the National Environmental Policy Strategy of Ukraine to 2020.

- Support to transboundary management bodies, and facilitating national inter-sectoral and stakeholder dialogues, falling under the obligations of the two states to implement the UNECE Water Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the EU WFD.

- Addressing the issue of water quantity taking into account the needs of various upstream and downstream stakeholders (working with the hydropower sector, in water balance, and addressing adaption to climate change) which are reflected in the National Adaptation Strategy for the Republic of Moldova (2014), and the bilateral Strategic Framework for Adaption to Climate Change in the Dniester River Basin (2015).

- Implementing pilot projects on some of the most crucial issues on the basin such as degradation of small rivers and loss of biological diversity. The Republic of Moldova's Strategy for Biodiversity Conservation for 2015-2020, the National Environmental Policy Strategy of Ukraine to 2020, the bilateral Strategic Framework for Adaption to Climate Change in the Dniester River Basin (2015), and the management plans for several wetlands of international importance (the Ramsar sites) located along in the Dniester river prescribe the actions to be taken regarding these issues.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) implemented the Project in close co-operation with UNDP and UNECE, and it was tasked with strengthening Moldovan-Ukrainian cooperation in the area of integrated water resources management in the Dniester basin. The project supported and promoted international dialogue with regard to both countries' commitments to the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive, which is part of the EU Association Agreements with the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, as well as with regard to the Moldovan-Ukrainian Dniester River basin Commission. The Project had three main components. Within each component there were

a number of expected outcomes which, in turn, would be engendered through specific outputs. The Components are listed below:[1]

- *Component 1. In-depth analysis of water resources, related ecosystems and their use*
- *Component 2: Development of the policy, legal and institutional set-up, mandate and capacities of the River Basin Commission for strengthened basin level cooperation*
- *Component 3: Strengthening of water resources and biodiversity monitoring and conservation, and information exchange in the Dniester River Basin*

The Project was implemented in the two countries where the Dniester River basin is located, i.e., the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The project started in August 2017, was officially registered with the OSCE in October 2017, and terminates in May 2021. Its implementing agency was UNDP, while the executive agency was the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The UNECE supported project implementation with consultancy on a range of technical issues and also at the strategic level by providing a platform for strengthening transboundary cooperation. Project beneficiaries were the ministries of the environment of the two riparian states, and its stakeholders included the water authorities, hydropower sector, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, authorities of protected areas, fisheries agencies, local communities, scientists, NGOs, and the general public.

[1] Further along this report there is a chart with the components and their respective outcomes (see Table 4: Project Components and outcomes)

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The varied purposes of evaluation exercises include monitoring results as well as assessing effects/impacts and promoting accountability. This evaluation centres, therefore, upon valuating the outcomes, outputs, products, and processes achieved by the *Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the Dniester River Basin Project*. The specific objectives of the evaluation were to determine if and how project results were achieved, and to draw useful lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project as well as to aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP / GEF programming. Lastly, this exercise follows general objectives of these sorts of evaluations which have as an overall purpose to assemble lessons learned and best practices to aid projects' processes in the future.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This final evaluation has primarily focused on assessing the effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and relevance of the project considering the accomplished outcomes, objectives, and effects. It includes the following scope:

- Assess progress towards achieving project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document.
- Assess signs of project success or failure.
- Review the project's strategy considering its sustainability risks.

The evaluation has focused upon the outcomes, outputs, products and processes achieved or with a perspective of being achieved. The specific objectives of the evaluation were to determine if and how project results were achieved, and to draw useful lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project as well as aid in overall enhancement of future programming. The varied purposes of evaluation exercises include monitoring results as well as effects/impacts and promote accountability. Lastly, this assessment follows general objectives of these sorts of evaluations which have as a purpose assembling lessons learned and best practices to aid projects' processes in the future.

The approach for the evaluation of the *Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the Dniester River Basin Project* has been determined mainly by the Terms of Reference (ToR) (see Annex 1: Terms of Reference) for this assignment and it follows methods and approaches as stated in UNDP guidelines and manuals, relevant tools, and other relevant UNDP guidance materials, including the *Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported*, *GEF-financed Projects* (of June 2020), UNEG directions, and follows guidance set by the standards for commissioned evaluations indicated in Section IV of the OSCE Evaluation Framework Administrative Instruction No. 1/2013. The analysis entails evaluating distinct project stages and aspects including design and formulation, implementation, results, and the involvement of stakeholders in the project's processes and activities. It has been carried out following a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with governments' counterparts, project team, and other key stakeholders.

The time scope of the final evaluation is for the whole project as such, including its planned implementation period together with the extension period granted. It is significant to point out that the findings, rankings, lessons learned and best practices respond to analysis of the project as a whole. That is, the scope of this evaluation is the project in its entirety.

To carry out this evaluation exercise several data collection tools for analysing information from the principles of results-based evaluation (including relevance, ownership, efficiency and effectiveness, sustainability) were used. Following UNDP/GEF guidelines, the relevant areas of the project were evaluated according to performance criteria and prospects of sustainability with ratings as summarized in the table found in annexes (Annex 5: Rating Scales)

The tools chosen for the evaluation, with a mixture of primary and secondary data as well as a combination of quantitative and qualitative material, were selected to provide a spectrum of information and to validate findings. These methods allowed for in-depth exploration and yielded information that facilitated understanding of observed changes in outcomes and outputs (both intended and unintended) and the factors that contributed to the achievements or lack of accomplishments. A typology of stakeholders was identified at onset and at inception of the evaluation process. This typology was basically defined aligned with the role of key stakeholders and their institutional membership (such as international organizations' members, project staff, members of government from both countries, civil society members, private companies). Based on this typology as sampling frame, key informants were identified and sampled for each of these types of stakeholders in order to include in the dialogues, interviews and questionnaires used. The number of selected potential stakeholders was 20. Most of the selected stakeholders agreed to engage with the evaluation, out of these 20 selected persons 18 agreed to engage with the evaluation. There was engagement with all of these types of stakeholders therefore.[2]

Gender-sensitive methodologies and tools were used. This was applied not only in convening women's participation in the processes that resulted in this report, but also in providing an analysis of issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment as part of the Project.

Regarding specific methodologies to gather assessment information, the following tools and methods were used:

- *Document analysis*. In depth analysis of documentation was carried out. The analysis examined documents prepared during the planning and implementation phases of the project. A list of documents consulted is found in annexes (Annex 4: List of consulted documents and online resources).
- *Key informant interviews:* Interviews were implemented through a series of open and semi-open questions raised to stakeholders directly and indirectly involved with the Project. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, mission travel could not take place. Therefore, all of these dialogues were held online, through video conferences via internet and through telephone interviews. Key actors (stakeholders) were defined as government actors, project staff, staff of the different international institutions which took part in the Project in diferent capacities, civil society organization as well as the private sector. Stakeholders to interview were chosen to be the key actors involved in the Project. Annexes contains a list of stakeholders contacted (Annex 3: List of consulted stakeholders).
- *Questionnaire:* In order to engage with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, beyond those mentioned above, a brief open-ended questionnaire was sent to a cluster of key stakeholders defined as significant partners or interested parties. This tool was used to collect their feedback on specific issues covered by the assessment. This online survey aided in collecting feedback on

[2] In annexes there is a list of those stakeholders that engaged with this terminal evaluation.

specific issues covered by the review as well as making this assessment participative as well as help with evaluability factors. Upon receipt of answers, a qualitative analysis of the responses took take place in order to validate and triangulate information. With the questionnaire as well as with the key informant interviews, anonymity of responses as well as independence of the assessment was assured (See Annex 3: List of consulted stakeholders).

A first tool developed for this process was an evaluation matrix. This matrix guided the data collection process and, as the evaluation proceeded, the matrix was used to collect and display data obtained from various sources that relate to relevant evaluation criteria and questions. This tool was developed not only as a guide for systematizing data collection but also to make the evaluation process transparent. The matrix contains Evaluative Criteria Questions (that is, questions and sub questions related to each of the evaluation criteria enclosed in the evaluation); Indicators; Sources; and Methodology.

LIMITATIONS AND EVALUABILITY IN PARTICULAR IN LIGHT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As it occurs in most of these sorts of assessments, there can be a series of limitations and these were exacerbated by the crisis situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides the characteristic evaluability issues such as access to inputs and constraints in terms of time and resources, with the COVID-19 pandemic there have been other limitations identified. For instance, in light of the pandemic, mission travel was cancelled. Therefore, in order to mitigate whatever issues might arise in this sense, different access instruments were used (such as different tools for key interviews) and a questionnaire was added to the standard interview methodologies in order to broaden stakeholder access, participation, and inputs at different levels. Since by the time the evaluation took place stakeholders had adapted greatly to the at-a-distance modality of engagement, not only within the international agencies but also with governments, stakeholder access was not considered an issue. Nevertheless, the process modality without a mission and without face-to-face nor group discussion encounters has proved to be a challenge given that it was not possible to hold focus groups or group discussions where different issues could be validated in light of different views by diverse stakeholders.

STRUCTURE OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

This evaluation report is structured beginning with an executive summary, an introduction and an evaluation scope and methodology section. A second section contains an overall project description within a developmental context, including an account of the problems the project sought to address, as well as its initial objectives. Furthermore, indicators and main stakeholders involved in the projects are described, as well as what were the expected results. Essentially, this segment of the report deals with the design stage and design concept of the project. A third core section of this report deals fundamentally with the evaluation findings, analytically observing the results framework, and linkages with other projects and interventions in the sector. Furthermore, this segment also deals with findings relating to the actual implementation of the project, including strategic issues such as adaptive management and partnership agreements, and monitoring. This section concludes with findings on project overall results and findings related to the criteria established for evaluations such as relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, ownership at the national level, mainstreaming and sustainability. A fourth core section of the present report entails overall conclusions as well as forward looking issues and recommendations. Lastly, an annex section includes project and evaluation support documentation.

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT START AND DURATION, INCLUDING MILESTONES

The *Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the Dniester River Basin Project* had a planned implementation period of three years. The actual finalization was planned for May 2021 given that the project was granted an extension. It had a total planned project cost of USD 21,415,000. Planned GEF financing was to be USD 1,950,000 with co-financing in the amount of USD: 19, 465,000 from various sources. [3]

DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT: ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC, INSTITUTIONAL, AND POLICY FACTORS RELEVANT TO THE PROJECT OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE AND PROBLEMS THAT PROJECT SOUGHT TO ADDRESS

The Dniester is the ninth largest river in Europe. The Dniester basin is the fourth largest in Ukraine and the largest in the Republic of Moldova; it lies within the Black Sea basin. The total length of the river is 1,350 km, the basin area is more than 72,000 km2. Approximately 8.5 million people (5.5 million in Ukraine and 2.7 million in the Republic of Moldova) live within the basin.

Within the basin a series of activities take place which are supported by its resources. Productive and other activities such as agriculture, aquaculture, water supply, recreation, hydro-power generation, production of building materials, woodworking industry, and mining unfold in Dniester river basin in both countries.

Groundwater is widespread in the basin with significant resources in some parts. These water resources (aquifers and springs) are becoming poorer which is due to both geomorphological characteristics and due to pressures from deforestation and climate change. The aquifers of Cretaceous sediments are the most common in this region. Estimated resources of groundwater in the Dniester basin in Ukraine are 2.025 million m3 per day (out of which 1.31 million m3 is the operational (regularly used) reserve). In the Republic of Moldova the underground water reserves are 3,478.3 m3 per day, and 80% of them are in the Dniester basin. The Republic of Moldova possesses 7,801 working deep water wells.[4]

Land use in the Dniester River basin is mainly in the agricultural sector. The share of arable lands in the Republic of Moldova's farmland is 67% and in Ukraine is up to 78%. The forest area within the basin in the Republic of Moldova is 11%. In the mountainous part of the basin in Ukraine, forests cover 50-70% of the area, on the left bank - 10-15%, in the lower part (Odessa region) - about 4%.

Water from the Dniester River basin is an important source of water supply for the cities Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Ternopil, Odessa, Zhmerynka, Mogyliv-Podil's'ky, Kalush, Drohobych, Boryslav, Kamianets-Podil's'kiy, Belgorod-Dniestrovskiy, Chisinau and many others. Water resources of the Dniester basin provide around 4.5% of the total needs of Ukraine in fresh water. Public utilities are the largest consumers of fresh water of the Dniester (63%), agriculture uses consume 17.5% and industry 17.2%. More than 1,800 water users extract about 700 million m3 from the basin in Ukraine annually.

[3] Actual co – financing data is presented further along this report when dealing with actual implementation.

[4] The detailed baseline information in this section is extracted from the Project Document.

Consequently, the river resources for drinking water supply are very valuable and important both within the Dniester basin and within the whole Ukraine. No economically sustainable and economically feasible agriculture is possible in the lower reaches of the Dniester (Odessa Region) in the arid steppe zone without irrigation.

There are a number of power plants in the basin. The Dniester Reservoir Hydro-Power Plant (1982) situated in Novodniestrovsk in Ukraine and consists of a hydropower generation plant. Also, the Dubasari Hydro-Power Plant (launched in 1958) has significant silted deposits and almost does not function as designed for flow regulation. The plants have both positive and negative effects. Under current trends of low-water the Dniester reservoir is to accumulate water for all economic sectors of the Lower Dniester, during the floods the Dniester Reservoir along with other artificial reservoirs protects the surrounding area. However, the hydro-power plants have negative effects on the downstream ecosystems, particularly upon sediment movement and fish migration and spawning. A specific effect of the Dniester Reservoir is that it decreases the temperature of the water released in comparison with the natural flow.

The basin also suffers from cyclical floods and droughts. Floods in the warm season are a result of sudden snow melting and rains, and spring floods are also frequent. In Moldova, the Dniester River basin flooding can occur on 40% of its territory. According to long-term observations in the Dniester basin there are periods of high and low water content, which fluctuate within 16-17 years and 9-13 years. In 1992-2005 annual flooding events occurred with estimated yearly damages of up to 5 million USD. The construction of the Dniester and Dubasari hydro-power stations and protective infrastructure have reduced flooding impacts. Currently there is an emphasis to constructing flood protection facilities in smaller rivers and streams, where the floods are caused by summer rains and are difficult to predict and therefore potentially more dangerous. The situation is made worse as obsolete flood protection infrastructure increases the risks and impacts of flooding.

