

Mid-Term Evaluation
NGO/CSO Capacity Support Project
(NCCSP Project)
UNDP Afghanistan

Elinor Bajraktari & Sabahuddin Sabah

October 2023

The authors of the report thanks all the stakeholders who participated in and contributed to this evaluation.

PROJECT INFORMATION		
Project title	NGO & CSO Capacity Support Project (NCCSP)	
Atlas and Quantum IDs	00145556	
Transitional Country Programme Results Framework (CPRF) Outcome and Output	Outcome 3: Economic growth is accelerated to reduce vulnerabilities and poverty, strengthen the resilience of the licit economy, and reduce the illicit economy in its multiple dimensions Output 6: Improved economic livelihoods, especially for vulnerable populations and women	
Country	Afghanistan	
Region	Asia and Pacific	
Date project document signed	28 July 2022	
Project dates	Start date	Planned end date
	1 July 2022	31 June 2024 (with donor-approved extension until 24 October 2024)
Project budget	US\$ 20,000,000	
Project expenditure at the time of evaluation	US\$ 1,754,637 (9%)	
Funding source	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, World Bank	
Implementing party	UNDP Afghanistan	

EVALUATION INFORMATION		
Evaluation type (project/ outcome/thematic/country programme, etc.)	Project Evaluation	
Final/midterm review/ other	Mid-Term	
Period under evaluation	Start	End
	1 July 2022	30 September 2022
Evaluators	Elinor Bajraktari & Sabahuddin Sabah	
Evaluation dates	Start	Completion
	15 August 2023	15 October 2023

Executive Summary

This report presents the main findings of the mid-term evaluation of the the project “*NGO & CSO Capacity Support Project*” (also referred to as the *NCCSP project*), financed by the World Bank and implemented by UNDP. The evaluation assessed the project’s achievements in terms of its relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency, sustainability, and other cross-cutting issues, and provides recommendations for the project team and UNDP for the further implementation of this project and the design of similar initiatives in the future. The evaluation methodology was based on mixed methods and involved the use of commonly applied evaluation tools such as documentary review, interviews, information triangulation, analysis and synthesis. Field work and observation was conducted by a national consultant in September 2023. The evaluation team also conducted interviews with project beneficiaries, UNDP, project team and project contractors, other UN agencies, World Bank, and other partners. An online survey was organized with more than 400 beneficiary NGOs and CSOs, which generated about 250 responses. The evaluation generated a wealth of findings and several recommendations which are outlines in the rest of this section.

Relevance

The evaluation found the NCCSP project to be highly relevant to the needs of civil society¹ in Afghanistan. It strengthens the ability of Afghan civil society to deliver essential services and foster accountability and trust. Interviews with project stakeholders and a survey of participating NGOs/CSOs revealed the project responds in an adequate manner to the urgent needs of Afghan civil society for capacity building, funding, and networking. The project has targeted core service areas like health and education, thus aligning with the pressing needs of vulnerable groups. Th project’s training programme has had nationwide reach and was based on a comprehensive needs assessment. Civil society respondents to the evaluation survey identified benefits like skill development, networking, and credibility from partnering with UNDP. The project is aligned with the UNDP’s Transitional Country Programme Results Framework, the United Nations Transitional Engagement Framework for 2022, and the UN Strategic Framework for Afghanistan for 2023–2025, specifically targeting outcomes and objectives related to social equity, gender equality, accountable governance, and capacity development for better service delivery. It also directly contributes to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, predominantly SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), through its focus on capacity building and coordination for the Afghan civil society. Suggestions from beneficiaries for further improvement included a need for more sustained and longer-term capacity-building support to address the dynamic needs in Afghanistan's evolving context; more practical, hands-on training by trainers with sectoral

¹ This report uses the same definition of CSOs as the Project Document - CSOs consist of many and diverse expressions of civil society that operate in the public sphere and interact with the state and market. They include farmers organizations, trade unions, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), professional guilds, think-tanks, informal networks, apex organizations or CSO platforms, faith-based associations, indigenous associations, student and youth organizations, academic bodies and business chambers, youth and women’s groups, community-based organizations, public and mutual benefit entities and more.

experience over theoretical instruction; more advanced, specialized training modules to cater to the varied capacities and needs of experienced organizations; and, stronger local engagement in the project's design and planning to ensure alignment with community needs and foster local ownership.

Effectiveness

The NCCSP project has delivered a comprehensive training program that addressed a range of capacity-building topics for over 400 NGOs and CSOs, through a process that included an initial mapping, a needs assessment identifying focus areas, and subsequent training module development. The training has addressed key needs of civil society in areas such as reporting, fundraising, and project planning, as indicated by the generally positive feedback from participating organizations. While the training has led to tangible organizational improvements, areas for refinement include addressing the licensing constraints that limit participation, diversifying training providers to broaden perspectives, extending the duration of training sessions, enhancing the quality of translation, and implementing a more rigorous system for monitoring and assessing the long-term impact of the training programs on NGOs and CSOs. The project's second component focused on the grant initiatives has experienced significant delay. While selection criteria for grants are finalized, no grants have been disbursed yet. This component faces significant risks such as selection bias, duplication of efforts with other agencies, and challenges in ensuring accountability and compliance, especially within Afghanistan's volatile context. Consequently, this component requires special attention by the project team and board – especially, meticulous planning, stakeholder coordination, and potentially third-party involvement for effective implementation. The project's third component, which aims to establish a networking platform for NGOs and CSOs, has faced setbacks and delays, including challenges in reaching an agreement with ACBAR, which was originally envisaged as the organization that would provide the basis for the networking component. The project is now considering partnerships with multiple networks and is in the planning stage of defining its vision, capacity requirements, and action plan for an inclusive and effective coordination platform. Accelerated efforts by UNDP are required in output areas two and three to fully meet project objectives.

Coherence

The project demonstrates internal coherence through aligned objectives and outputs tailored to strengthen NGO/CSO capacities. Externally, coordination mechanisms exist, but require improvement. Potential overlaps with the work of other development partners like UN Women or ACBAR were noted in training topics, target beneficiaries, and geographic coverage across similar civil society support projects. This risks duplication of efforts and resource misallocation. More systematic coordination and information sharing between development partners is needed to optimize resource use, enable shared learning, avoid duplication, and maximize impact. Joint consultations, shared databases, and integrated training workshops should be explored by UNDP and the project team.

Efficiency

The project has experienced significant delays in implementation and faces major external risks, including potential influence by the De Facto Authorities over the grants process, deteriorating security, shrinking civil society space, and bans on women's roles. Management and oversight structures are adequate, and adaptive measures like timeline extension have been taken. However, the project has a 9% budget execution rate at the point of this evaluation, reflecting the upcoming enormous challenge of coordinating the implementation of over 200 grant initiatives. While the project's implementation pace has improved recently, with training and selection activities accelerating, the disbursement of grants has not begun yet. The project faces very tight timeframes, given its budget size, the number of beneficiaries, and the volatile context. Accelerated efforts by the project team and UNDP will be vital to improve budget execution and fully deliver the planned activities within the ambitious timeline.

Sustainability

The project strengthens the organizational resilience of Afghan civil society through capacity building for a large number of CSOs and NGOs, contributing to a more capable civil society sector. However, the project's sustainability will benefit from integrated training content across projects, the potential establishment of an online training platform which could benefit all civil society simultaneously at no cost, greater focus on the training and use of local trainers, utilizing existing training resources, and promoting knowledge sharing between civil society organizations.

Cross-cutting Issues

The project has promoted inclusion, prioritized vulnerable groups, and empowered marginalized communities, demonstrating a rights-based approach. It has taken steps to advance gender equality through women-led organizations and safe training environments, though a more systemic focus is required. Disability inclusion has been limited so far. By building civil society capacity for socioeconomic progress and funding local initiatives, the project contributes to poverty reduction and conflict resolution. However, further efforts are needed to fully embed gender considerations, engage persons with disabilities, and integrate environmental sustainability.

The evaluation identified the following set of recommendations for the attention of project stakeholders. These recommendations will be useful to the project team in the further implementation of this project and to UNDP and the WB in the design of future interventions in this area.

Recommendation 1: Enhancing the Training Content in Response to Civil Society Needs

The following are recommendations directed at UNDP primarily in relation to the training component. They are forward looking in nature, given that most training activities under

the project have been already delivered.

- Consider the development and provision of sustained, long-term capacity building support over a longer timeframe, rather than one-off workshops.
- Incorporate more hands-on, interactive activities into the training workshops. Prioritize experienced, professional trainers with practical expertise relevant to the training topics. Where possible and feasible, design training with a follow up mentoring component.
- Create more than one stream of training to respond to the diverse needs of NGOs/CSOs. For the more experienced NGOs/CSOs, develop advanced, specialized training modules.
- Enable NGOs/CSOs to participate more directly in the design projects like NCCSP through a participatory design and planning approach.

Recommendation 2: Improving the Measurement and Tracking of Results

The following are recommendations related to the project, in the context of the significant risks that the project faces.

- Given the fact that the project's timeline is very tight, it is advisable for the project to develop a clear implementation plan for the grants' component, with milestones for each key stage of the process.
- As an option for dealing with the tight timelines for the grants' component, the project could consider contracting an experienced third-party administrator to manage the grants.
- In addition, given the elevated risks associated with the grant initiatives, the project should invest in a robust M&E system that tracks very closely the implementation of the grant initiatives and which helps the team to quickly identify corrective measures.
- The project should also establish stringent financial control mechanisms to monitor the flow of resources, especially in the grants' component, given its transaction-intensive nature. These safeguards will prevent misallocation or misappropriation of funds. Care should be taken to employ sporadic checks/audits on the use of grants and on the implementation of activities. This would serve as an additional layer of accountability, particularly useful in counteracting undue influences on the project.

The following are recommendations for UNDP, based on the experience of NCCSP, for its future efforts in support of civil society.

- UNDP should consider providing longer trainings for topics requiring extensive learning. It could also break up the delivery into multi-phase modules over several months to allow application of learnings.
- It will also be important to verify rigorously the translators' competency and engage professional translation services to ensure high quality training material.
- UNDP should establish sound assessment systems that track training impact through surveys, pre- and post-tests, observation, and regular communication.

Recommendation 3: Strengthening Cooperation with Development Partners

The following are recommendations for UNDP, based on the experience of NCCSP, for its future efforts in support of civil society.

- Given the absence of a consolidated source of information on grant recipients, UNDP is well-positioned to advocate for and support the development of a shared, real-time database of NGOs/CSOs that receive support. Such a database would help avoid overlaps and ensure efficient resource allocation. The database should include details like the amount of the grant, duration, objectives, and target beneficiaries.
- During the planning of training programmes, UNDP should consult and coordinate very closely with development partners in order to map out the geographical and sectoral focus of each participating organization. This will help ensure that each region and sector receive equitable attention and resources.
- UNDP should cooperate on the development of training curricula with other agencies such as ACBAR and UN Women, so that training efforts are coordinated and make use of existing resources.
- A centralized training repository could be considered for storing and sharing training materials, allowing partners to leverage existing resources rather than developing similar materials independently.
- To make better use of resources and enhance the quality of capacity-building efforts, UNDP should consider conducting joint training workshops that bring together different organizations. This will foster a collaborative learning environment and will allow for knowledge transfer across agencies and projects.
- UNDP should integrate UN Women's expertise and specialized knowledge on gender into training programmes for civil society.
- UNDP could contribute to the establishment of an inter-organizational mechanism among development partners that allows for the capturing and sharing of lessons learned in initiatives in support of civil society like NCCSP.

Recommendation 4: Addressing Challenges and Mitigating Risks

The following are recommendations related to the project, in the context of the significant risks that the project faces.

- The project should fast-track the recruitment of the remaining PIU members to get team fully staffed.
- Given the complexities involved, the project is advised to schedule more frequent Steering Committee meetings for timely guidance.
- The project should develop a comprehensive risk matrix and risk mitigation strategy that takes into account Afghanistan's political volatility and the logistical challenges it brings. Such a strategy should involve regular monitoring and a contingency plan that can be quickly enacted should destabilizing events occur.
- The project should conduct project review meetings every 2-3 months for mid-

course corrections.

The following are recommendations for UNDP, based on the experience of NCCSP, for its future efforts in support of civil society.

- Using the experience of NCSSP, UNDP should engage with development partners in a discussion about the challenges and risks of rapid fund disbursement in a volatile and complex environment. More realistic fund disbursement timelines and expectations will minimize the risks associated with rapid financial injections.

Recommendation 5: Enhancing the Sustainability of Training and Partnerships

The following are recommendations related to the project, in the context of the significant risks that the project faces.

- The project team should prioritize the project's third component to facilitate partnerships and knowledge exchange between NGOs/CSOs through networking events and online platforms.
- The project's grant component could be designed to reward collaborative initiatives between NGOs/CSOs to incentivize partnerships.

The following are recommendations for UNDP, based on the experience of NCCSP, for its future efforts in support of civil society.

- In close cooperation with development partners, UNDP should explore the possibility of consolidating existing and future training materials into a comprehensive integrated package that meets diverse needs. This effort might benefit from the establishment of an online platform to host training content and make it freely accessible to NGOs/CSOs.
- There is also an opportunity to leverage existing online resources for generic training content like financial management.
- UNDP should pay greater attention to the training of trainers (ToT) to build local training capabilities.

Recommendation 6: Strengthening Gender Mainstreaming and Disability Inclusion

The following are recommendations directed at UNDP in relation to gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion.

- Prioritize gender training in capacity building activities to integrate gender considerations from the start. To the extent possible, collaborate with expert agencies like UN Women to bring their expertise to the project activities. Balance the provision of training on empowerment of women with the "do no harm" principle.
- Strengthen the gender focus in grants component through criteria, objectives, technical guidance, and gender-sensitive monitoring.
- Strengthen the collection and utilization of sex-disaggregated data to inform gender-sensitive programming.
- Include disability inclusion in project objectives, activities and monitoring frameworks and to the extent possible seek to partner with disability focused CSOs/NGOs.

--

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	13
1.1. Project Context.....	13
1.2. Project Description.....	14
2. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY	19
2.1. Purpose of the Evaluation	19
2.2. Evaluation's Scope and Methodology	20
2.3. Evaluation Process and Governance	23
2.4. Evaluation Limitations.....	24
3. FINDINGS.....	25
3.1. Relevance.....	25
3.2. Effectiveness	33
3.2.1. Capacity Building (Training).....	33
3.2.2. Grant Initiatives.....	38
3.2.3. Networking	40
3.2.4. Achievement of Objectives.....	41
3.3. Coherence	46
3.4. Efficiency	50
3.5. Sustainability.....	58
3.6. Cross-cutting Issues	61
4. LESSONS LEARNED.....	64
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	65
ANNEX I: EVALUATION'S TERMS OF REFERENCE	71
ANNEX II: PROJECT'S RESULTS FRAMEWORK	79
ANNEX III: EVALUATION CRITERIA AND KEY QUESTIONS	82
ANNEX IV: EVALUATION MATRIX.....	84
ANNEX V: SURVEY WITH BENEFICIARIES.....	92
ANNEX VI: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES	97
ANNEX VII: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	98