During 1990-2007 seven droughts were recorded in the Republic of Moldova, with several categorized as severe. The duration of droughts varies from several months to years and, in some cases, droughts lasted the entire growing season (April-September), significantly impacting upon agricultural production. The losses associated with the most severe droughts in the Republic of Moldova were estimated at to be up to 225 million USD of lost production.

The Dniester is one of main rivers of the Black Sea basin with flow released in its shallow North-West part. As the major Black Sea rivers (the Danube, the Dniester, the South Bug and the Dnieper) discharge to the Black Sea in its North-West part, there are significant concentrations and impact of organic pollution and eutrophication here. The main pollutants of the Black Sea from the Dniester River Basin are nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus from agriculture and urban sources) leading to eutrophic conditions, as well as impacts from obsolete pesticides, heavy metals, communal wastes, improper landfills etc., which generally lead to increased toxicity of the environment and trigger various health alterations at individual, population and ecosystem levels.

For both countries, the Basin has strong productivity factors. Several are associated to agriculture and livestock production. Crops include: sugar beet, sunflower, maize, cereals and legumes, fruits and vegetables. Animal husbandry includes: pig, cattle and poultry farming, as well as fish farming. The food industry (associated to the agricultural and animal husbandry) is also diversified. Furthermore, other productive activities are also found in the Basin such as mining, hydro-power generation, and assorted industries. The Dniester Basin is also a region with a developing tourism industry as well as the home of

a number of activities associated to the urban centres localised there. Following are further descriptions of socio – economic factors per each country.

The Republic of Moldova, in the periods immediately before project design, has had slowed down economic growth. This, together with other economic issues, indicates that the country's economy has a high level of vulnerability and economic security issues. Furthermore, there is a high degree of territorial disparity with better factors in urban industrialized areas and more vulnerability in agricultural areas (some of this vulnerability is associated to environmental factors and climate change issues).

Ukraine also faces several socio – economic challenges associated to production decline, outflow of capital, decreased investments (including foreign direct investments in most regions), unstable export dynamics, decrease of construction works, shrinking of internal markets, unemployment and declining income levels and growing social crisis. Some positive trends associated to the growth of agricultural production have been recorded, however.

Also in both countries there are a series of environmental issues. Several these are associated to water and water management, and a number directly linked to matters pertaining to the Dniester Basin. Growing urban population and pressure on water supply for human consumption and sanitation, worsening sanitary and hygiene conditions, contamination of drinking water, are overall water issues found in both countries, in addition to challenges related to urban industrial activities. Inadequate wastewater treatment, industrial discharges, municipal and illegal waste sites further impact upon water quality.

Furthermore, the water flow regime is heavily delimited by the Dniester hydropower plant. The versatile facility not only provides power generation but it also has flood protection and water storage and distribution functions. Nevertheless, sediment transport and fish migration have been significantly altered by the reservoir. The water release patterns are a source of dispute between upstream and downstream water users. A number of flood-protection dams and dykes, and modifications to the riverbeds, have also altered natural river flow and habitats. Contamination from chemical enterprises and mine tailing dams in the upper stream likewise have an effect upon natural resources and on the population in the basin.

Water quality is also impacted by agriculture. Moldova and Ukraine face land degradation issues linked to agricultural and livestock raising practices. Ploughing to the banks margins, intensive use of fertilizers and pesticides, and little use of crop rotation all impact upon the area's soil.

Loss of biodiversity is a consequence of the factors described above. Ecosystems of the Dniester (in both countries although at different scales) suffer from illegal logging, illegal gravel and sand extraction, and illegal / inadequately regulated fishing.

Given the above, the Dniester River Basin faces critical environmental challenges including issues such as water flow regime (quantity and fluctuations) and pollution (quality), loss of biodiversity, climate change impacts, deforestation and resources management issues. Expenditures in environmental management is quite low in both countries. Public awareness of the state of environment in the population is extremely low.

There are several policy factors that internally and/or in collaboration among the two countries which are highly relevant to the Project's issues and objective. Furthermore, European wide policy is

also a consideration for water management, basin-wide issues, and their related promotion of sustainable development factors. Some of the accords between the two countries in this issue can be highlighted as follows:

1) Agreement between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova on Joint Use and Protection of Cross-Border Waters. Supplementary agreements to this accord are:

- Regulation on the Ukrainian-Moldovan Cooperation on Water and Environmental Monitoring and Control of Water Quality
- Regulation on Stakeholder Participation in the Activities of the Institution of Plenipotentiaries under the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of Ukraine on the Joint Use and Protection of Border Waters
- Regulation on the Ukrainian-Moldovan Cooperation on Flood Protection at the Border and Inland Waters
- Regulation on Measures in Case of Dangerous and Extraordinary Pollution of Border Rivers That Cannot Be Avoided

2) Protocol on Intentions on Cooperation on Environmental Improvement of the Dniester River (2005) where basin councils[5] were recommended

3) Treaty between the government of the Republic of Moldova and the cabinet ministers of Ukraine on Cooperation in the field of Protection and sustainable development of the Dniester River Basin (Dniester Treaty, 2012).

At the Regional and European – wide level there are other accords that are relevant (either directly or indirectly) vis-à-vis the Dniester Basin. Among these, the following can be found:

- EU Water Framework Directive
- Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979)
- Framework Convention on the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians (2003)
- Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention)
- Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention)
- Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution (Bucharest Convention)
- Directive 2000/60 / EC establishing a framework for community action in the field of water policy (Water Framework Directive)

[5] These were eventually created with the EU Association Agreements in 2014

- Directive 91/676/EC concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources (Nitrates Directive)
- Directive 2006/21/EC on the management of waste from the extractive industries
- Directive 2008/56/EC establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive)
- Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks (Floods Directive).

Furthermore, important endeavours were implemented within the framework of the Environment and Security[6] (ENVSEC) Initiative during the period 2004 – 2017 which have also been relevant vis-à-vis this project. For instance, within this initiative, the "Climate Change and Security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus (2013- 2017)" project had the Dniester river basin as a pilot region with a number of products developed in the framework of the ENVSEC programme.

The GEF – funded Project is being implemented in the two countries where the Dniester River basin is located, i.e., the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The project started in August 2017, was officially registered with the OSCE in October 2017, and terminates in May 2021. Its implementing agency is UNDP, while the executive agency is the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); the UNECE is supporting the project implementation with the consultancy on a range of technical and strategic issues. The project beneficiaries are the ministries of the environment of the two riparian states, its stakeholders include the water authorities, hydropower sector, foreign affairs ministries, authorities of protected areas, fisheries agencies, local communities, scientists, NGOs, and the general public.

It was expected that the objective and specific aims of the Project would be achieved through three components. Besides the specific components, products and processes that the Project intended to achieve, there was also a general aim to engender cooperation between the two countries in order to jointly manage the Basin and its natural resources. The table below indicates what are the components and associated expected outcomes that the Project specifically aimed to achieve.

[6] The ENVSEC Initiative is a partnership of several international organizations that aims at tackling environment and security risks through promoting environmental co-operation. https://www.osce.org/oceea/446245.

TABLE 4: PROJECT COMPONENTS AND OUTCOMES

Objective: Integrated water resources management in the Dniester river basin to strengthen sustainable development, through the update of the TDA, development and endorsement of the SAP and initiation of its implementation.
❖ *Component 1. In-depth analysis of water resources, related ecosystems and their use* *Outcomes for Component 1:* o Science- based consensus among the countries and key stakeholders on major transboundary problems of the basin o Understanding current and future priority environmental issues, and their transboundary implications, by key basin stakeholders and the public o Local stakeholders ready to minimize negative consequences for economic sectors as well as the environment in the basin
❖ *Component 2. Development of the policy, legal and institutional set-up, mandate and capacities of the River Basin Commission for strengthened basin level cooperation* *Outcomes for Component 2:* o Strengthened environmental transboundary cooperation in the Dniester basin o Agreed actions to address major transboundary problems of the Dniester basin (SAP) with established collaborative mechanism for multi-country cooperation framework o Involvement of stakeholders in the decision making processes of the Dniester Commission / a joint management body and its institutions o Project experiences and lessons disseminated globally and regionally
❖ *Component 3. Strengthening of water resources and biodiversity monitoring and conservation, and information exchange in the Dniester River Basin* Outcomes for Component 3: o Stronger information base and better accessibility of the relevant information in the Dniester basin for the joint management of water resources o A coordinated institutional and legal framework for access to and exchange of information from monitoring and other sources, including the use and further development of the Dniester basin GIS involving stakeholders from the whole basin o Improved capacities for monitoring in the basin, and the partial implementation of the agreed monitoring and information exchange programme.

4. FINDINGS

PROJECT DESIGN/FORMULATION

PRIORITIES AND COUNTRY DRIVEN-NESS

As seen in the previous section, the Dniester River Basin is a priority for both countries given the importance that its resources have for development in the Republic of Moldova and in Ukraine. The Dniester Treaty demonstrates this priority and country driven – ness.

In addition to this bilateral accord there are a number of multilateral agreements of which are priorities for the countries involved and guide driven – ness. The consistency of the Project with both countries national priorities is further demonstrated by the countries' adherence to a series of international agreements that focus upon natural resource management and sustainable development issues. Furthermore, both the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine are aligning and adapting national policies to further harmonise with EU policies as prescribed in their respective Association Agreements with the EU.

THEORY OF CHANGE

The Project did not have a specific defined theory of change as such. Nevertheless, there is a tacit theory that the objective of integrated water resources management in the Dniester river basin would be fostered through the development and implementation of tools to that effect (TDA, SAP, etc.).

GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Gender equality matters are imbedded within Project design. When the Project defines its main directions of work, it is stated that "All project activities will follow a gender strategy to be developed in the inception phase and will, as a minimum, record sex-disaggregated data on all participants." At design the Project was assigned a Gender Marker 1: *Activities contribute in some way to gender equality, but not significantly.*

This assessment is based on the outputs contributing to this gender marker assessment, which included:

- The development of a gender mainstreaming strategy, together with a communications/awareness strategy during the inception phase that would guide overall project implementation and the involvement of women in the development of the TDA and SAP (Output 2.8).
- In the development of climate change adaptation plans, the project would consider social and gender equity issues (Output 1.3).
- Women's groups will be encouraged to participate at the biannual two-day International Dniester Day Conference (Output 3.5).[7]

[7] These matters will be taken up again further along this report when implementation is assessed.

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAFEGUARDS

As the design documents indicated, the Dniester Project is rated as a 'Category Low' from an environmental and social safeguard perspective, with small scale, site-specific and manageable environmental and social impacts. No adverse long-term impacts were anticipated. An Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) was developed at design that support this rating as well provided guidance and measures with clear roles and responsibilities, along with capacity strengthening measures for effective implementation and monitoring in line with UNDP SES guidelines at the time.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS FRAMEWORK: PROJECT LOGIC AND STRATEGY, INDICATORS

As all projects of this sort, a key aspect of its design is the inception log frame/results framework which includes the project strategy and the intervention's logic as well as baseline and target indicators, among other factors. The Project's logic and strategy at the design and formulation level was very fitting. The formulation documents effectively identify key issues, threats, root causes and barriers that hinder proper management of the Basin.

The threats and root causes identified at design were:

- Periodic floods and droughts
- Pollution of surface and groundwater in the basin, insufficient flow in small rivers, loss and/ or disappearance of plant and animal species
- Infrastructure related issues e.g. high-probability floods, failure of emergency dams.

Climate change is also identified as a growing threat due to extreme seasonal variations of water flow resulting in more frequent and severe floods and droughts; increased number and intensity of flash floods on tributaries and small watersheds, decreasing reserves of groundwater, declining quality of drinking water from surface and groundwater sources, reduced biodiversity, lower productivity in agriculture, reduced GDP due to environmental and social factors, as well as increased level of pollution of the Dniester River and its tributaries.

Design goes further in also identifying the barriers that stand in the way of proper management, in order to refine project strategy. For this, the main barriers identified were as follows:

- Political and economic instability in the states
- Low capacity of some local authorities
- Low prioritization of the environment on the state's agenda
- Weak involvement of majority of water users in transboundary river basin cooperation
- Lack of modern legal framework for inter-state river basin cooperation
- Lack of data in the important fields (linked to water balances, water protection, ecosystems, etc.).

The problem analysis at design also included preliminary transboundary problems. These were established as:

- Water flow regime (hydropower, water quantity, floods and droughts)
- Pollution (e.g. agriculture, industrial, domestic)
- Loss of biodiversity, and invasive species
- Climate change.

Based on the above analysis, the strategy of the Project has been to explore potential solutions to the issues mentioned above. In design documents the potential solutions explored were: capacity building in order to develop, implement as well as to monitor policy decisions (using the EU Association Agreement to serve as framework for this); development and application of effective and innovative financial mechanisms for sustainable management of natural (including water) resources; enhancing participatory approach / stakeholders participation; and –lastly-- science based approach and improved knowledge with concrete data about situations are to be used for ecological rehabilitation, conservational and decision making.

Given the above, it is considered that the overall conceptual strategy of the Project, identifying the problem, the root causes as well as barriers and then strategizing on solutions based on this analysis was proper and proactive at planning stages. The Project's logic and strategy therefore was to confront these issues and barriers through specific outputs and expected outcomes that would, plausibly, deal with identified threats and barriers. Therefore, in terms of overall logic and strategy the design responded to an adequate rationale and it was designed as a strategic intervention.

The results framework, through which this strategy would be implemented, was also well considered. The outcomes, outputs, and relevant indicators, were –furthermore—quite fitting. Baseline indicators for the Project Objective and each of the expected project outcomes were established in the Project Document.

Regarding indicators, a SMART analysis indicates that –generally—they fulfilled these guidelines. When doing a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attributable, Relevant, Time-bound/Timely/Trackable/Targeted) analysis of end of project target indicators, it can be said that they fulfil several of these parameters for all indicators. For instance, they are specific (S) since they clearly communicate a description of a future condition. Most are measurable (M) since many are presented in specified metrics, although not all are such at the design level. For instance some are identified as To Be Determined at design (such as Countries identify means to implement the SAP/RBMP). They are certainly relevant (R) since they aligned with a developmental framework and with an issue that both countries identified as key for several water related issues, management of the Basin, as well as for promoting both countries' cooperation. They are time bound and targeted (T) given that they are expected to be achieved by the end of the intervention. The mid-term review presented a series of recommendations for adjusting or changing the results framework, at the target and at the log frame level, as well as at the indicators level. The Project Steering Committee accepted recommendations in their April 2020 meeting and they were implemented after that.