FIGURES

Figure 1: Survey Respondents by Gender.....	22
Figure 2: Method of Triangulation.....	22
Figure 3: Evaluation Criteria	23
Figure 4: Steps in the Analysis Process	23
Figure 5: Survey Results – Types of Organizations.....	27
Figure 6: Survey Results – Relevance of NCCSP Project	28
Figure 7: Survey Results – Quality of Trainings	35
Figure 8: Survey Results – Quality of Trainers	35
Figure 9: Survey Results – Training Format.....	36
Figure 10: Project’s Organizational Structure	51

TABLES

Table 1: Data Sources	21
Table 2: Mapping of NGOs/CSOs in Numbers	33
Table 3: Achievement of Project Results.....	41
Table 4: Status of Project Results	44
Table 5: Project Budget and Execution.....	56

BOXES

Box 1: Project’s Main Beneficiaries	18
Box 2: UNDP’s and UN Women’s Training Approaches	48

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACBAR - Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development
ANCB - Afghan NGOs' Coordination Bureau
ARTF - Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
AWCC - Afghanistan Women Chamber and Commerce
AWEC - Afghan Women's Educational Center
AWN - Afghan Women Network
CCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
CDC - Community Development Councils
CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CESCR - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CO - Country Office
CPD - Country Programme Document
CSO - Civil Society Organization
DAC - Development Assistance Committee
DIM - Direct Implementation Modality
FGD - Focus Group Discussion
GBV - Gender-Based Violence
GRM - Grievance Redress Mechanism
IDA - International Development Association
ITA - Interim Taliban Authority
LVG - Low-Value Grants
M&E - Monitoring and Evaluation
NCCSP - NGO/CSO Capacity Support Project
NEET - Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NGO - Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA - Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD - Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDO - Project Development Objective
PIU - Project Implementation Unit
PMU - Project Management Unit
POM - Project Operations Manual
PSC - Steering Committee
PWD - Person with Disabilities
SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals
SEA - Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SH - Sexual Harassment
TEF - Transitional Engagement Framework
ToR - Terms of Reference
ToT - Training of Trainers
UDHR - Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UK Aid - United Kingdom Aid
UN - United Nations
UNDP - United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund
UNSF - UN Strategic Framework
USD - United States Dollar
WB - World Bank

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Project Context

In Afghanistan, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)² and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)³ play a vital role in promoting development, providing inclusive and critical basic services, strengthening local community action and ownership, and responding in swift and flexible ways to the needs of the population. They have also offered employment to a substantial number of Afghans.

Following the political changes that occurred in August 2021, the Afghan civil society has suffered greatly from the dire economic, social and political situation.⁴ The departure of approximately 120,000 Afghans, most of whom were engaged in the NGO sector, has had a significant negative impact on civil society. The loss of senior and technical staff from NGOs has left a vacuum, leaving the organizations with junior staff who are inexperienced in managing funds and projects. Moreover, the civil society sector is facing significant organizational constraints and sector/institutional gaps, exacerbated by the internal operating environment. The new regulations implemented by the Interim Taliban Authority (ITA) are having a restrictive impact on the scope and operations of NGOs, affecting their ability to deliver essential services such as healthcare, education, and humanitarian aid.⁵ In this regulatory and security context, NGOs face complexities in legal compliance and operational risks. The new rules hamper collaboration with international partners, thereby affecting vital aspects like funding and technical support. Additionally, the challenging security landscape presents operational disruptions and increased risks of intimidation and violence against NGO staff and beneficiaries. Furthermore, the country has faced international sanctions and an abrupt halt in international aid flows. The NGOs and CSOs that have survived are operating under pressure, with their integrity and independence increasingly threatened. All these factors collectively pose significant obstacles to the efficacy and sustainability of civil society organizations in Afghanistan.

Overall, the Afghan civil society faces many daunting challenges, including limited capacity for collaboration and negotiation with authorities, financial unsustainability, restricted Human Resources capacity, poor project management capabilities, ineffective dispute

² This report uses the same definition of CSOs as the Project Document - CSOs consist of many and diverse expressions of civil society that operate in the public sphere and interact with the state and market. They include farmers organizations, trade unions, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), professional guilds, think-tanks, informal networks, apex organizations or CSO platforms, faith-based associations, indigenous associations, student and youth organizations, academic bodies and business chambers, youth and women's groups, community-based organizations, public and mutual benefit entities and more.

³ This report uses the same definition of NGOs as the Project Document - NGOs are here defined by three main characteristics: independence; not-for profit status; and being a subset of civil society.

⁴ A May 2023 policy brief titled "The Collapse of the Civic Space in Afghanistan and Supporting the Fight to Reclaim it" prepared by the Afghanistan Policy Lab, associated with the School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, examines the declining state of civic space in Afghanistan, particularly in the context of constraints on civil society activity. The brief argues that civic spaces in Afghanistan have significantly deteriorated due to a variety of factors including political instability, insecurity, and the rise of extremist ideologies.

⁵ More analysis can be found in the publication "AFGHANISTAN: Working under the ITA's evolving NGO regulations", ACAPS, Thematic Report, 31 July 2023.

resolution systems, and difficulties in recruiting and retaining female staff. In particular, women-led CSOs are grappling with significant challenges, ranging from operational cessation and financial difficulties to social constraints and safety concerns.⁶

Supporting NGOs/CSOs in Afghanistan today is a critical development need. They provide a critical voice for Afghans, are a pathway to expedited and targeted service delivery, and enhance social cohesion and local ownership of the development process, both vital to sustainability and security. Furthermore, NGOs/CSOs are particularly important for delivering services to Afghan girls and women.

1.2. Project Description

With financing of USD 20 million from the World Bank (WB), UNDP has launched on 1 July 2022 the project “*NGO/CSO Capacity Support Project*” (NCCSP Project), which is expected to end on 31 October 2024. The objective of the project is to enhance the capacities of selected registered national and local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (NGOs/CSOs) to improve their performance and effectiveness.

The Project Development Objective (PDO) of the NCCSP project is to enhance the capacities of selected registered national and local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (NGOs/CSOs) to improve their performance and effectiveness. The project contributes to UNDP Afghanistan’s priority focus to support basic human needs, complementing short-term humanitarian life-saving assistance with the safeguarding of livelihoods and the strengthening of community resilience under the “ABADEI” programme,⁷ and under Outcomes 1, 2, and 3 of the UN Transitional Engagement Framework (TEF)²⁴ in Afghanistan.

The proposed **Objective** of the Project is to enhance the capacities of selected registered national and local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (NGOs/CSOs) to improve their performance and effectiveness. The desired **outcome** is to build the capacities of select NGOs and NGOs/CSOs, ultimately contributing to sustaining the provision of basic services and to providing life-saving support to the most vulnerable populations, in the short to medium term.

- **Output 1.** NGO/CSO personnel capacity enhanced on core management functions and service delivery focused areas (including project management; fiduciary capacity; reporting on results; outreach and mobilization of women; and SEA/SH mitigation and response); (percent)
- **Output 2.** NGOs/NGOs/CSOs benefitting from Project grant awards have enhanced their programs (including women outreach/mobilization and GBV mitigation and response mechanisms); (percent).

⁶ The Rapid Perception Survey conducted by the Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group painted a grim picture of the operational, social, and economic hurdles affecting women and women-led organizations in Afghanistan.

⁷ The programme called ‘ABADEI,’ which denotes communities being resilient and inspires hope for a better future in several local languages, brings together UNDP, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations providing community level solutions which complement the urgent humanitarian interventions.

- **Output 3.** NGOs/NGOs/CSOs benefiting from improved coordination and access to better information and networking (percent).
- **Output 4.** Project Management and Implementation Support.

Under Output 1, NCCSP maps the current landscape of the Afghan civil society across all 34 provinces and keep track of the NGOs and NGOs/CSOs that have remained active. It includes an analysis of the legal and regulatory environment under which NGOs/NGOs/CSOs are operating and monitoring policy changes in the short to medium term (including to take stock of the registration process and potential changes). The rapid mapping and analysis will extend to all NGOs/NGOs/CSOs, including those engaged in advocacy (human rights, rule of law, women and youth, peace and security, etc.). This Output will also finance an integrated approach combining direct training and hands-on support. Lessons learned from past experiences highlight the limitations of one-time training. The delivery of capacity-building will therefore include three sub-activities: (i) direct provision of training; (ii) on-the job training; and (iii) production of self-instruction handbooks and kits to promote self-study on delivery of services and local engagement.

Under output 2, NCCSP provides Low -Value Grants³⁷ to 200 NGOs/NGOs/CSOs to support their capacity to deliver basic services, by helping them to reactivate their operations, retain key staff and solicit development solutions in support of the most vulnerable populations. Typically, LVGs aim to provide core funding, boost organizational capacity and to promote innovate approaches and projects (including Quick Impact Projects) for which no repayment is required. This Output will provide cash awards to select trained NGOs/NGOs/CSOs according to a set of predefined eligibility and selection criteria. Ultimately, it will serve to enhance the capacity of NGOs/NGOs/CSOs, provide life-saving support when needed, and contribute to levelling the playing field in support of a more vibrant civil society.

Under Output 3, NCCSP ensures close collaboration with existing structures (e.g., ACBAR) to determine the best approach to enhance coordination at national and provincial levels, avoid overlaps and duplications, and strengthen communication channels, notably on gender equality and human protection. Most notably, the proposed project will first examine the feasibility of leveraging ACBAR, given its leading role in representing and defending the interests of its member NGOs and its ongoing capacity -building programmes.

The project is aimed to target NGOs and NGOs/CSOs that improve basic service delivery and promote the socioeconomic empowerment of women and girls. A special focus was placed on NGOs and NGOs/CSOs engaged in service delivery aligned with the priority areas under ABADEI (health, agriculture, livelihoods, and education) and on women-led NGOs and NGOs/CSOs, as well as those with programs and activities focusing on the socio-economic empowerment of the most vulnerable populations (girls and women; youth; persons with disabilities (PWDs); etc.). Although non-governmental community platforms are well established (e.g., Community Development Councils, (CDCs)) and unregistered shuras (community-based councils) and jirgas (tribal assemblies of elders) are also active and are key civil society actors in Afghanistan, these community structures did not fall within the scope of the proposed project. By design, the NCCSP project opted for selectivity and simplicity by focusing on Afghan national and/or local registered organizations that have a well-established track record and carry legitimacy within their communities.

The project was designed to promote key human rights-based principles: participation, non-discrimination, dignity, equality, transparency and accountability. Through this project, the role of NGOs/CSOs and NGOs as independent entities acting in the interest of the communities, including marginalized and excluded groups and individuals, and in providing critical basic services was recognised and promoted. The aim was to support communities so that they can access the rights guaranteed to them in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Project's Theory of Change

The following is a basic Theory of Change for the NCSSP project developed for the purpose of this evaluation.

Problem Statement: In Afghanistan, many local NGOs/CSOs lack the core management capacities and skills needed to effectively deliver basic services and support vulnerable populations. This reduces the availability and quality of essential services like healthcare, education, and livelihood support.

Project's Goal: Enhance the performance and effectiveness of local NGOs/CSOs in Afghanistan so they can better provide basic services and support to vulnerable populations.

Key Assumptions:

- Capacity building of local NGO/CSO staff will lead to stronger organizations and improved service delivery.
- Providing grants to NGOs/CSOs will allow them to deliver more services and projects.
- Better coordination and networking will enhance efficiency and impact.
- The operating environment allows NGOs/CSOs to function and provide services.
- Sufficient number of capable local NGOs/CSOs exist and are willing to participate
- Staff trained will retain skills and remain with NGOs/CSOs.

Inputs:

- Funding from the World Bank (\$20 million)
- Implementing partner: UNDP
- NGOs/CSOs willing to participate
- Trainers and technical assistance providers

Activities:

- Rapid mapping and analysis of NGO/CSO landscape

- Direct training on core management functions (project management, financial management, reporting, etc.)
- On-the-job training and mentoring
- Development of self-instruction materials and toolkits
- Low-value grants (~\$10,000 each) to 200 NGOs/CSOs
- Enhanced coordination and networking between NGOs/CSOs

Outputs:

- NGO/CSO staff trained on core functions and service delivery
- 200 NGOs/CSOs receive low-value grants
- Improved NGO/CSO coordination and information sharing

Outcomes:

- NGOs/CSOs have enhanced organizational and management capacities
- NGOs/CSOs deliver more and higher quality services and projects, especially for vulnerable groups like women and youth
- NGOs/CSOs can operate more efficiently and effectively through coordination and networking

Impact: Vulnerable populations in Afghanistan benefit from improved access to basic services like healthcare, education, and livelihood support. This contributes to poverty reduction, human development, and community resilience.

Stakeholder Analysis

The following are the main stakeholders of the NCCSP project and a brief description of their motivations related to the project.

- Local NGOs/CSOs in Afghanistan (direct beneficiaries): Have limited organizational and management capacity. Interested in training, grants, and partnerships to enhance their performance and service delivery. Want coordination support. Face operational constraints like security.
- UNDP (implementing partner): Interested in building local civil society capacity to support vulnerable groups. Wants to maximize impact within limited timeline. Must balance coverage and depth in programming.
- World Bank (donor): Provided \$20 million funding for the project. Wants to see efficient use of resources and strong results.
- Other UN Agencies (e.g., UN Women): Have complementary projects building NGO/CSO capacity with potential for collaboration. Have specialized expertise like in gender mainstreaming.
- ACBAR (NGO coordinating body): Key existing platform for NGO/CSO coordination and advocacy. Valuable partner for coordination and training.

- **De Facto Authorities:** Set the legal/regulatory framework for NGO/CSO operations and the participation of key stakeholders, such as women. Influenced by enhanced civil society capacity and service delivery.
- **Vulnerable populations (indirect beneficiaries):** Need improved access to basic services from stronger NGOs/CSOs. Focus on women, youth, disabled.
- **Rural communities:** Have less access to NGO/CSO services than urban areas. Hence, the important of expanding the reach of the programme.

The box below provides a more detailed summary of the project's main beneficiaries.

Box 1: Project's Main Beneficiaries

- **Direct Beneficiaries:** The immediate or direct beneficiaries of the project are the selected national and local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (NGOs/CSOs) in all 34 provinces across the eight administrative regions. These organizations are targeted based on eligibility and priority criteria that include a range of factors such as operational presence, track record in financial management, and focus areas like health, education, agriculture, and livelihoods. The primary objective here is capacity-building aimed at improving performance and effectiveness. Special emphasis is given to NGOs and NGOs/CSOs led by women, or those focusing on the socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable groups like youth and persons with disabilities (PWDs).
- **Indirect and Ultimate Beneficiaries:** While the direct beneficiaries are NGOs and NGOs/CSOs, the ultimate beneficiaries are the vulnerable communities they serve. The activities of the NGOs and NGOs/CSOs are designed to produce direct positive economic and social impacts on communities. By enhancing the ability of these organizations to provide basic services, the project indirectly supports the most vulnerable populations in those communities. This includes sub-sectors such as health, agriculture, livelihoods, and education. Additionally, a specific focus is placed on programs that aim to uplift women and girls, further broadening the scope of beneficiaries.
- **Excluded Groups:** It is important to note that other forms of community structures like Community Development Councils (CDCs), shuras (community-based councils), and jirgas (tribal assemblies of elders) are not within the scope of this project. This is due to the project's design criteria of focusing on registered, national, and local organizations with a proven track record.

2. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

As envisaged by the NCCSP Project Document, UNDP Afghanistan commissioned in July 2023 a mid-term evaluation of the NCCSP project. Under the overall supervision of UNDP Afghanistan, an international evaluation expert assisted by a national evaluation expert were hired to undertake the evaluation of the project's results, lessons learned and contributions.

2.1. Purpose of the Evaluation

The mid-term evaluation assessed the project's progress toward project deliverables, identified gaps in programming, and determined any course correction required for the current implementation process, as well as for future programming. It informed UNDP Afghanistan and its partners of lessons learned, results achieved, and areas for improvements. The mid-term evaluation produced lessons and experiences, providing useful findings to the other relevant projects and various initiatives organized by UNDP Afghanistan and other Country Offices (COs) globally. The mid-term evaluation produced a report on the achievements of the NCCSP project and its success stories, which were published on the UNDP website.

The overall objective of the mid-term evaluation was to assess the continued relevance of the project and the progress made towards achieving its planned objectives, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency, as well as sustainability. The following were the main objectives of the evaluation, as identified in the evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR), which are included in Annex I of this report:

- The extent to which NCCSP contributed to the capacity development of civil society organizations (NGOs/CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in terms of their organizational and operational efficiency, programmatic and managerial capacity, outreach and public relations.
- The effectiveness of synergies and complementarities of NCCSP with other relevant UNDP and donor projects.
- Document lessons learned, good practices and challenges, as well as identify the strategies for replicating and up-scaling the project's best practices;
- Provide practical, actionable and feasible recommendations for further implementation.

The evaluation report will serve as an accountability tool for the stakeholders to assess the implementation of the project, while providing specific and achievable recommendations to stakeholders in order to inform future programming. The evaluation findings may be used for further project development in the field and resource mobilization.

2.2. Evaluation's Scope and Methodology

The mid-term evaluation assessed the project's performance against the expected targets set out in the project's Results Framework, which was part of the approved project document and included as a separate annex of this report (Annex II). The evaluation assessed the results achieved by the project from 1 July 2022 to the point of the evaluation and geographically focused on the provinces and zones where the NCCSP project was implemented. It encompassed both the outcome-level results and the output-level results as key indicators of the overall project performance. The evaluation proposes recommendations that will inform and help improve the current implementation of the project. It is also intended to document achievements, good practices, success cases, lessons learned, and experiences.

The evaluation was conducted as per the UNDP Evaluation Policy.⁸ It applied OECD DAC criteria⁹ and definitions and followed norms and standards established by the United Nations Evaluation Group. It was guided by the requirements set forth in UNDP's evaluation toolkit, and in particular the "*Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Development Results*"¹⁰. A participatory and consultative approach was used for the collection of data, formulation of recommendations and identification of lessons learned. The evaluation team engaged with various NGOs/CSOs (beneficiaries), the project team, implementing partners, relevant UNDP programme staff, the donor (World Bank), other UN Agencies, and other stakeholders. The evaluation team used a Human Rights and Gender Equality lens during data collection, data analysis and evaluation process.¹¹

The evaluation methodology was based on mixed methods and involved the use of commonly applied evaluation tools such as documentary review, interviews, information triangulation, analysis and synthesis. Evaluation activities were organized according to the following phases: i) planning; ii) data collection; and, iii) data analysis and reporting.

Evaluation Planning

As a first step of the evaluation process, the project team shared with the evaluation team the full documentation related to the project. On the basis of this documentation, the evaluation team conducted a preliminary review of the available information and a basic assessment of the project's evaluability. The evaluability analysis showed that the project's outputs, indicators, baselines and the available data provided allowed for an effective evaluation of the project. The evaluability analysis was underpinned by the evaluation matrix included in Annex IV of this report.

Data Collection

The data collection process started with further collection of secondary information from available documents (see the figure below for a list of secondary data sources). The following table outlines the main data sources used for this evaluation.

⁸ Link [here](#).

⁹ Criteria for evaluating development assistance: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of development efforts.

¹⁰ Link [here](#).

¹¹ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/980>

Table 1: Data Sources

Evaluation tools	Sources of information	
Documentation review	General documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025 • UNDP Afghanistan Transitional Country Programme Results Framework 2022-2023 • UN Transitional Engagement Framework for Afghanistan 2022-2023 • UN Strategic Framework for Afghanistan 2023-2025 • UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures • UNDP Evaluation Guidelines • World Bank Country Strategy
	Programme documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Document; • Minutes of the meetings of the decision-making body of NCCSP; • Annual Workplans; • Quality Assurance reports; • Monitoring reports prepared by the NCCSP team of activities implemented under grant mechanism and results achieved; • Reports prepared by experts; • Selected activity, interim and final reports prepared and submitted by NCCSP grantees; • Training reports; • Interim narrative and financial reports; • Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix.
	Third-party reports	Including those of the World Bank, other UN agencies, research institutes, NGOs, international organizations, etc.

The collection of secondary data consisted of the following components:

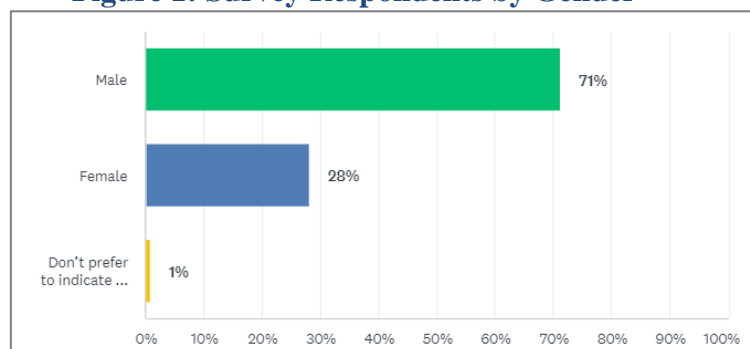
- **Online Survey** – An online survey was administered with 400 NGOs/CSOs/NGOs that received training from the project. The online survey that was used is included in Annex VI of this report. 247 responses were received, of which 28% were from women. 50% of respondents were young people, belonging in the age group 26 to 35. The responses had an extensive geographical coverage with a high degree of regional variety, encompassing all regions of the country.
- **On-site Observation** – The national evaluator conducted field work by visiting the training centers where the project is conducting trainings in five provinces. The provinces that the national evaluator visited were: Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, Balkh and Nangarhar. The national evaluator will observe the training process, participation, delivery method, engagement of participants, the training content, etc.
- **Focus Group Discussions:** During the field work in the five above-mentioned locations, the national evaluator conducted focus group discussions (FGD) with selected NGOs/CSOs/NGOs. One FGD will be conducted in each location, leading to a total of five FGDs. The number of participants for FDG will be seven. The selection criteria for these seven CSO/NGO representatives will be gender, geographical distribution, thematic area of operation, women-led/man-led. The selection process will seek to capture a

balanced representation of these factors. The questions that will underpin the interviews and FGDs with NGOs/CSOs/NGOs are shown in Annex VII of this report.

- ***Semi-structured Interviews*** – The evaluation team conducted additional interviews in the online format. A preliminary list of potential stakeholders to be interviewed is provided in Table 2 below. These interviews will involve key stakeholders – in particular, the project team and project board members, UNDP CO and WB management and staff, donor/development partners, etc. The main questions that will be used for the discussion with the project team are shown in Annex VIII of this report. Five interviews will be conducted with key NGOs/CSOs/NGOs (in addition to the FGDs mentioned above, which will be conducted in the training sites by the national evaluator). The main questions for these interviews are shown in Annex VII of this report.