In retrospect, as several stakeholders have indicated, the design had some inherent complexities given the intricacy of the issue (with the involvement of several countries, multiple issues, and the complex architecture that this entailed). Furthermore, stakeholders pointed out that there could have been more pilots within design this would have been beneficial for the Project. Lastly, some issues that were deemed as important were not part of the design (such as environmental flow) yet, in those cases, the Project included them throughout the implementation process.

ASSUMPTIONS AND RISKS

Project design identifies several assumptions and risks that could, conceivably, have an impact upon the Project. These were

- Political instability could affect the implementation of actions at country and bilateral levels
- Lack of appropriate participation in the project of Transdniestria
- Limited scientific data and information and limited willingness of responsible authorities to share
- Climate change.

All of them were classified as Medium risks and there were a set of mitigating processes identified that could be used to abate the risk factors.

LESSONS FROM OTHER RELEVANT PROJECTS (SAME FOCAL AREA) INCORPORATED INTO PROJECT DESIGN

Several lessons from other relevant projects or actions were raised at design, either specifically or generally. Some of these dealt with transboundary water management issues. For instance, regarding the lessons learned from the implementation of the Danube River Protection Convention, the design points out to its relevance vis-à-vis the Dniester Project.

Further to this, a long series of other interventions and activities in the same focal area and supported by UNDP and GEF from which the Dniester Project could draw lessons were listed at design. Among these the design lists the following: UNDP-GEF Danube Regional Project which led to an International River Basin Management Plan /SAP under the direction of the ICPDR; UNDP-GEF Tisza Project that developed a five-country detailed analysis and river basin management plan were itemised; Restoring Ecosystems to Mitigate Floods and Improve Cooperation between Countries in Transboundary River Basins in Eastern Europe (OSCE and UNEP under the ENVSEC Initiative); Targeted Research for Improving Understanding of the UNEP/GEF Global Nitrogen Cycle towards the Establishment of an International Nitrogen Management System.[8]

Design also indicates that, in one form or another, the current Dniester Project would draw lessons from a series of relevant interventions from other partners. These are partners involved in the current project, such as OSCE, UNECE, etc., as well as other partners and donors.

[8] The other relevant projects specifically in the Dniester River Basin are analysed below in the pertinent section.

PLANNED STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

A stakeholder analysis was drawn up at the design stage. Furthermore, potential interests and probable roles of different stakeholders in the implementation of the Project were also drawn in the planning stages following consultations during project preparation (PPG).

The stakeholders identified cover the broad range of actors involved in the Basin, in different capacities, from the public to the private sectors, from beneficiaries to academia. These are further classified at three levels or spheres: National; Local; and NGO/Academia/Private.

LINKAGES BETWEEN PROJECT AND OTHER INTERVENTIONS WITHIN THE SECTOR

Design specified that the initiative would build upon from other relevant projects (current and previous) in the same focal area. Above are a few of those interventions indicated at that stage.

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the *Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the Dniester River Basin Project* is very specifically a follow – up to other key projects carried out in recent years and, as such, there are very crucial linkages between these former projects and the current one being evaluated. The previous interventions were:

- Action Programme to Improve Transboundary Cooperation and Sustainable Management of the Dniester River Basin (Dniester-II), (OSCE, UNECE, UNEP under the ENVSEC Initiative), 2006 - 07
- Transboundary cooperation and sustainable management in the Dniester River basin: Phase III – Implementation of the Action Programme (Dniester-III), (OSCE, UNECE, UNEP under the ENVSEC Initiative), 2009 - 15
- Reducing vulnerability to extreme floods and climate change in the Dniester river basin, 2010 – 2014 (OSCE, UNECE, UNEP under the ENVSEC Initiative), 2009-12.

This Project builds upon and takes further the achievements of the previous three interventions mentioned above. The Dniester I; Dniester-II; and Dniester-III –as they are known for short— enabled the development of the Dniester Treaty as well as lay the groundwork for several different aspects of the current project.

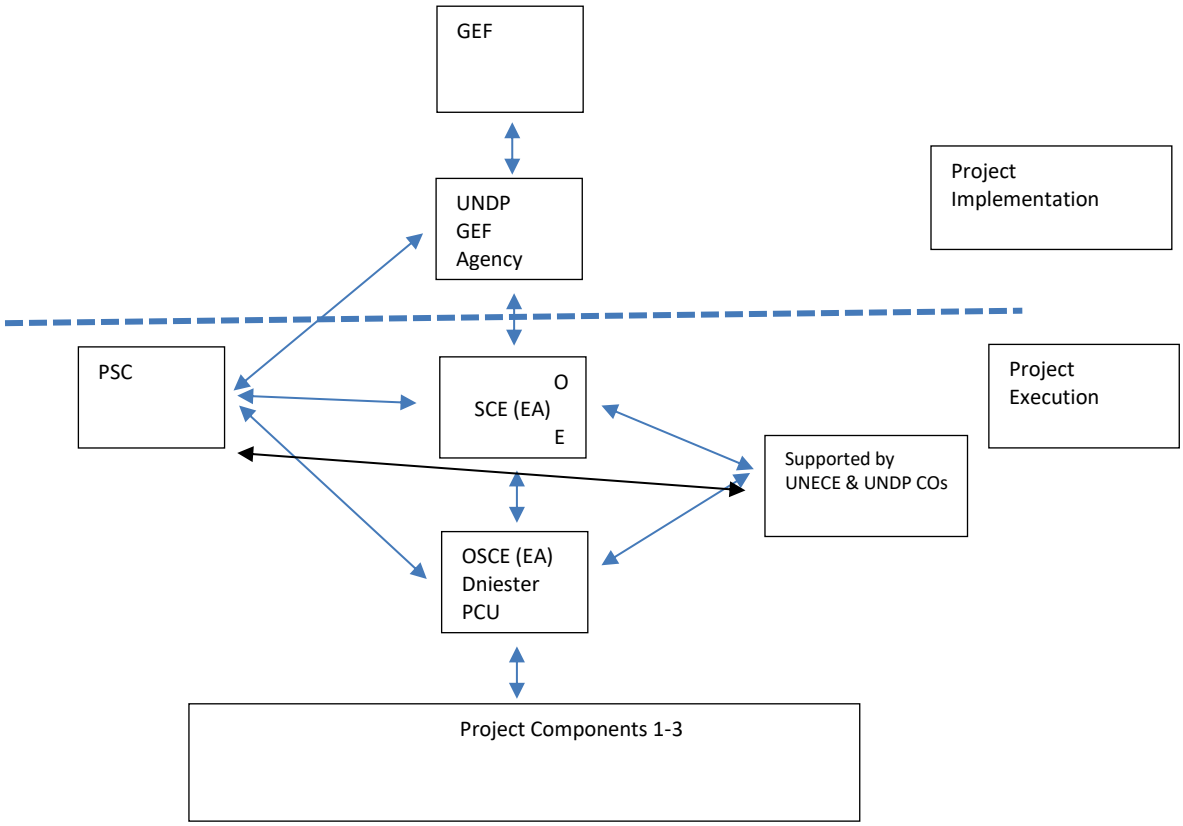
These three previous interventions also further aided in developing the so – called Dniester component of the EU Instrument for Stability-funded project Climate Change and Security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus. This last regional intervention aided in developing a strategic framework and implementation plan for adaptation to climate change in the Dniester Basin, which is also a base for the climate change work the current project being assessed has carried out.

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Management arrangements are multi-layered and involve a number of different international, regional, and national institutions. Below is a graphic representation of the management arrangements

set at design, while after the figure there is a brief narrative on each agency's role in management as indicated in the Project Document.[9]

FIGURE 1: PROJECT MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS



[9] This is the chart in the Project Document as stated at planning. The only major change evidenced at implementation is that UNDP Country Offices did not support the Dniester PCU as stated at planning.

Following what was stated at planning, the Project has been implemented by the United Nations Development Programme fulfilling the role of GEF Agency. The Regional Technical Advisor (RTA) on Water and Oceans --based at the UNDP Istanbul Regional Centre for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) – provided substantive and technical oversight. The project has been executed by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) provided technical, strategic as well as management input.

Design indicated a Dniester Project Co-ordination Unit (Dniester PCU) was to be hosted by the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, with the exception of the National Project Co-ordinator in the Republic of Moldova. Furthermore, the Project was to be guided by a Project Steering Committee (PSC) named "Dniester Project Steering Committee" to oversee project implementation and execution and to ensure continued regional ownership.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT (CHANGES TO THE PROJECT DESIGN AND PROJECT OUTPUTS DURING IMPLEMENTATION)

Adaptive management is defined as the project's ability to adapt to changes to the project design (project objective, outcomes, or outputs) during implementation resulting from: (a) original objectives that were not sufficiently articulated; (b) exogenous conditions that changed, due to which change was needed; (c) the project's restructuring because the original expectations were overambitious; or (d) the project's restructuring because of a lack of progress.

The mid-review recommendations for changing the results framework were formally accepted in early 2020 by the Project Steering Committee. Furthermore, regarding adaptations employed by the Project in general, the intervention was granted an extension (following the Mid-Term Review's recommendations) to make-up for time lost at start up. Some issues that were deemed as important were not part of the design (such as environmental flow) yet, in those cases, the Project included them throughout the implementation process.

Furthermore, as all activities carried – out in the last year, the Project had to adapt to the impact of COVID-19 upon the countries involved as well as upon the institutions. An extension was also granted in order to accommodate to delays in implementation related to the pandemic. For this, and attending to international travel restrictions as well as each of the countries' states of emergency, there were several adaptation measures taken, such as activities that were to be face-to-face were implemented online (for instance steering committee meetings, etc) and adjusting work planning, etc. Adaptation by the Project to online modalities was done rather quickly. Yet, there is an overall awareness that many issues (such as study tours, negotiations, exchanges, upstream policy work) cannot be fully carried out in this modality.

ACTUAL STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION AND PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

The general actual stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements has followed to a great degree what was planned. This involves stakeholder participation at the different institutional levels as well as at the non-governmental and civil society levels.

However, this does not mean that the Project had no challenges in stakeholders and partners participation. They were mainly due to political issues, political changes, etc. Some of these challenges were highlighted as potential risks. These were:

- Lack of appropriate participation in the project of Transdniestria due to issues in the relations between Chisinau and Tiraspol since 2019
- Political instability in both countries, with government changes twice in each of the countries
- High rotation and shifting personnel within different ministries, with the ensuing adaptation need to involve institutional stakeholders when there is such a high rate of personnel replacement.

Up until 2019 there were some challenges also in defining UNECE involvement in the project with respect to support for climate change aspects, monitoring and data exchange, inter-sectoral coordination and SAP development. This, as other matters that will be also seen further along this report, was not a conceptual divergence but more of a management one due to differences in accounting and in reporting scheduling between UNDP and UNECE. The involvement of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) concluded in 2019, once all administrative items enabling collaboration with the project partners (legal frameworks, reporting mechanisms, etc.) were clarified, and consisted in providing support for climate change related activities, monitoring and data exchange, inter-sectoral coordination and SAP development. Although slightly later than initially envisioned, the partnership arrangements between OSCE, as the Executing Agency, and UNECE were concluded through a Third Party Cost Sharing Agreement, in line with all project donor requirements.

The Project greatly benefitted from the development, and use of, a stakeholder analysis which included a plan for their involvement in the Project. This analysis and the implementation of its plan greatly aided the Dniester Project in its inclusive implementation modality, and in discerning stakeholder topics. This stakeholder analysis and plan is very much linked to the communication and information plans also drawn and implemented by the Project. [10] The involvement of stakeholders has been one of the best practices of the Dniester Project. As indicated in the stakeholder analysis, involvement went beyond just consultation to include other aspects of proactive participation.

The COVID-19 pandemic did also have an impact on stakeholder participation in activities that entailed travel, personal interactions, and others which were curtailed due to the emergency situation. Although the Project did swiftly shift to online modalities of engagement, there is also the awareness that many matters that involve participation cannot be carried out properly virtually (such as upstream policy work, study tours, and even the informal but valuable exchanges that take place in face-to-face interactions in projects such as this).

PROJECT FINANCE AND CO-FINANCE

The Project had a total planned project cost of USD 21,415,000. Planned GEF financing was to be USD 1,950,000 with co-financing in the amount of USD: 19,465,000 from various sources.

[10] See subsection COMMUNICATIONS, OUTREACH AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT of this report.

TABLE 5: CO-FINANCING TABLE[11]

Co-financing (type/source)	UNDP financing (US$m)		Government (US$m)		Partner Agency (US$m)		Total (US$m)	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
Grants Loans/Concessions					13,500,000	13,500,000	13,500,000	13,500,000
In-kind support	300,000	300,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	2,665,000	2,615,000	5,965,000	5,915,000
Other							19,465,000	19,415,000
Totals								

At closure, the Project reports that actual financing and co – financing were at nearly at the planned level (99 percent actual financing/co-financing).

MONITORING & EVALUATION: DESIGN AT ENTRY (*), IMPLEMENTATION (*), AND OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF M&E (*)

Imbedded in design there was a Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) plan, this included a series of standard activities. The monitoring framework indicated that there would be an inception workshop/report, mid-term review, project implementation reports, audits, a final evaluation process (i.e., the process that gives rise to this report), etc. Therefore, for M&E design at entry, the ranking is *Highly Satisfactory (HS)* since there were no shortcomings in the quality of M&E design.

The implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation plan was properly and timely followed. The PIRs had to be generated coordinating the implementation cycles with the PIR-prescribed cycles. Therefore, to date, two PIRs were drafted: 2019 and 2020. The 2021 PIR is being produced at the time this terminal evaluation takes place, which presents a phase shift however since there is no opportunity for the PIR as a monitoring tool to nourish this evaluation The Project commissioned an independent external mid-term review in a timely manner. It also used its findings and recommendations for adaptive management. Therefore, feedback between this monitoring tool as well as others (PIRs, MTR, etc) provided information that was used to improve and adapt project performance. The final project report will also be produced after this evaluation.

Therefore, the achievement of the monitoring plan at implementation is considered to have been *Satisfactory (S)* since there were only minor shortcomings as stated above regarding timing of instruments and the quality of M&E implementation met expectations. A composite ranking that considers monitoring and evaluation design at entry together with the M&E plan's implementation for the overall quality of M&E is *Satisfactory (S).*

[11] In annexes a table is found with Confirmed Sources of Co-Financing at TE Stage.

IMPLEMENTING AGENCY (UNDP) (*) AND EXECUTING AGENCY (OSCE) (*), OVERALL PROJECT OVERSIGHT/IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION (*)

The Project Document sets up coordination and operational structures as well as proposed management arrangements. As stated before in the section on management arrangements at design, management/implementation/execution and oversight for this Project has been multi – layered and it involved a number of different institutions in different countries. This reflects the multi-institutional and multi-layered issues that the Project had to deal with in order to properly reflect the complexities of the national, bi-national, regional and international aspects of integrated water management and transboundary cooperation with the Dniester Basin.

However, this layered and extended arrangement did not present major overall problems in implementation/execution and oversight, although some challenges had to be taken into account. The operational association between the UNDP as implementing agency and the OSCE as executing agency was practical and practically flowing. There were some issues identified, especially in start – up, where different reporting systems and administrative processes had to be levelled, both within and between the implementing and executing agencies. Challenges were present however regarding financing flow to the Project, for which the Project had to request fund advances from OSCE while awaiting actual UNDP disbursement.

The multi – layered aspects of project management and of oversight concerned also the internal workings and internal architecture of the institutions involved. For instance, regarding the OSCE, several divisions of the institution had to work in tandem to manage and oversee this Project. OSCE Field Operations in Moldova as well as in Ukraine had to implement in coordination with the OSCE Secretariat based in Vienna. The Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) holds responsibility for the effective use of donor resources and outputs delivery, and ensuring operationalisation of the PCU. Yet, although this architecture might seem complex, each area of OSCE has had a well-defined role (technical, policy, governance, international cooperation, negotiations, etc.) and the sectors have worked in tandem offering their individual value – added to the overall project management and implementation. Internally within the OSCE there have been further formal linkages. For instance, in the second stage of project implementation the PCU participated in staff meetings, and other such planning meetings, of the OSCE, further integrating work.

Although these institutional arrangements did not compromise neither delivery nor oversight, the internal OSCE complexity related to the project had to be acknowledged and institutional arrangements smoothed. Due to the history of work of OSCE with the other partners in the past in the region as well as in projects directly in the countries involved and in particular in relation to the Dniester River Basin, the institution had already strong links with the other partners engaged. OSCE previous work with several projects in the Dniester River Basin was also a contributing factor to partnerships, background and flowing relations with the different partners. A helpful matter for flowing operations entailed the fact that OSCE serves as the co-Secretariat of the Dniester Basin Commission (DBC), the bi-lateral body responsible for the implementation of the 2012 Treaty Cooperation in the field of Protection and sustainable development of the Dniester River Basin (Dniester Treaty).

While UNDP is the implementing agency, there was also a multi – layered involvement of this agency in the Project given that several of its Offices took part in the Project at different levels. Both the Moldovan UNDP Country Office and the Ukrainian Country Office were involved in the Project, while

UNDP's Regional Centre for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) had several roles including technical oversight. Moreover, UNECE until October 2019 did not reach an official agreement with the Project as a whole on what its involvement would be, mainly due to the need to make its reporting and accounting methods compatible with those of UNDP.[12]

The Project, by its very multi-layered nature, had to fulfil financial guidelines by OSCE and those by UNDP, creating –at times—a duplication of efforts. Furthermore, UNDP would transfer funds to OSCE in a rather intricate manner. Although budget was approved on a yearly basis according to work plans, disbursement of expenses met with some difficulties. A three month funding disbursement process took place, increasing the work flow since this had to be done four times a year with the all the effort that this entailed. Funds were released after an 80 percent expenditure rate and a new instalment was then received. However, the definition of expenditure varied from OSCE to UNDP guidance. For OSCE service agreements/contracts these are funds which are frozen, and therefore classified as expenditures by this institution, while for UNDP actual pay outs are considered expenditures. To fill this gap between contracts/service agreements and actual expenditures as defined by UNDP, at times the Project had to request fund advances from OSCE while awaiting actual UNDP disbursement.

The Project Coordination Unit (PCU) consisted of a Regional Project Coordinator (based in Kyiv), a National Project Coordinator for Ukraine (also based in Kyiv), and a National Project Coordinator for Moldova (based in Chisinau) plus additional staff hired as needed dealing with specific aspects of the Project (support, financial, conflict resolution/collaborative dialogue, stakeholder engagement and communication, interns, etc). The National Coordinator for Moldova position, however, has been vacant since July 2020 and was not be filled before project closure. The Project has had difficulties in finding a candidate that fulfils this post's requisites as well as in aligning with procurement processes. This has increased the work flow for the remaining staff in Kyiv since the PCU staff fulfilled some of the duties inherent to this post. Yet, with restrictions in travel due to COVID-19, traveling to Chisinau has also been affected, and therefore Kyiv-based staff has not been able to carry – out those duties when travel constraints are in place.

Communication lines between and among the different institutions involved were suitable. Throughout implementation there were consistent and systematic communication channels. Communication between the Project and actors at the national as well as at the local level was considered positively, not only in the specific information flow and the relation with national partners, and also regarding the transparency mode in which it worked with other stakeholders.

The Steering Committee (comprised of the key stakeholders directly involved in the Project) was a functioning entity. It met regularly in order to foster work planning and provide guidance to the Project as a whole and it was considered to be effective by all parties involved.

[12] As specified elsewhere in this report, the involvement of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) concluded in 2019, once all administrative items enabling collaboration with the project partners (legal frameworks, reporting mechanisms, etc.) were clarified, and consisted in providing support for climate change related activities, monitoring and data exchange, inter-sectoral coordination and SAP development. Although slightly later than initially envisioned, the partnership arrangements between OSCE, as the Executing Agency, and UNECE were concluded through a Third Party Cost Sharing Agreement, in line with all project donor requirements.

Therefore, as an amalgamated review, the global quality of implementation and execution, of the executing agencies as well as the quality execution of implementing agencies is *Satisfactory (S)* since – overall-- only a few shortcomings were identified throughout the implementation process as a whole.

RISK MANAGEMENT, INCLUDING SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS

The Project had a series of risks identified as seen earlier in this report. The monitoring tools (PIRs and MTR) identified these risks as still valid and occurring during implementation. Of the four risks identified at design as medium-level risks, two have manifested themselves fully, and are risks which can be managed to some extent: political instability and lack of appropriate participation in the project of Transdniestria. Political instability has been addressed through flexibility and adaptation of the Project to the political changes that have occurred in both countries.

The second identified risk, that is hindered participation by Transdniestria within the Project, has also been managed to the extent possible bypassing the challenges of conflictive relations through the invitation to representatives of Transdniestria to participate in Project events. For this, also, the role of the OSCE Mission to Moldova as the facilitator of a comprehensive and lasting political settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict in all its aspects was important. The communication with the Transdniestrian side for a number of activities was facilitated by the OSCE Mission to Moldova, which was a key player in the overall implementation of the project.

Furthermore, the divergences between the two countries vis-à-vis several aspects of transboundary water management have also been identified as challenging overall, not only in documents but also through acknowledgement of this issue by the different stakeholders this evaluation engaged with. Although the Project in and of itself tried to maintain impartiality between the two countries, even at the end of the Project implementation period, some perceptions of inequality between the two countries as to what activities were carried out, or perceptions regarding what issues in what countries prevailed over the other, still remain.

An unplanned or perhaps unexpected positive outcome regarding the above risks has been the perception that third parties (such as OSCE/ UNDP/ UNECE and GEF as donor) can bring-in increased even-handedness and compromise to transboundary issues.

UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards (SES) screening was carried out at design so that project programming would maximize social and environmental opportunities and benefits as well as to ensure that adverse social and environmental risks and impacts are avoided, minimized, mitigated and managed. The Project was rated as a 'Category Low' from an environmental and social safeguard perspective, with potential small scale, site-specific and manageable environmental and social impacts only.

PROJECT RESULTS

PROGRESS TOWARDS OBJECTIVE AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES (*)

The Project achieved anticipated outputs and expected outcomes by project closing. Key expected outputs were actually delivered to the degree planned, and in some cases even beyond.

Following is a listing of key products delivered thus far and, following that there is an assessment of effects and results beyond the product level.[13]

- *Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) for the Dniester River Basin.* The development of this document was carried out via intermediate outputs and processes, such as data gathering, participatory events where the TDA was discussed (including publishing on the Dniester-commission website for public consultation), study tours and exchanges, as well as other similar activities. Several key thematic supplements were also developed (such as analysis of the effects of the Dniester reservoirs on the state of the Dniester river/analysis of hydrological options, on impacts of hydropower, ecosystem valuation assessments of the Dniester delta, inventory of tailings from the mining industry). Others are being developed (for instance, analysis of hydro biological parameters). The TDA and SAP documents were developed in accordance with the structure established by the EU Water Framework Directive.

- *Technical studies and scenarios.* A number of technical studies vital for integrated transboundary management, either to support TDA or as stand-alone products, were developed by the Project. These included, inter alia, technical surveys for building a diagnostic of monitoring nitrate pollution, scenarios on water resource use, development of strategic plans (such as climate change adaptation projects relevant also at local levels)

- *Strategic Action Program (SAP).* Following GEF guidance on transboundary water management (defining environmental quality objectives, how to achieve these goals, cost / benefit assessment of different options for achieving them, governance mechanisms, monitoring and evaluating SAP implementation, national action plans, etc.) this action plan has been developed for the Dniester River Basin, and developed in accordance with the structure established by the EU Water Framework Directive.

- *Development of other policy plans and policy drafts.* There has been a generation of other policy plans and drafts carried out by Project such as draft national management plans, scenarios for joint management bodies such as the Dniester Commission and its related working groups, stakeholder consultation mechanism.

- *Products to foster the implementation strategy for public participation, communication, education, gender equality.* A number of products, processes, study tours, exhibits, etc., were carried out to foster proactive participation processes, communication regarding the Basin as well as the workings of the DRC, education components bringing in sectors –such as youth—which were not part of the overall basin management knowledge, as well as incorporating issues regarding gender equality and water.

The above are a number of key products that have engendered processes and effects. At the effect/outcome levels, several expected as well as unplanned effects can be found. The main ones are as follows:

[13] In annexes there is Gantt chart with outputs and timeline (see Annex 6: Chart of Project Outputs)

- *Countries signed regional agreement.* Moldova signed the Joint Statement and the SAP generated by the Project on March 19th 2021 and Ukraine in turn signed these on March 31st 2021.[14]

- *Integrating for a true basin-level approach for river management.* As many stakeholders have indicated, the Project has aided the two countries to intensify their water management policies to a more articulated and cohesive systemic approach. That is, the Project has helped in incorporating innovative basin – level monitoring and management methods for the countries as well as for the regions.

- *Institutional and individual capacity built.* Through the many technical and policy-oriented activities, products and processes there has been capacity built, at the individual and at the institutional levels. Institutions are now more capable of implementing transboundary mechanisms to manage the Dniester River Basin in an integrated and sustainable manner given that the Dniester River Basin Commission has been established and operated also with support provided by the Project.

- *Collaborating with and incorporating international expertise.* The engagement of international experts, and bringing-in this expertise to the products and processes, has entailed formal and information capacity built (at the individual as well as at the institutional levels) and promoted innovation. Having national experts, policy and decision makers in contact with these international experts outside of the two countries and discovering about experiences of transboundary water management proved to be valuable for national – level stakeholders.

- *Building bridges between technical knowledge and national as well as transboundary policy making*. The Project successfully joined technical knowledge with policy – making. This was done by generating high quality and relevant technical exercises (studies, technical tours, pilots) with their policy making sphere required for transboundary water management.

- *Activating the Dniester Basin Commission*. The Dniester Agreement was signed in 2012, although the full ratification took place in 2017. The Project, therefore, bolstered in a timely manner the setup of the Commission and generated other opportunities for cooperation in the basin. This was done through the technical as well as through the policy engagement practices, and through formal and informal information exchanges carried out by the Project resulting in the Commission being more active and proactive as the Project developed.

- *Supporting policy bodies and cross sectorial collaboration.* The Project products and outcomes not only have supported the Commission but also its working groups, fostering national and transnational cross sectorial collaborations. Furthermore, the Project linked and engendered further inter – sectoral collaboration by being attentive to other policies and agreements that are germane to the Dniester River Basin, such as those dealing with transboundary impacts of industrial accidents, for example.

[14] See https://dniester-commission.com/en/news/a-joint-statement-on-the-strategic-action-programme-for-the-dniester-river-basin-for-2021-2035-signed/

- *Engendering a culture of participation and cooperation.* Through formal and informal activities, the Project engendered and promoted a culture of participation with multiple stakeholders and cooperation between the two countries in transboundary water management.

COMMUNICATIONS, OUTREACH AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The Dniester Project has had a very thorough and proactive communications, outreach, information and knowledge management approach. This was conferred specifically from some expected outcomes/outputs dealing with this as well as for the Project as a whole. Specifically, for instance, Component 2 Outcome 7 deals with this: *Project experiences and lessons disseminated globally and regionally*, as well as several expected outputs apply to this matter.[15] Also explicitly the third component in its very definition indicates that information exchange within the Basin is an expectation of the Project [Component 3: Strengthening of water resources and biodiversity monitoring and conservation, and *information exchange* in the Dniester River Basin]. This Component also has specific outputs dealing with this topic.[16]

For this, a *Communication Strategy and Informational Promotion* document was developed early on in the implementation stage (2018). This strategy contained analysis of the means, tools to be used and necessary communication frequency with the aim to facilitate interactions with all stakeholders in relation to information flows. This plan applied to both internal and external project stakeholder' engagement.

The communication and information promotion strategy's implementation is also linked to the stakeholder analysis and plan drawn by the Project and implemented throughout project execution. Furthermore, there was a close interaction throughout execution between the communication and the gender strategies. The Project, for instance, used concepts developed in the gender strategy to support communication.

[15] For example:

Output 2.7. Twinning and experience sharing with another transboundary basin, strategy for replication of best practices in the Dniester basin

Output 2.8. Comprehensive public participation and communication/awareness raising and gender mainstreaming strategy with selected activities implemented

Output 2.9. A project web page (following IW : LEARN standards), international waters experience notes with best practices from the project produced, use of the GEF 6 IW tracking tool, and participation at GEF IW conferences, UNECE Water Convention events and other IW : LEARN activities ensured.