A list of key questions that drove the data collection process is shown in Annex III of this report. The data collection process took into account to the extent possible gender considerations and ensured that the information gathered was classified by sex and other pertinent categories. As can be seen from the figure below, 28 % of survey respondents representing CSOs and NGOs were female.

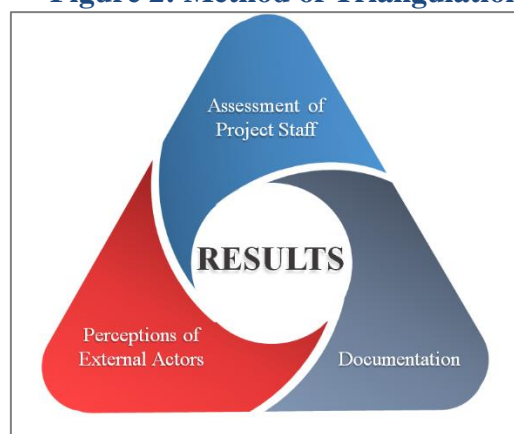
Figure 1: Survey Respondents by Gender



Data Analysis

Information obtained through the documentary review and interviewing process was triangulated against available documented sources, and then synthesized using analytical judgement. The method of triangulation is shown in Figure 2 below.

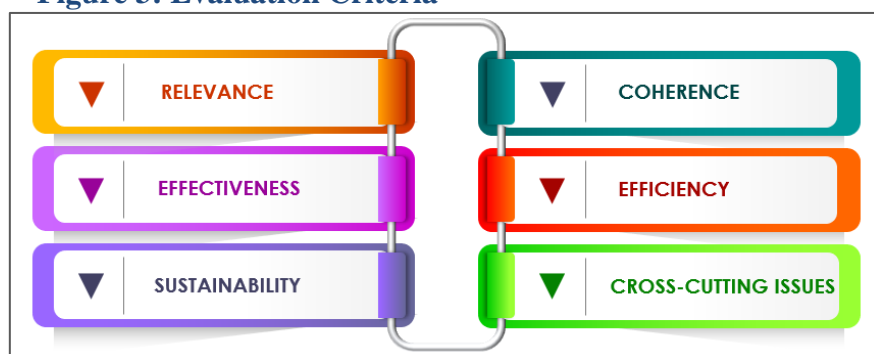
Figure 2: Method of Triangulation



Some of the basic questions used in the analysis of the collected information are shown in Annex III of this report. Figure 3 shows the steps that were taken for the analysis which was

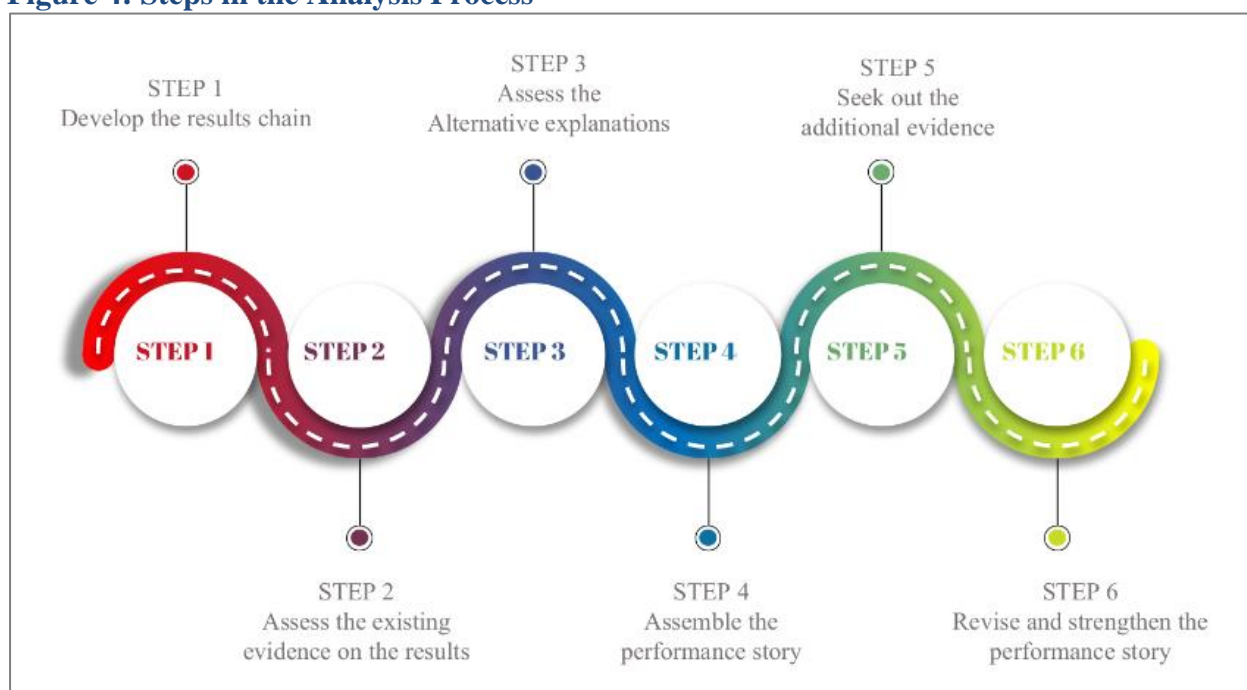
conducted on the basis of the standard criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.

Figure 3: Evaluation Criteria



Care was given to the assessment of the extent to which the project has been successful in involving *marginalized groups*, especially *women* and *persons with disabilities*. The figure below shows the steps that were taken for the analysis.

Figure 4: Steps in the Analysis Process



The analysis also covered aspects of formulation, such as the extent of stakeholder participation during project formulation; replication approach; design for sustainability; linkages between the project and other interventions; adequacy of management arrangements, etc.

2.3. Evaluation Process and Governance

The evaluation was conducted by an independent evaluation team contracted by UNDP Afghanistan. The evaluation process was guided and overseen by the evaluation focal point of UNDP Afghanistan. The evaluation team worked under the direct supervision of the Project Manager. They work in close communication with the NCCSP M&E Specialist.

2.4. Evaluation Limitations

This evaluation was conducted in challenging circumstances, which reflect the challenging context in which the project is being implemented. The organization of the data collection process and the field observation in the provinces took much longer than expected due to logistical and organization challenges related to travel in the provinces. This led to a very tight timeframe available for the analysis of the data. The evaluation team experienced significant pressure from the project management to complete the evaluation the report, while the interviews were still ongoing. In future exercises of this nature, the CO should provide flexibility and ample time to the evaluation team to digest the collected information, reflect on it and draft the evaluation report.

3. FINDINGS

The evaluation findings are structured into seven sections: i) Relevance (the extent to which the project aligns with the priorities and needs of beneficiaries and the UN's strategic framework); ii) Effectiveness and Impact (the project's contribution to local development outcomes and the extent to which the project has made an impact on the NGOs/CSOs and their beneficiaries); iii) Coherence (the project's delivery in a coordinated and consistent manner); iv) Efficiency (the efficient delivery of project results); v) Sustainability (the likelihood of project results being sustained after completion); vi) Cross-cutting Issues, which include a Human Rights Based Approach, Gender & Youth Mainstreaming, Disability Inclusion, Conflict Sensitivity, Environmental Sustainability, etc.

3.1. Relevance

The following is a summary of the assessment of the project's relevance to the needs of civil society in Afghanistan, and its alignment with the institutional frameworks of the UN and the WB and contributions to the achievement of the sustainable development agenda.