[16] Output 3.5. Distribution of available basin-wide information to the public via diverse sources of mass media, i.e. via a network of the environmental journalists trained during the Dniester-III project, working with national and local media, UNECE and OSCE websites, and active www.dniester-basin.org site linked to the Dniester River Basin Commission. Links with GEF IW:LEARN activities.

Distribution of available basin-wide information to the public via diverse sources of mass media, i.e. via a network of the environmental journalists trained during the Dniester-III project, working with national and local media, UNECE and OSCE websites, and active www.dniester-basin.org site linked to the Dniester River Basin Commission.

In Component 3 there are also several communication and dissemination activities to be achieved through awareness raising (Dniester Day, art contest "Colours of the Dniester", joint expeditions, etc.).

As a result of the implementation of this communication strategy as well as in meeting with the specific information communication aims and (through this) increased stakeholder engagement, the Project developed a strong set of information/dissemination/communication products, processes and activities. The dedicated internet presence through the webpage https://dniester-commission.com/en/gef-project/ is an example of this. The Project also provided inputs for the international GEF webpage IW :Learn. Moreover, the communication and outreach activities were facilitated through the incorporation of staff dealing with information and stakeholder engagement.

RISK MANAGEMENT, INCLUDING SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS (SAFEGUARDS)

UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards (SES) screening was carried out at design so that project programming would maximize social and environmental opportunities and benefits as well as ensuring that adverse social and environmental risks and impacts would be avoided, minimized, mitigated and managed.

RELEVANCE (*)

Relevance is the extent to which a project's objectives are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies. In the first place, the Project is relevant due to the importance to a number of sustainable development factors in the Republic Moldova and Ukraine, including industrial development, agriculture, urban issues, water for human consumption, hydroelectric dams, and the like. Another indicator of relevance is the alignment of the Project's objective, aims, and expected results with national development and environmental priorities in both countries. Advancing in the processes of EU accessing is a relevant factor for both Moldova and Ukraine's commitment, ownership and underlying relevance. Both countries are parties to international commitments and agreements, including international water agreements, that are either directly or indirectly addressed by the Project.[17] Furthermore, reporting under the UNECE Water Convention align within SDG Goal 6 which is defined as "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Target 6.5: By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate./*Indicator 6.5.2: Proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation*". The latter is also indicative of relevance.

The main relevance indicator, nevertheless, is the explicit alignment of the Project's expected results with the Dniester River Basin accord. The Treaty on Cooperation in the Field of Protection and Sustainable Development of the Dniester River Basin signed between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine in 2012 is the main instrument that is indicative of the this project's high relevance given that the intervention aims at fostering cooperation between the countries relating to the Basin as well as to advance implementation of this agreement per se.

[17] These are listed in the Project Design section of this report.

Relevance is also analysed in relation to IA's and GEF's strategic priorities. This is exemplified by alignment of the Project with the following:

Contribution to achieving UNDAF/Country Programme Outcomes:

- Moldova: Outcome 3.1 - Improved environmental management in significantly increased compliance with international and regional standards
- Ukraine: Outcome 3 – Regulatory and legislative mechanisms for sustainable management of natural resources are created

UNDP Strategic Plan Output:

- Primary Output 1.3: Solutions developed at national and sub-national levels for sustainable management of natural resources, ecosystem services, chemicals and waste.
- Indicator 1.3.1: Number of new partnership mechanisms with funding for sustainable management solutions of natural resources, ecosystem services, chemicals and waste at national and/or subnational level.
- Secondary Output 2.5: Legal and regulatory frameworks, policies and institutions enabled to ensure the conservation, sustainable use, and access and benefit sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems, in line with international conventions and national legislation.
- Output Indicator 2.5.2: Number of countries implementing national and local plans for integrated Water Resource Management.

The relevance is also applicable with regards to GEF's International Waters cluster/Focal Area. The Project is fully aligned with GEF's International Waters Strategy Objective 1: 'Catalyse sustainable management of transboundary waters' and to 'Foster co-operation for sustainable transboundary water systems and economic growth'.

Therefore, relevance is assessed on a six-point scale as *Highly Satisfactory (HS)* since there were no shortcomings at the national institutional nor agency level regarding the significance of this intervention.

EFFECTIVENESS (*)

The effectiveness of a project is defined as the degree to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved or are expected to be achieved. The valorisation of effectiveness is used as an aggregate for judgment of the merit or worth of an activity, (i.e., the extent to which an intervention has attained, or is expected to attain, its major relevant objectives proficiently in a sustainable fashion and with a positive institutional development impact).

The effectiveness of this project can be rated as *HS (Highly Satisfactory)* since it met expectations as to the degree of objectives being achieved. This is factual at the objective, output and at the outcome levels. The Project level of achievements in all of the distinct outcomes and outputs was commensurate to metrics (i.e. indicators) as well as more general effects and impacts and effects expected to be achieved. All other outputs/outcomes/results were achieved at the level expected or exceeding it.

The Project also contributed to country expected outcomes as expressed in both countries' UN programming (UNDAF, CPAP, GEF strategic priorities) and contributed to the countries national priorities as well as in meeting with international commitments.

EFFICIENCY (*)

Efficiency is defined as the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible. Efficiency is a measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results. This relates also as to the funding flow, time consumed to amend inefficient practices, as well as the extent to which a project extension could have been avoided.

The Project has been efficient in achieving outputs/products and in achieving outcomes and effects in both Moldova and Ukraine in a high degree of accomplishment vis-à-vis expected target indicators and other metrics. Also, it has provided value-for-money since it achieved results within budgets, agreed disbursement, etc., while leveraging investments and in-kind support from sources external to the project per se (co-funding). Although the Project had an efficient implementation vis-à-vis achieving (and in some cases overachieving) products and results it also faced some challenges that impact on efficiency such as financial flow delays, inception and set up time.

The efficiency of implementation met expectations to a large degree. Therefore, the overall ranking of efficiency is *Satisfactory (S).*

OVERALL OUTCOME (*)

Given the high degree of relevance and the highly satisfactory degree of effectiveness the satisfactory degree of efficiency, the overall project outcome is ranked as *Satisfactory (S).*

SUSTAINABILITY: FINANCIAL (*) , SOCIO-POLITICAL (*), INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND GOVERNANCE (*), ENVIRONMENTAL (*), OVERALL LIKELIHOOD OF SUSTAINABILITY (*)

Sustainability of an intervention and its results are examined to determine the likelihood of whether benefits would continue to be accrued after the completion of a project. Sustainability is examined from various perspectives: financial, social, environmental and institutional.

Financial sustainability: Financial risks to sustainability relate to the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the assistance ends. The main risk, therefore, would entail lack of appropriate funding for implementation of the results, effects, etc. The risk to a great degree lies in the economic situation of the countries, and both countries have had severe economic issues recently. Regarding financing risks there are also those associated with the functioning of the DBC and more so of funding from the public sector in infrastructure if necessary in the near future. Although a positive aspect of adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic has been the switch to online meetings and events which do not require major funding, several key stakeholders indicate that funding for in-person activities of the Commission are doubtful without the support of international partners. Another indicator of this potential lack of funding is that both countries are discussing and contemplating reducing the number of members of the DBC in order to make it more agile and less costly (membership at this point stands at 17 members per country).

Notwithstanding that several key stakeholders express their doubts on the possibility of robust funding from the countries for the Dniester Commission's continuous support, during this Project's Final Stakeholders Conference, held on 22 April 2021, the two Co-Chairs of the Dniester Commission indicated their countries' readiness to continue with the work of the Commission in the next period, after having realized the added value of the already established platform for cooperation. On both sides, it was indicated that the countries stand ready to cover the costs for the continued work of the Commission.

The implementation of the SAP as well as the support of other results that were attained by this Project, are the subjects of a follow – up intervention currently in the pipeline. International cooperation financial resources for sustainability of outcomes will be continued in the near future with this new project, if approved. Yet, financial sustainability outside of a new project's time framework (four years) is not assured. A more positive note is related to private sector investment however. Here there are indicators that some private companies will finance facilities (for example recycling facilities) to implement processes indicated in the Project's technical studies. Therefore, the *Moderately likely (ML),* amalgamated ranking is given since, although there are moderate risks, there are also expectations that at least some of the outcomes and results will be sustained in time financially.

Socio-economic risks to sustainability: When analysing socio economic risks to sustainability, an examination is made of the potential social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes. The level of stakeholder ownership is strong and the accomplishments of the Dniester Project are two indicators that the socio – economic risks are not high. Furthermore, the integrated approach and the regulation of crucial issues for both countries, as well as the stated explicit aim of both Moldova and Ukraine to further integration with the European Union with implementation and adoption of EU directives as vehicles for this, are positive signs that there is constructive social and political acceptance of the Project and that sustainability is likely if looking at these factors. The only risk perceived in this area of analysis is political risks as well as political instability in one or both of the countries that could shift socio-economic support for project results. Therefore, the ranking for socio – economic sustainability is *Likely (L).*

Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability: At the time of the final evaluation there is a good expectation that institutional framework and governance gains derived from the Project can be sustained, with only some discernible risks. This not only due to the institutional strengthening that has taken place but also due to the generation of tools that potentially support integrated water resource management in the Dniester Basin in accordance with the Dniester Treaty. Therefore, the ranking for institutional/governance sustainability is *Likely (L).*

Environmental risks to sustainability: Environmental risks to sustainability are not identified, besides the externalities outside of the horizon of the Project that could possibly impair gains, such as climate change for example. Given that the Project promotes an integrated transboundary water management approach, there are no other environmental risks per se that can jeopardize sustaining results. Therefore, the ranking for environmental sustainability is *Likely (L)* since there are little risks to sustainability in this regard.

Taking a composite view of the rankings for financial, socio – economic, institutional as well as environmental sustainability probabilities, the overall likelihood of sustainability is ranked as Moderately *L (Moderately Likely).*

Countries' ownership has been a crucial factor for the achievements of the Project. Both countries (Moldova and Ukraine) have continuously expressed in a number of ways –formally and informally-- their full ownership of the Project notwithstanding the number of political, governmental and other similar changes that have occurred in both countries. Ownership has been manifested from planning to closing to follow – up activities. Ownership is highlighted by the countries indicating that this is directly linked to the Project aiding in their aims to implement the Treaty on Cooperation in the Field of Protection and Sustainable Development of the Dniester River Basin, support for the Dniester River Commission, and to fulfil each individual country's Association Agreements with the EU within the framework of the European Water Framework Directive.

Another indicator of this high degree of ownership is both countries' ongoing and continuous support of a new project in preparation at the time of this evaluation. This national – level support of both countries is given in order to continue working with OSCE and with UNDP/GEF support for advancing transboundary co-operation and integrated water resources management, mainly through the implementation of the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) developed by the project currently being evaluated.

GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Gender equality matters are imbedded within Project design (as seen in the design section). These were, furthermore, articulated throughout implementation in the different products and processes the Project produced.

The Project developed a *Gender Survey and Gender Mainstreaming Strategy*. This is a best practice not only due the fact that this survey and strategy were developed per se, but that this was carried out early on in implementation (beginning with inception) in order to pose opportunities for the Project to incorporate the findings of this strategy into the processes and products that were generated throughout operation.

The *Gender Survey and Gender Mainstreaming Strategy* places an emphasis on key concepts that accompany gender mainstreaming and water resource management such as:

- ensuring women and men have equal representation in decision-making with regards to the use of water resources and sanitation at all levels;
- ensuring that women and men have equal representation in decision-making with regards to policy and policy instruments aiming at improving water management at all levels; and
- ensuring that all policies and policy measures take into consideration the gender impact of water scarcity and pollution.

Following these principles, the *Gender Survey and Gender Mainstreaming Strategy* generated a series of recommendations. The Dniester Project made full use of these recommendations and –properly so—did not only carry-out gender-dedicated events (such as gender training for civil servants) but ensured that gender equality and women's empowerment issues were embedded throughout all activities and processes. For instance by inter crossing gender issues with communication and information products (i.e. by avoiding stereotypes and generating communication messages that were

attentive to the visualization of women's equality and roles) and by ascertaining balanced representation of women in different activities. The Project also gathered sex - disaggregated data.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Given that GEF -- financed projects are key elements in UN country programming, project objectives and outcomes should align with UN country programme strategies as well as to GEF-required global environmental benefits. The Dniester Project converged environment-related and other development programming, as well as aligning with UNDAF and other such programming relevant to UNDP (as seen in the section on relevance above) as cross cutting and mainstreaming issues and it conformed to agreed priorities in the UNDP country programme documents (for both, Moldova and Ukraine).[18] Specifically, additionally, the Project dealt with the following specific cross-cutting issues.

Poverty Alleviation/Development. There are several positive effects sought which are aligned with poverty alleviation and sustainable development cross – cutting issues. For instance, promotion of sustainable agricultural practices (training of farmers on conservation agriculture) as well as for providing opportunities for livelihood improvement. The Project addressed these issues. Improvement in policy frameworks for resource allocation and distribution is also an indication of the Project addressing development in a cross-cutting integrated manner.

Improved Governance. When dealing with mainstreaming and cross-cutting issues, evaluations also explore whether project outcomes are being mainstreamed into national policies. The Dniester River Basin Project clearly involved cross-cutting issues of improved governance, at the national, sub regional and regional levels, and further advanced transboundary cooperation in water resource management.

Capacity Development. Capacity development has been a central issue of the Dniester Project. In addition to individual capacity building, there has been a strong momentum for institutional capacity building. For instance, through the development of technical studies that strengthen policy decisions, and – owing to this- to strengthen institutions for collaboration and integrated water management.

South-South Cooperation. The Dniester Project most certainly addressed the cross cutting issue of south-south cooperation given that the very nature of the intervention deals with collaboration and cooperation between Moldova and Ukraine in order to jointly manage the river basin's water and associated resources.[19]

Knowledge Management. Knowledge management and accompanying information dissemination have been a key cross – cutting issue engendered by the Dniester Project. This has been harmonised with stakeholder participation as cross – cutting arrangements throughout implementation.

Climate Change Adaptation. Adaptation to climate change considerations were an underlying element of the Dniester River Basin Project, including issues of risk management and disaster prevention related to climate issues. Pressures to water resources in the basin and other such issues related to climate change were addressed, and this has been a special focus of the institutions engaged in the

[18] Gender is clearly a cross – cutting issue, but it is dealt with separately above following evaluation guidance.