Alignment with the Needs of Civil Society

Interviews the online survey for this evaluation revealed several features of the NCCSP project that make it particularly relevant to the needs of civil society in Afghanistan, and the general population more broadly. The following are the key features that were emphasized by the participants of this evaluation.

- CSOs and NGOs are crucial actors in Afghanistan's institutional landscape. They deliver essential social services such as healthcare, education, and humanitarian aid and advocate for human rights, rule of law, and gender equality. Historically constrained by limited resources and capabilities, these organizations now face additional challenges due to the brain drain post regime change and the unstable security conditions and new regulations imposed by the Interim Taliban Authority. Recent political changes in Afghanistan have accentuated capacity gaps, increasing the need for capacity-building interventions. Therefore, the support being provided by the NCCSP project for the civil society sector in Afghanistan is timely and essential – it is not only a capacity building project for local NGOs/CSOs, but even more importantly it is a means of survival for the civil society on the ground. Furthermore, the NCCSP has taken a multi-pronged approach in the delivery of this support – the support was designed to include training, operational grants and coordination platform for sustainability.
- The NCCSP project has explicitly targeted NGOs and CSOs that provide community services in priority areas such as health, agriculture, livelihoods, and education.¹² This

¹² In the Project Document, the project's priority criteria were defined as “NGOs and CSOs working in areas of women socio-economic empowerment (including women-led NGOs/CSOs); track-record of delivery of basic

targeted focus aligns with Afghanistan's most urgent needs, as sustainable development and human well-being depend on progress in health, agriculture, livelihoods, and education, especially at the grassroots level. NGOs and CSOs working in these areas often deliver basic, grassroots services that people would otherwise not have access to, especially where government services are limited. By improving the skills and capacity of NGOs and CSOs to deliver health, agricultural, livelihood, and educational services, the NCCSP project directly helps to improve public health, foster sustainable agriculture, create livelihood opportunities, and expand access to education. This is particularly impactful in regions where government interventions are inadequate.

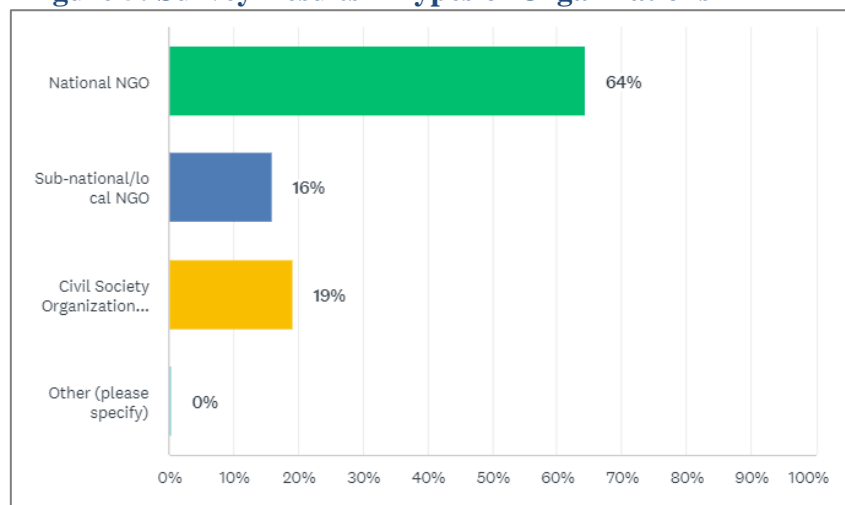
- Additionally, the NCCSP project has had an explicit focus on vulnerable groups.¹³ It was designed to prioritize women-led organizations, as well as CSOs that focus on gender equality. This is particularly relevant now that women's organizations face systematic targeting and restrictions at all levels. The project also gives attention to ethnic and regional/rural populations, people affected by disabilities, and economically vulnerable groups like youth not in education, employment or training (NEETs). The concept of Low-Value Grants was designed to target organizations serving the most vulnerable populations, which is a direct response to the socioeconomic disparities at the local level. By enhancing the capacities of NGOs and CSOs—organizations that are often at the forefront of delivering essential services to marginalized communities—the project directly contributes to the betterment of the lives of these groups, which is in line with the *"Leave No One Behind"* principle. In particular, women-led organizations bring a nuanced understanding of gender-specific challenges and are often more effective in implementing interventions that benefit women and girls. This is particularly critical in Afghanistan's context, where gender disparities are stark, and vulnerable populations are disproportionately affected by poverty, conflict, and lack of access to services. In this context, the NCCSP project promotes social inclusion and equity, in line with Afghanistan's both immediate humanitarian needs and long-term developmental goals.
- Another factor of relevance is the project's geographical distribution. The NCCSP project was designed to build the capacity of 400 NGOs/CSOs located throughout Afghanistan's regions. This decentralized, locally-focused approach aimed to address the diverse needs of civil society across the country. Survey responses for this evaluation confirm the extensive geographical reach of the project across Afghanistan's regions. Many participating organizations are based in Kabul, reflecting the city's political and developmental importance. As shown in the figure below, many organizations are of a national nature as they work across multiple provinces and regions – this can be seen in the large share of national NGOs in the figure below. Some NGOs have a more localized presence, focused only on one region. By distributing its support evenly across

services in the sectors of education, health, jobs & livelihoods, and food security; NGOs/CSOs working in the hard to reach and remote areas and with marginalized groups."

¹³ Ibid.

Afghanistan's diverse regional landscape, the NCCSP project captured a broad spectrum of local civil society needs nationwide.

Figure 5: Survey Results – Types of Organizations¹⁴



- Another key factor of the project's relevance is the way in which the specific capacity needs of civil society were identified. The training programme's content was based on a comprehensive needs assessment, which was conducted by the consortium hired by the project to deliver the training. The needs assessment involved rapidly mapping and identifying NGOs and CSOs that would benefit from capacity building. This exercise served as an adaptable tool to understand the evolving landscape and needs. It allowed for real-time adjustments to the project's focus and methodology based on up-to-date information. The use of a thorough needs assessment ensured that the training programme was designed to address the most pressing capacity needs faced by local civil society organizations. Conducting the assessment at the start and adjusting it along the way has enabled the project to remain responsive to needs on the ground despite the volatile circumstances in Afghanistan.

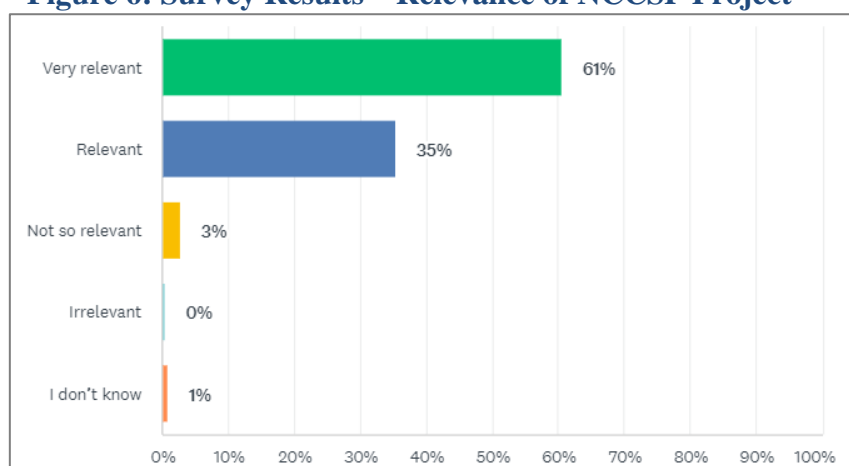
The relevance of the project was also strongly confirmed by the data collected from the online survey with CSOs/NGOs which was conducted for this evaluation. It is clear that these organizations' decision to apply for participation in the NCCSP capacity building programme was motivated by a sense of urgency to fill capacity gaps. And, it is also clear that these CSOs/NGOs perceived the offer of the NCCSP as relevant to their needs. Also, the fact that the majority of programme participants (and respondents to the evaluation survey) hold top management positions such as Director, Executive Director, or Programme Manager, is indicative of the relevance of NCCSP's training offer.