[19] Although not a cross-cutting issue in UNDP/GEF guidance for evaluations, an additional factor of this project has been the fostering of triangular cooperation between the two countries and European governments/institutions.

Project. There have been a number of products and activities dealing with adaptation, such as development of adaptation project proposals, scenarios and models for water demand in a climate change context, etc. This focus notwithstanding, several stakeholders have indicated that more attention needs to be paid to this issue in the Dniester Basin due to its growing impact on water resources and on development associated with these issues vis-à-vis climate change.

GEF ADDITIONALITY

The Project's outcomes (results, effects, impact) are closely related to incremental reasoning for all components, and basing the GEF-funded intervention as a catalyst for incremental benefits of GEF support. Specifically, if analysing via a scenario without GEF support, it is understood that Moldova and Ukraine would have a lower capacity to cooperate cross boundary for the integrated joint management of the Dniester River Basin and its resources. GEF additionality has helped –as planned—in the development of knowledge (TDAs for instance) that can lead to different tools for transboundary governance.

Following definitions in GEF guidelines[20], the Dniester Project falls under all six areas of GEF additionality:

- Specific Environmental Additionality
- Legal/Regulatory Additionality
- Institutional Additionality/Governance additionality
- Financial Additionality
- Socio-Economic Additionality
- Innovation Additionality.

CATALYTIC ROLE / REPLICATION EFFECT

The potential catalytic and replication effect of the Project was established early on in project design. Explicitly, project planning documents point out that the project has a replicability approach. It is of interest to note that –even at design—there is an aim to potentially catalyse and/or replicate achievements not only within both countries but also in other regional settings (EU, CIS, Eastern Europe) but also in global contexts. Another matter that signals a strong catalytic and replication effect is the expressed aspiration by all sorts of stakeholders (that is, from government, private sector as well as of national experts) to continue to work with international and national institutions in the specific and broader issues that the Dniester Project has undertaken. An indicator of this is both governments' support and driving of the follow – up project that is in GEF's pipeline at the time of this terminal evaluation.

The replication/ catalytic role of the Project is found in several different features thus far, such as:

[20] As stated in '*An Evaluative Approach to Assessing GEF's Additionality*', https://www.thegef.org/council-meeting-documents/evaluative-approach-assessing-gef-s-additionality

- *Innovation / Production of public good*. The Project has introduced new tools to deal with transboundary management practices, such as the Strategic Action Programme which has a strong base on the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis.
- *Demonstration*. Demonstration in the case of the Dniester Project is strongly based on knowledge transfer. Demonstration/pilot activities were identified early on in project planning, in particular for ecosystem restoration, improving the quality of flood protection through information management and fisheries conservation activities. When these demonstrational activities, in turn, were carried out they have nourished other tools that were supported by the Project (such as providing guidelines for identifying actions to manage SAP). They have also provided inputs for knowledge transfer. As seen in the section on communications above, there has been a high degree of dissemination of lessons through project result documents, transparent information exchange, fostering of forums (webpages, events, etc.) for public as well as institutional information exchanges including via the demonstration/pilot activities results.
- *Replication.* The potential for replication is very high, within both countries, regionally as well as globally, mainly based on the experience, information and knowledge tools generated through the Project. Furthermore, this was even acknowledged from design onward, and specifically planned for, through Component 3 where it indicates that the Dniester Project "*in partnership with GEF IW:LEARN will also facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices with other cross-border commissions and stakeholders*". The potential from replication has also been found quite clearly in the relation of the Project with peer interventions, particularly of GEF – supported similar international waters projects in the Eastern European region, such as the Danube, Kura-Aras and Tisza projects. There have been linkages and cross-exchange of information through partners of this project with other regions or sub regions also in an attempt to foster connections and replication.

PROGRESS TO IMPACT

There has been clear progress towards potential long – term impact attributable to the Project. The progress to impact would be associated to clear contributions to changes in policy/legal/regulatory frameworks through the adoption of the SAP which the Project has fostered and by supporting the implementation of other key regional and international policy of which both countries are a party to. For instance, given that both states are party to the UNECE Water Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and to the International Lakes and the EU European Water Framework Directive in addition to the Treaty on Cooperation in the Field of Protection and Sustainable Development of the Dniester River Basin. Progress to impact furthermore will not only be at the regulatory framework and policy level for these (and other) transboundary and regional agreements, but also due to observed changes in capacities (awareness building, knowledge management, monitoring systems, and potentially infrastructure to improve water management). Furthermore, progress to impact can also be determined by observed change regarding improved governance architecture through access to and use of information in particular regarding trust-building and conflict resolution processes.

5. MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS

MAIN FINDINGS

- The Project was well designed in terms of outputs, components, intermediate processes and products attending to regional and local specificities.

- Although complex and multi – layered institutionally, management, and implementation architecture and oversight was effective and efficient given that the institutions (or sectors within each institution) involved have worked in tandem offering their individual value – added to the overall project management and implementation.

- The Project faced some management challenges regarding financial flow as well as in staffing, although without impacting the overall project implementation.

- The ownership of the Project was also a factor that fostered achievement of results and will be a key factor for implementation of outcomes and products as well as for overall sustainability in the near future.

- Some of the main reasons for project success included its relevance regarding priorities of both countries, not only in the transboundary management of the Dniester River Basin, but also in ensuring Moldova and Ukraine's fulfilment of each individual country's Association Agreements with the EU within the framework of the European Water Framework Directive.

- The Project had to withstand a number of issues that caused postponements of some activities and of some products. These were mainly external issues such as high political rotations in both countries and, evidently, the COVID-19 pandemic. The Project, nonetheless, managed to adapt and operate though these external issues successfully.

- Project Coordination Unit was very proactive, linking very well internally with all partners including the national – level partners, as well as with other institutions. PCU had an excellent working relationship, outreach and approach with national level partners. National partners indicated that the PCU was attuned to the countries' needs. Also, the PCU integrated the areas of expertise internally and avoided having them work in isolation.

- The extent that the expected outcomes and objectives were achieved has been met in some components while in others they have been overly achieved.

- Although no institutional, socio-political, nor environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results are foreseen, and the likelihood of sustainability in the near future is quite high, financial risks – in particular financial risks of public investments for infrastructure as well as national funds from both countries to run the Dniester Commission are uncertain at some levels and by some key stakeholders due to the economic situations in both countries.

- While the Project was well appreciated regarding its technical inputs, there could be an expansion in scope and in technical extent, with some aspects that could be reinforced in the future (innovative technical issues, etc.).

- Project had a very strong and applied information, dissemination and communication strategy which was employed throughout the implementation process. This not only helped in communication and transparency vis-à-vis the immediate stakeholders (national and local level governments, civil society and the private sector in both countries) but also helped in dissemination of information for peers in different basins in the region.

- The linking at implementation of the different strategies (gender, communication, stakeholder participation) aided in creating and connecting the different parts of the Project, avoiding internal operation in silos.

CONCLUSIONS

The *Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Dniester River Basin* Project has met with its objective of supporting integrated water resources management in the Dniester River Basin. For this, while implemented by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in close co-operation with UNDP and UNECE, it has attended both the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in generating capacity, knowledge and policy instruments for transboundary cooperative management of the Basin and its associated resources.

There have been several factors for the generation of outputs and products as expected out of this project. Among them have been the appropriate design and a very proactive, open and positive project management modality. The institutionality and associated governance of the Project was complex and multi layered. Nevertheless, through open communications and based on previous work of the different institutions in the region as well as in the Basin, implementing partners worked well together in an effective and efficient manner. All of the above is linked to several strategies that the Project applied jointly (such as communication, gender and participation strategies as well as conflict resolution plans). Furthermore, the high technical quality of the products generated have also aided in engendering capacity and trust in the Project.

Another factor for achievement rests within the high relevance that the management of Dniester River Basin has for both countries, not only regarding national priorities but even regional priorities and aspirations of the Republic of Moldova and of Ukraine. The ownership of the countries regarding the Project achievements and future sustainability of these remains not only on national and bi – national issues, but also in inserting both countries further into regional agreements and accords.

But perhaps even as important as achieving products, or perhaps more important at some levels, have been the expected and also the unplanned effects that the Project has had and will, seemingly, have in the near future. Both countries have signed a regional agreement which will open the way for the implementation of the Strategic Action Programme developed within the framework of the Dniester Project, which is a very clear signal of effect. Other achievements that the Project has had have been the instilling of true basin-level approach for river management and capacity building at very diverse levels. Lastly an effect has been the activation and bolstering of a functioning basin – level commission and through engendering support for collaboration and cooperation between the two countries.

As the Project is about to end, its achievements and learning should be highlighted in order to evolve towards the application of instruments that can equitably aid in managing the Dniester River Basin within a framework of cooperation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are provided for two time frames, for the implementation closure as well as for future programming. Recommendations either recommend future actions to take and decisions to make in order to channel corrections ***or*** to reinforce the positive aspects the Project has had, that could also act as recommendations for other and future programming in international water projects specifically.

Recommendations for the Dniester Project for closure:

1. PCU and partners should concentrate in helping both countries follow through with all phases necessary in order to transition to the full implementation of the endorsed SAP's strategic directions.

2. Efforts should be made to produce whatever documents, products, knowledge management instruments, information packets, monitoring tools, etc., remain in order to finalize those, give the Project the full visibility it merits as well as to transition to new projects/activities with these products as institutional history back up.

Recommendations for future programming:

3. It is recommended a new project for implementing the developed SAP be approved in order to facilitate implementation of this instrument by advancing integrated water resource management in the Dniester River basin. Future programming related to the Dniester River Basin should closely follow up on the results and outcomes of the Project. In particular by helping create and/or strengthen the conditions for implementing transboundary management tools arrived at in the present project as well as for monitoring water management issues.

4. Future projects should also be attuned to countries' changing needs, for instance incorporating issues and subjects that the riparian countries' indicate as crucial for transboundary water management at a certain point in time (for instance, climate change adaptation as it affects floods and draughts, regulating and monitoring productive activities –industry, agriculture, energy-related--, etc.). Programming needs to incorporate flexibility to some extent in order to integrate new issues or new expertise that is deemed necessary and identified as such during the implementation process.

5. When there is high turnover of national level staff and / or of policy makers, a project should make every effort to engage constantly with new personnel or policy makers in order to initiate their engagement and transfer knowledge, which can also be a way in which ownership of new stakeholders is fostered.

6. Future programming should fully acknowledge and incorporate the idea that these projects are not exclusively technical nor exclusively policy oriented, that they are a proper combination of both areas, that these areas should be mutually supportive, and --as such- should integrate cooperation factors with technical factors.

7. Pilot / demonstration activities should reflect the proper level of illustrative factors for implementation. Increasing the number of pilots as necessary might prove helpful to generate

demonstration factors and / or to incorporate new innovative issues to transboundary basin – level water management. The pilot / demonstrational activities should be planned and carried-out maintaining equity between the countries involved.

8. Projects should stress public awareness and involvement in a project of different types of stakeholders in order to strengthen their capacity. Future programming should emphasise activities that support the value of integration of different actors to engender participation, transparency, and cooperation.

9. Foster informal exchanges and cooperation between the different stakeholders. Informal ways to engender cooperation between the parties should not be underestimated. Exchanges and cooperation are not exclusively created by formal settings, and activities (such as study tours) can not only provide technical knowledge but can also stimulate institutional interactions and foster cooperation.

10. Capacity generation should not only be carried-out by formal training/capacity building processes, but also be done through informal interaction with and exposure to other experiences in transboundary water management. Capacity generation and capacity upgrading (individual as well as institutional) are key factors for sustaining results and can be accomplished in formal and informal settings. Capacity building and training should also incorporate actors that although important for transboundary river management are not typically included in these activities, such as private and public companies.

11. At some level it would be helpful to have a mechanism that exchanges information between and among different projects in the countries involved that could either wholly or tangentially relate to the same issues as does a transboundary water management project. For instance information exchange of urban development projects, agricultural, hydropower interventions, etc., that operate within a basin. This would strengthen the integrated approach and determine that these projects are mutually supportive vis-à-vis transboundary water management and take on a stronger focus on broad-range transboundary issues. Projects dealing in similar subject areas (water management, basin issues, etc.) that are supported by the same agencies/donors should link in order for them to be mutually supportive. Furthermore, future programming should also link and engendered further inter – sectoral collaboration by being attentive to other policies and agreements that are germane to the international waters a project is working on.

12. Fully incorporate conflict resolution and conflict management mechanisms if it is perceived that transboundary water management is potentially conflictive. A project should fully incorporate --as soon as this is detected-- conflict resolution and conflict management expertise.

13. Financial provisions need to be reviewed and streamlined between the implementing and executing agencies in order to avoid delays and burdensome bureaucratic administrative processes and to guarantee the timely flow of funds for fluid continuous implementation. Streamlined administrative agreements regarding financial flow should be arranged between the parties before implementation begins, expectantly during project planning processes.

14. Time frame planned for implementation needs to commensurate with a project's scope. In particular for ambitious projects, the planned implementation time frame needs to be

commensurate with the scope of the processes and results intended to be achieved. Furthermore, an implementation inception phase should be incorporated as an execution stage and factored in for time needed for implementation. Given new guidance from GEF regarding limiting extension requests, it is decisive to have a duration scope set at planning that is realistic and commensurate to what a project is trying to achieve in order not to have a future project truncated.

15. When procurement process for staffing prove to be difficult to fulfil due to offer factors and is hindered by the lack of suitable personnel in a particular situation, then a fast track process needs to be implemented as to boost hiring within an adequate time scope so that implementation is not delayed due to staffing issues. Furthermore, introductory training sessions should be carried out for new staff.

LESSONS LEARNED/BEST PRACTICES

The *Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Dniester River Basin Project* has a number of lessons learned that can be taken from good practices the Project has attained. These are lessons that could be useful not only for the Implementing Agencies but also for national stakeholders as well as for other similar international water projects. Some of the most salient lessons based on the Project's best practices are as follows:

- Projects that are developed around strategic issues ensure political buy – in from the different countries involved.
- Constant working relationships, consultations (formal and informal) with beneficiaries, with networks of professionals, and with different stakeholders engenders good working relationships and fosters ownership.
- Having the institutional and project implementation stakeholders take a neutral stance is a positive standpoint since it ensures transparency, and continues to build confidence amongst relevant institutions and stakeholders.
- Gender strategies are effective if they are developed early on in an inception stage in order to guide gender mainstreaming throughout the implementation process.
- All types of strategies (gender, communication, conflict resolution) are more applicable and have more potential to be applied if a project incorporates relevant expertise in implementation and if they are mutually supportive.
- Capacity generation and capacity upgrading (individual as well as institutional) are key factors for sustaining results.
- The value of integration of different actors to engender participation, transparency, and cooperation should not be underestimated, since –as seen in the development of this project— these factors are significant for prompting ownership and fostering cooperation.
- Informal ways to prompt cooperation between parties should not be undervalued. Exchanges and cooperation is not exclusively created by formal settings, and activities (such as study tours) can not only provide technical knowledge but can also stimulate institutional interactions and foster cooperation.

- Acknowledging that transboundary water management can at times be conflictive, professional mediators and conflict resolution experts should be incorporated in projects where these conflicts are foreseen or might potentially arise.
- The wearing away of ownership due to high rotation of policy-makers, decision-makers and relevant staff in the countries involved in a project can be circumvented to some extent by constant engagement with relevant stakeholders.
- Openeness in communication and in constant information sharing from a project contributes greatly to fostering ownership, increase transparency, and for easing whatever divergences might be present between the different stakeholders and parties to a project.
- Increasing the number of pilots as necessary might prove helpful to generate demonstrational factors and / or to incorporate new innovative issues to transboundary basin – level water management.

6. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

EEPM

TERMS OF REFERENCE

SSA No. **075/2021**

Title Terminal evaluator for ExB Project 1101924

Suggested Expert Ms. Maria Onestini

Start of Assignment **03 March 2021**
End of Assignment **05 May 2021**

Location Homebased

Objective The expert is to conduct Terminal Evaluation of the GEF project "Enabling transboundary co-operation and integrated water resources management in the Dniester River Basin" in line with the Guidance for Conducting Terminal Reviews of GEF Financed Projects.

Background

The GEF funded project "Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the Dniester River Basin", implemented by the OSCE in close co-operation with UNDP and UNECE is tasked with strengthening Moldovan-Ukrainian cooperation in the area of integrated water resources management in the Dniester basin. The project supports and promotes international dialogue with regard to both countries' commitments to the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive, which is part of the EU Association Agreements with Ukraine and Moldova, as well as with regard to the Moldovan-Ukrainian Dniester River basin Commission.

The project is being implemented in the two countries where the Dniester River basin is located, i.e. the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The project started in August 2017, was officially registered with the OSCE in October 2017, and will terminate in May 2021. Its implementing agency is UNDP, while the executive agency is the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); the UNECE is supporting the project implementation with the consultancy on a range of technical issues. The total project budget is 1,950,000 USD, with co-financing from the beneficiaries (ministries of the environment, OSCE, UNDP, UNECE, Swiss Development Cooperation, and Polish water authorities). The project beneficiaries are the ministries of the environment of the two riparian states, its stakeholders include the water authorities, hydropower sector, foreign affairs authorities, authorities of protected areas, fisheries agencies, local communities, scientists, NGOs, general public.

The **overall goal** of the GEF project "Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the Dniester River Basin" is "to strengthen sustainable development, through the update of the TDA, development and endorsement of the SAP and initiation of its implementation". The project consists of the following three components.

Component 1:

- development of the transboundary diagnostic analysis (TDA, including an inventory of tailing mines),
- study of an influence of the Dniester on the Black Sea,
- analysis of nitrate and phosphorus contamination,
- completion of water balance automated system,
- inventory of tailings in the Dniester basin,
- development of projects for adaptation to climate change in Odesa region of Ukraine.

Component 2:

- development of a joint (Moldova-Ukraine) action plan (SAP, = basin management plan),
- supporting work of the national basin councils and the bilateral (Moldova-Ukraine) Dniester River Basin Commission,
- work with hydropower.

Component 3:

- support to joint monitoring and data sharing,
- identification of flood risks,
- demonstration projects (restoration of small rivers),
- public awareness (the Dniester Day on May 27, art competition "Colours of the Dniester", joint expeditions, etc.).

In accordance with UNDP and GEF M&E policies and procedures, all full- and medium-sized UNDP-supported GEF-financed projects are required to undergo a Terminal Evaluation (TE) at the end of the project. This Terms of Reference (ToR) sets out the expectations for the TE of the medium-sized project titled "Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the Dniester River Basin" (PIMS 5269) implemented through the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The project started on the Project Document signature 10 August 2017, was registered in OSCE's system on 25 October 2017, and is in its last year of implementation.

This TE will be guided by the standards for commissioned evaluations as set out in Section IV of the OSCE Evaluation Framework Administrative Instruction No. 1/2013 and will also follow other applicable international standards. In this case, the TE will follow specific guidelines on the purpose, scope and methodology of terminal reviews, on main evaluation criteria, and the indicators/benchmarks against which the criteria will be assessed as set out in the UNDP Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects ((*http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/documents/GEF/TE_GuidanceforUNDP-supportedGEF-financedProjects.pdf*). This Guidance standardizes the approach to undertaking mid-term reviews of the GEF funded projects and is, therefore, essential to this assignment. Guidance and OSCE Administrative Instructions will be shared with the Contractor at the start of the assignment.

A quality control process will be put in place to ensure that a draft TE report will be reviewed for accuracy of findings and to confirm that recommendations are objective, relevant to the project being assessed and capable of implementation prior to the clearance of the report by the OSCE. Wherever applicable, the TE report will seek to indicate state staff members and entities responsible for implementing recommendations and respective timeframes. The current terminal evaluation is preceded by the mid-term review, carried out in 2019.

The **purpose** of the TE is to provide an impartial evaluation of the project in terms of its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, overall performance, management and achievements.

The **objectives** of the evaluation are to assess the achievement of projects' results, and to draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from these projects, and aid in the overall enhancement of GEF programming.

The TE will assess the extent to which planned project results have been achieved since the beginning of the projects in August 2017/ October 2017 till the end of the project in May 2021 (based on their Project Document and Project Results Framework, as well as considering the results of the MTE). Also, the TE will assess the monitoring and evaluation aspect of the project and its compliance with UNDP and GEF minimum standards, including SMART criteria for indicators.

The information, findings, lessons learned, and recommendations generated by the TE will be used by the OSCE and the implementing partners to inform prospects for eventual replication and sustainability of the intervention.

In line with the donor's requirement, an international consultant will be hired by the OSCE to assess the progress and performance of the GEF project "Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the Dniester River Basin" since the start of its implementation in August 2017 (officially registered with the OSCE in October 2017) as per the tasks described below. Kindly refer to Annexes for the TE approach and methodology, detailed scope of the TE and other information relevant for the assignment.

Tasks

Under the supervision of **Ms.Tamara Kutonova, National Project Officer,** the Expert will perform the following tasks:

1) To conduct a **desk review** of the project documents (i.e. PIF, Project Document, annual Project Implementation Reports (PIRs), Project Inception Report, finalized GEF focal area Tracking Tools, Project Steering Committee meetings' minutes, Mid-Term Review Report, project budget revisions, Financial and Administration guidelines used by the Project Team, project files, and any other materials that the evaluator considers useful for this evidence-based assessment) provided by the OSCE Project Team and the implementing agency (UNDP). Data analysis should be conducted in a systematic manner to ensure that all findings, conclusions and recommendations are substantiated by evidence. Appropriate tools should be used to ensure proper analysis (e.g. data analysis matrix). Kindly refer to Annexes for more details.
2) To participate in an **TE inception meeting** with the PSC and the implementing agency to clarify the objectives, methods, deliverables, a timeline and a draft table of content of the TE. The proposed methodology may employ any relevant and appropriate quantitative, qualitative or combined methods to conduct the TE.
3) To conduct interviews with the following (will be clarified during the inception meeting):
    a. UNDP Senior Management,
    b. the Dniester River Basin Commission Co-Chairs and heads of its working groups from the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine,
    c. GEF Operational Focal Points in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine,
    d. Deputy heads of the national water authorities of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine,
    e. Project Manager, GEF Dniester Project regional project coordinator and a national project coordinator (OSCE),

f. relevant NGOs active in the Dniester river basin,
g. UNECE Regional Adviser on the Environment.

The evaluation questions will be discussed with the evaluator at the start of the assignment.

4) To draft the evaluation report according to the outline presented in Annex C.
5) To present the draft report to those interviewed, the OSCE and the UNDP, collect the feedback and integrate it to the final report.
6) To finalize the evaluation report and prepare an audit trail with details on comments received and incorporated, according to the outline presented in Annex H.

Expected Deliverables

1) A draft desk review and TE inception meeting report (incl. objectives, methods, deliverables, the timeline and the draft table of content of the Midterm Review) – 1 (one) week before the TE inception meeting, the final version of the document – 2 days after the inception meeting **– 15 days;**
2) Presentation of the Draft Evaluation Report (as per an outline provided in the Annex C) to the executing agency's project management (OSCE) and the implementation agency (UNDP), including RTA, up to 20 pp. of a main text – **12 days;**
3) Revised Final Report with recommendations and Audit trail (template in TOR Annex H) in which the TE details how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final TE report – **7 days.**

The final TE report shall be written in English and shall be presented in electronic form in MS Word format. It will be cleared by the OSCE as an executing agency. If applicable, the Project Coordination Unit (OSCE) may choose to arrange for a translation of the report into a language more widely shared by national stakeholders.

Total 34 days (2 months)
Proposed fee
EUR 19,000, based on an estimate of 2 months (34 working days) at **EUR 9,500 per month**.

Payment will be effected upon successful completion of all tasks.
Funding ExB project number 1101924 Task: EEA-Management UKR

ANNEX 2: EVALUATION QUESTION MATRIX (EVALUATION CRITERIA WITH KEY QUESTIONS, INDICATORS, SOURCES OF DATA, AND METHODOLOGY)

Evaluative Criteria Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Relevance: How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF focal area, and to the environment and development priorities at the local, regional and national levels?			
• Does the project relate to the GEF focal area and has it been designed to deliver global environmental benefits in line with relevant objectives?	• The project includes the relevant GEF outcomes, outputs and indicators • The project makes explicit links with global goals	• Project Document • GEF Focal Area Strategies • PIF	• Desk Review of Documents
• Is the project aligned to national development objectives, broadly, and to national energy transition priorities specifically?	• The project design includes explicit links (indicators, outputs, outcomes) to the development and environmental policies.	• Project Document • National development strategies, energy policies, Nationally Determined Contributions, etc. • PIF	• Desk Review of Documents
• Does the project have an explicit Theory of Change? • If so, is the project's Theory of Change relevant to addressing the development challenge(s) identified?	• The Theory of Change clearly indicates how project interventions and projected results will contribute to the reduction of the major barriers • The Theory of Change clearly identifies beneficiary groups and defines how their capabilities will be enhanced by the project.	• Project Document • PIF	• Desk Review of Documents
• Does the project directly and adequately address the needs of beneficiaries? • Is the project relevant with the countries priorities? • Does it provide the most effective route towards expected/intended results?	• The project design includes explicit links to addressing the needs of beneficiary country.	• Project Document • PIF	• Desk Review of Documents
• Is the project's results framework relevant to the development challenges and are results at the appropriate level?	• The project results framework adequately measures impact • The project indicators are SMART • Indicator baselines are clearly defined and populated, and milestones and targets are • The results framework is comprehensive and demonstrates systematic links to the theory of change • The result framework is adequately ambitious vis-à-vis resources, timeliness, and feasibility	• Project Document • PIF	• Desk Review of Documents • Stakeholder Interviews
• Is the project appropriately aligned with relevant OSCE and relevant UN system priorities including thematic objectives?	• The project's results framework includes relevant thematic outcomes and indicators from the OSCE, UNECE, UNDP Strategic Plan, UNDAF, UNDP CPD and other relevant corporate objectives	• Project Document • UNDP CPD, UNDAF, SP	• Desk Review of Documents
• Have the relevant stakeholders been adequately identified and have their views, needs and rights been considered during design and implementation?	• The stakeholder mapping and associated engagement plan includes all relevant stakeholders and appropriate modalities for engagement.	• Stakeholder mapping/engagement plan and reporting • Quarterly Reports	• Desk Review of Documents • Stakeholder Interviews

	• Planning and implementation have been participatory and inclusive	• Annual Reports (PIR) • Stakeholder Consultation Reports	
• Have the interventions of the project been adequately considered in the context of other development activities being undertaken in the same or related thematic area?	• A Partnership framework has been developed that incorporates parallel initiatives, key partners and identifies complementarities	• Project Document • Quarterly Reports • Annual Reports (PIR) • Stakeholder mapping/engagement plan and reporting	• Desk Review of Documents • Stakeholder Interviews
• Have relevant lessons learned from previous projects informed the design, implementation, risk management and monitoring of the project?	• Lessons learned are explicitly identified and integrated into all aspects of the Project Document	• Project Document • PIF • Midterm review	• Desk Review of Documents
• Did the project design adequately identify, assess and design appropriate mitigation actions for the potential social and environmental risks posed by its interventions? Risk management?	• Risk and risk management identification.	• Project Document	• Desk Review of Documents
Effectiveness: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?			
• Has the project achieved its output and outcome level objectives?	• The project has met or exceeded the output and outcome indicator end-of-project targets	• Quarterly Reports • Annual Reports (PIR) • Monitoring Reports • Beneficiary testimony • Interviews • Midterm review • End of project report	• Desk Review of Documents • Interviews with project staff, (current and former), stakeholders and beneficiaries
• Were lessons learned captured and integrated into project planning and decision-making? • Were there opportunities to adapt implementation processes to conditions presented during project execution?	• Lessons learned have been captured periodically and/or at project end	• Steering Committee Meeting Minutes • Quarterly Reports • Annual Reports (PIR) • Midterm review	• Desk Review of Documents • Interviews with project staff, stakeholders and beneficiaries
• Were there issues with communication which affected effectiveness?	• Communication between and among stakeholders.	• Project planning documents.	• Document review • Interviews with stakeholders, particularly project staff
• How well were risks assumptions and impact drivers being managed?	• A clearly defined risk identification, categorization and mitigation strategy.	• M&E Reports • Midterm review	• Desk Review of Documents • Interviews with project staff, stakeholders and beneficiaries
• Were relevant counterparts from governments and civil society involved in project implementation, including as part of the project steering committee?	• The steering committee participation included representatives from key institutions in governments	• Steering Committee Meeting Minutes	• Interviews with project staff, stakeholders

			and beneficiaries
• Has the project contributed directly to any changes in legislation or policy in line with the project's objectives?	• Draft legislation has been developed or enacted.	• Draft legislation • Policy Documents • Action/Implementation Plans • End of project report	• Desk Review of Documents
• Has the project carefully considered the thematic issues related to human right/gender?	• The project results framework has incorporated gender equality considerations, as relevant. • The project prioritized the most vulnerable as key beneficiaries	• Gender Mainstreaming Plan • Project Document • Stakeholder analysis and engagement plan	• Desk Review of Documents
• Efficiency: Was the project implemented efficiently, in-line with international and national norms and standards?			
• Did the project adjust dynamically to reflect changing national priorities/external evaluations during implementation to ensure it remained relevant?	• The project demonstrated adaptive management and changes were integrated into project planning and implementation through adjustments to annual work plans, budgets and activities • Changes to AWP/Budget were made based on mid-term or other external evaluation • Any changes to the project's planned activities were approved by the Steering Committee • Any substantive changes (outcome-level changes) approved by the Steering Committee and donor, as required • Any changes based on midterm review	• Annual Work Plans • Steering Committee Meeting Reports • Quarterly Reports • Annual Reports (PIR) • Stakeholder/beneficiary testimony • Revised Project Results Framework • Midterm review	• Desk Review of Documents • Interviews with project staff, stakeholders and beneficiaries
• To what extent were the Project results delivered with the greatest value for money?	• Value for money analyses, requests for information, market surveys and other market intelligence were undertaken for key procurements. • Procurement is done on a competitive basis, where relevant.	• Procurement Evaluation Documents	• Desk Review of Documents • Interviews with project staff and government stakeholders
• Was co-financing adequately estimated during project design (sources, type, value, relevance), tracked during implementation and what were the reasons for any differences between expected and realised co-financing?	• Co-financing was realized in keeping with original estimates • Co-financing was tracked continuously throughout the project lifecycle and deviations identified and alternative sources identified • Co-financiers were actively engaged throughout project implementation	• Annual Work Plans • Steering Committee Meeting Reports • Quarterly Reports • Annual Reports (PIR)	• Desk Review of Documents • Interviews with project staff, stakeholders and beneficiaries
• Was the level of implementation support provided by UNDP and OSCE, UNECE adequate and in keeping with the implementation modality and any related agreements?	• Technical support to the Executing Agency and project team were timely and of acceptable quality. • Management inputs and processes, including budgeting and procurement, were adequate	• UNDP/OSCE/UNECE Project support documents (emails, Procurement/ recrutement documents) • Quarterly Reports • Annual Reports (PIR)	• Desk Review of Documents • Interviews with project staff, UNDP personnel

• Has the M&E plan been well-formulated, and has it served as an effective tool to support project implementation? Financial oversight? • Has the midterm review impelled adaptive change to improve implementation?	• The M&E plan has an adequate budget and was adequately funded • The logical framework was used during implementation as a management and M&E tool • There was compliance with the financial and narrative reporting requirements (timeliness and quality) • Monitoring and reporting has been at both the activity and results levels	• Project Document • M&E Plan • AWPs • Periodic Narrative Reports • Interview reports • Midterm review	• Desk Review of Documents • Interviews with project staff and governmental stakeholders
• Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: How did the project contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment?			
• Did the project analyse gender issues, gender differential matters? • Did the project include gender equality matters in its design/implementation?	• Existence and use of a monitoring and reporting system/activities with gender differentiated data	• Project Reports	• Document analysis
• Did the project have a gender strategy? • Did the project work on issues related to women's empowerment?	• Gender Survey and Gender Mainstreaming Strategy	• Interview data	• Interviews
• Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, social-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?			
• Are there financial risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outcomes?	• The exit strategy includes explicit interventions to ensure financial sustainability of relevant activities	• Project Exit Strategy • Risk Log	• Desk Review of Documents
• Do the legal frameworks, policies, and governance structures and processes within which the project operates pose risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project benefits?	• The exit strategy identifies relevant socio-political risks and includes explicit interventions to mitigate same	• Project Exit Strategy • Risk Log	• Desk Review of Documents
• Have key stakeholders identified their interest in project benefits beyond project-end and accepted responsibility for ensuring that project benefits continue to flow?	• Key stakeholders are assigned specific, agreed roles and responsibilities outlined in the exit strategy • MOU(s) exist for on-going monitoring, maintenance and oversight of phased down or phased over activities	• Project Exit Strategy • Risk Log • MOU(s)	• Desk Review of Documents
• Are there ongoing activities that may pose an environmental threat to the sustainability of project outcomes?	• The exit strategy identifies relevant environmental risks and includes explicit interventions to mitigate same	• Project Exit Strategy • Risk Log	• Desk Review of Documents
Impact: Are there indications that the project has contributed to, or enabled progress toward, reduced environmental stress and/or improved ecological status? Effects: Has the project had any effects, in particular sustainable effects?			
• Are there verifiable improvements in ecological status, or reductions in ecological stress, that can be linked directly to project interventions?	• The project has contributed directly to improved ecological conditions.	• Quarterly Reports • Annual Reports (PIR) • Monitoring Reports • Pilot Data Analysis/Reports • Technical reports	• Desk Review of Documents • Interviews

• Has the project had sustainable effects? For instance, has the project contributed directly to any changes in norms, policies or aligned with project's objectives?	• Draft legislation • Approved legislation • Policy Documents	• Action/Implementation Plans • Implementation of previous norms/agreements, etc.	• Desk Review of Documents • Stakeholder interviews (governments)

ANNEX 3: LIST OF CONSULTED STAKEHOLDERS

Dniester Commission - Moldova Representative	Liudmila David
Dniester Commission - Moldova Representative	Radu Cazacu
Dniester Commission - Ukraine Representative	Petro Kropotov
Dniester Commission - Ukraine Representative	Mikhaylo Khorev
Dniester Commission - Ukraine Representative	Volodymyr Bilokon
Dniester Commission - Ukraine Representative	Roman Mikhaylyuk
Institute of Geography and Ecology of the Republic of Moldova	Ana Jeleapov
OSCE	Dana Bogdan
OSCE	Karin Roelke
OSCE	Emina Sibic
PMC	Tamara Kutonova
PMC	Anna Zhovtenko
State Water Agency of Moldova	Mariana Codreanu
The Association of NGOs Dniester River Keepers Eco-TIRAS	Ilya Trombitskiy
UkrHydroEnergo	Oksana Gulyaveva
Ukrnafta	Mavrikiy Kalugin
UNDP	Vladimir Mamaev
UNECE Water Convention	Sarangoo Radnaaragchaa

ANNEX 4: LIST OF CONSULTED DOCUMENTS AND ONLINE RESOURCES

- Analysis Of The Communication Strategy And Information Promotion Of The Project "Enabling Transboundary Cooperation And Integrated Water Resources Management In The Dniester River Basin"
- Analysis of The Effects of The Dniester Reservoirs on the State of The Dniester River.
- Analysis Of The Effects Of The Dniester Reservoirs On The State Of The Dniester River. Report of the Moldovan-Ukrainian expert group. Thematic supplement to the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis of the Dniester River Basin. Vienna • Geneva • Kyiv • Chisinau. 2019
- Digests. GEF / UNDP / OSCE / UNECE Dniester Project Overview November 2019 - March 2020 And Plans For April - June 2020.
- Digests. Highlights Of The GEF / UNDP / OSCE Dniester Project. (Results In July-September 2018 And Plans For October-November 2018) Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA)
- Digests. Review Of The Dniester Project GEF/UNDP/OSCE/UNECE In August-October And Plans For November-January 2019.
- Final Stakeholders Conference. Online, 22 April 2021. Report
- First meeting of the Project Steering Committee in Kyiv, 18 December 2017
- GEF project “Promotion of cross-border cooperation and integrated water resources management in the Dniester river basin " Results for the period November 2017 - May 2021
- Gender Survey and Gender Mainstreaming Strategy
- https://dniester-commission.com/en/
- https://dniester-commission.com/en/news/a-joint-statement-on-the-strategic-action-programme-for-the-dniester-river-basin-for-2021-2035-signed/
- https://dniester-commission.com/en/news/amateur-fishing-pressure-on-fish-stocks-of-the-lower-dniester/
- https://dniester-commission.com/en/news/global-environmental-facility-supported-implementation-of-the-first-exemplary-project-on-small-river-restoration-in-ukraine/
- https://dniester-commission.com/en/news/large-scale-study-on-the-state-of-tailings-storage-facilities-in-the-dniester-basin/
- https://dniester-commission.com/proekt-gef/
- Implementation Plan for the Strategic Framework for Adaptation Climate Change in the Dniester River Basin. 2017
- Inception Workshop - First project kick-off workshop in Kyiv, 18 December 2017
- Joint Statement On Strategic Action Plan For Dniester River Basin For 2021-2035
- Mid Term Review. Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the Dniester Basin. Final Report. 4 July 2019.
- Project Document
- Project Implementation Report (PIR). 2019.
- Project Implementation Report (PIR). 2020.
- Report on “Teleconference on recommendations by Mr Pedro Cunha Serra on draft operation rules for the Dniester reservoirs”, teleconference, 23 January, 2019
- Second meeting of the Project Steering Committee, 18 December 2018, Odesa. 18 December 2018
- Thematic Report on Hydro power impacts in the Dniester Basin. 2019
- Third Meeting of the Project Steering Committee (PSC). 15 April 2020. On-line meeting. Report.

ANNEX 5: RATING SCALES

Ratings for Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, Implementation/Oversight, Execution, Relevance	Sustainability ratings:
6 = Highly Satisfactory (HS): exceeds expectations and/or no shortcomings 5 = Satisfactory (S): meets expectations and/or no or minor shortcomings 4 = Moderately Satisfactory (MS): more or less meets expectations and/or some shortcomings 3 = Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): somewhat below expectations and/or significant shortcomings 2 = Unsatisfactory (U): substantially below expectations and/or major shortcomings 1 = Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): severe shortcomings Unable to Assess (U/A): available information does not allow an assessment	4 = Likely (L): negligible risks to sustainability 3 = Moderately Likely (ML): moderate risks to sustainability 2 = Moderately Unlikely (MU): significant risks to sustainability 1 = Unlikely (U): severe risks to sustainability Unable to Assess (U/A): Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability

ANNEX 6: CHART OF PROJECT OUTPUTS

* - start of procurement, x – meeting

	2020									2021				
	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	01	02	03	04	05
Component 1: Analysis of the water resources, related ecosystems and their use														
1.1.1 Data collection for TDA* – done														
1.2.1 Water balance - done														
1.3.1 Project proposals study of the projects for adaptation to CC														
Component 2: Development of the policy, legal and institutional set-up, mandate and authority of the Commission on the river basin to promote cooperation at the level														
2.1.1 Preparation and approval of the SAP									X ?					
2.2.1 Rules of procedure of the Commission - done														
2.3.1 Basin councils / committees - tbc														
2.4.1 Improvement/development of the nat. RBMP														
2.5.1 Bilateral working groups –tbc														
2.6.1 Stakeholder involvement mechanism - done														
2.7.1 Twinning with other basins - done														
2.8.1 Communication strategy of the project														
2.8.2 Summer school		*		X										
2.8.3 Kayak expedition - done														
2.8.4 Colours of the Dniester				*			X							
2.8.5 Info boards along the Dniester River														
2.8.6 Dniester Day		*		X										
2.8.7 Start-ups competition - tbc														
2.8.8 Gender equality														
2.9.1 Maintaining project website, its transfer to Dn. Commission														
2.9.2 GEF IW:Learn tracking – done														
2.9.3 Participation in conferences – done														

Component 3: Improved water and biodiversity monitoring (resources and their sustainable use) and information exchange in the Dniester River Basin														
3.1.1 Floods simulation - see 3.2.3														
3.1.2 Flash floods forecast – cancelled														
3.1.3 Inflow forecast														
3.2.1 Reservoirs modelling														
3.2.2 Flood risk MP														
3.2.3 Platform for Hydromet (website) - done														
3.2.4 Fundraise for stations - done														
3.3.1 Training of hydromet - tbc														
3.4.1 Demo projects														
3.5.1 Dniester conference						X								
3.5.2 Media engagement							X							
Project management														
Meetings of the Project Steering Committee									*			X ?		
Mid-term and terminal evaluations / project audit									*			X ?		
Coordination and management														

ANNEX 7: CONFIRMED SOURCES OF CO-FINANCING AT TE STAGE

Sources of Co-Financing	Name of Cofinancier	Type of Cofinancing	Investment Mobilized	Amount (US$)
GEF Agency	*UNDP*	*In-Kind*	*Recurrent expenditure***	300,000
Recipient Country Gov't	*Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of the Republic of Moldova*	*In-Kind*	*Recurrent expenditure***	1,000,000
Recipient Country Gov't	*Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine*	*In-Kind*	*Recurrent expenditure***	2,000,000
Other	*OSCE*	*In-Kind*	*Recurrent expenditure***	*1,515,000*
Other	*UNECE*	*In-Kind*	*Recurrent expenditure***	*1,100,000*
Other	*SDC*	*Grant*	*Investment mobilized**	5,000,000
Other	*SDC*	*Grant*	*Investment mobilized**	8,500,000
Total Co-Financing				19,415,000

**Investment Mobilized* means Co-Financing that excludes recurrent expenditures (Different governments, companies and organizations may use different terms to refer to "recurrent expenditures", such as "current expenditures" or "operational/ operating expenditures".)[21]

***Recurrent expenditures* can generally be understood as routine budgetary expenditures that fund the year-to-year core operations of the entity (they are often referred to as 'running costs' - they do not result in the creation or acquisition of fixed assets). They would include wages, salaries and supplements for core staff; purchases of goods and services required for core operations; and/or depreciation expenses. Some of the typical government co-financing we have previously included (such as routine budgetary expenses for Ministry of Environment operations) will no longer meet this new definition of investment mobilized for these specific countries.[22][23]*

[21] GEF Guidelines on Co-financing and Policy on Co-financing https://www.thegef.org/documents/co-financing

[22] ibid

[23] Specific, Measurable, Attributable, Relevant, Time-bound/Timely/Trackable/Targeted

ANNEX 8: EVALUATION CONSULTANT AGREEMENT FORM

Evaluators:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study imitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form[24]

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

Name of Consultant: Maria ONESTINI

I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

Signed at *Buenos Aires, Argentina* on *March 3 2021*

Signature: 

[24] www.unevaluation.org/unegcodeofconduct