The evaluation survey asked CSOs/NGOs to rate the relevance of the training provided by the NCCSP project.¹⁵ The figure below shows the survey results for this question – more than

¹⁴ National NGOs work across multiple provinces and regions. Local NGOs have a more localized presence, focused only on one region.

95% of all respondents found the training provided by the project either “*Very Relevant*” or “*Relevant*”.

Figure 6: Survey Results – Relevance of NCCSP Project



The following are some of the perceived benefits of the project based on CSOs/NGOs’ feedback captured through the survey.

- The survey shows that there is a strong desire from Afghan civil society organizations for “*capacity building*” support. The data shows that organizations recognize the necessity of enhancing both individual and organizational competencies. The project also responds to diverse needs, which include specific skill sets like project management, proposal writing, and human resource management, which are essential for efficient operations and effective service delivery. Respondents associate capacity building with tangible outcomes like increased productivity and improved decision-making capabilities. They also pointed out the importance of accessing grant opportunities to implement initiatives of their particular interest.
- The focus on “*knowledge acquisition and skill development*” emerged as a consistent theme. Responding organizations noted that they seek stay informed of the latest developments and trends in their respective fields. For them, the NCCSP is serving as a sort of platform for further learning, especially in the country’s rapidly evolving political environment.
- The term “*empowerment*” featured prominently in the survey, particularly with respect to women and vulnerable populations. Responding CSOs/NGOs perceive capacity building as a tool to advance gender equality and promote social inclusion – two key features of the project’s broader societal impact.

¹⁵ The survey question was “*How relevant was the training provided by UNDP’s NCCSP project to your needs and expectations?*”

- Furthermore, “*networking and collaboration*” are considered added benefits. The survey data also showed an appetite for inter-organizational cooperation. Organizations valued the exposure to other CSOs/NGOs and international entities, thereby fostering a network that could be leveraged for future initiatives and partnerships. The CSOs/NGOs value the potential of the NCCSP project to facilitate knowledge exchange and potential partnerships, which may result in a synergetic impact beyond the capacity of individual organizations.
- Also, the “*Reputation and Credibility of UNDP*” appears to have been a factor of relevance. Several survey responses indicated that the association with UNDP in itself was a motivating factor for CSOs/NGOs, reflecting the agency's standing as a trusted development partner.

Alignment with UN’s and UNDP’s Strategy for Afghanistan¹⁶

The NCCSP project is closely aligned with UNDP’s Transitional Country Programme Results Framework (TCPRF),¹⁷ particularly Outcome 4 focused on social equity and gender equality. Through its targeted capacity-building initiatives, NCCSP enhances the performance and effectiveness of NGOs/CSOs in areas such as women’s rights and gender-based violence mitigation, thereby complementing UNDP’s efforts to promote social equity. The NCCSP project also contributes directly to Outcome 1 which focuses on accountable governance, peace-building, and capacity development for better service delivery. The project is also aligned with Outcome 3, which emphasizes equitable and inclusive development. The project’s inclusive approach aims to provide life-saving support to the most vulnerable populations, which often include women and youth—demographics that Outcome 3 specifically targets.

Furthermore, the NCCSP project is closely aligned with the overarching objectives and strategic focus of the United Nations Transitional Engagement Framework (TEF) for 2022. The NCCSP project's core objective of enhancing the capacities of NGOs and CSOs directly complements the TEF's mandate to strengthen local institutions and promote sustainable development. The following is how more specifically the NCCSP project contributes to the objectives of the TEF:

- Output 1: Enhancing core management functions and service delivery areas directly contributes to TEF's objective of institutional strengthening and better governance.
- Output 2: The use of Low-Value Grants to enhance program delivery in NGOs/CSOs aligns with TEF's focus on immediate humanitarian support, while building for the future.

¹⁶ No analysis of the project’s alignment with national policy frameworks has been conducted in this section because of the peculiar situation of Afghanistan since the takeover of power by the Taliban in 2021, who currently constitute the De Facto Authority.

¹⁷ At the time of this evaluation, UNDP Afghanistan was operating still under the Country Programme Document for 2015-2019 as a result of the August 2021 change of power.

- Output 3: Focusing on coordination and better information flow aligns with TEF's goal for enhanced inter-agency cooperation and shared accountability.

NCCSP is also aligned with TEF's focus on the protection of vulnerable populations, with a special focus on mechanisms for gender-based violence (GBV) mitigation and response.

The NCCSP project is also aligned with the UN Strategic Framework (UNSF) for Afghanistan for the period 2023–2025.

- The NCCSP's objective to capacity building, including direct training and on-the-job training, aligns with the UNSF's focus on building long-term resilience and not merely offering immediate relief.
- These grant initiatives are designed to enable NGOs and CSOs to deliver basic services, contributing to the UNSF's objective of ensuring basic human needs.
- NCCSP's Output 3 which aims to improve coordination among NGOs and CSOs aligns well with the UNSF's emphasis on improving coordination mechanisms within the aid and development ecosystem in Afghanistan.

Both the NCCSP and the UNSF prioritize the needs of vulnerable groups, including women and internally displaced persons. The NCCSP's specific outputs related to gender-based violence (GBV) mitigation and women's outreach are directly in line with the UNSF's commitments to gender equality and social inclusion.

Contribution to the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The NCCSP project is making contributions to several SDGs by providing capacity support – as well as upcoming financial support through the grants programme – to civil society organizations in Afghanistan. It is also designed to foster collaborations and partnerships among NGOs/CSOs and other stakeholders. As a capacity building programme for civil society, the NCCSP project primarily contributes primarily to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), while also contributing to SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). While the contribution to SDG 16 is straightforward, the extent of the contribution to the other SDGs varies on the basis of the specific activities and initiatives implemented by the NGOs/CSOs involved with the project.

Suggestions for Further Improvement

The survey with the NGOs/CSOs that participated in the project's training programme revealed some key suggestions for the improvement of the relevance of the project. The following are some common themes that emerged from the analysis of the survey data, but which also received confirmation and support from most of the interviewees of this evaluation.

- One of the main points that emerged from the evaluation survey is that NGOs/CSOs demand capacity building support that is sustained and longitudinal, rather than fragmented or short-term. Several organizations highlighted the limitations of one-off or limited training events, which lack continuity and fail to reinforce skills over time. Given

Afghanistan's rapidly evolving political context, they emphasized the need for sustained, yet flexible support that addresses their dynamic needs as they emerge. The NGOs/CSOs called for a longer-term commitment and planning horizon from UNDP, international training providers, and donor partners. They suggested moving beyond fragmented training workshops to extended periods of engagement and training to allow for deeper and more sustainable impact. Interviewees emphasized the need for extended, long-term capacity building support versus short-term workshops. For example, some suggested a minimum of five years of support programming, given Afghanistan's context. The NGOs/CSOs also demanded post-engagement follow-ups and mentoring to solidify the skills learned. While additional hands-on support is envisaged to be provided through the grant implementation process to those organizations that will benefit from the grants, it will be important to sustain the support for the civil society organizations engaged in the programme. Such broader time horizons would allow for skills development and organizational strengthening to be an ongoing, iterative process tuned to organizations' evolving needs.

- Feedback from participating NGOs/CSOs revealed a strong preference for more practical, hands-on training over theoretical instruction. They raised the need for increased opportunities for experiential learning during the training events. As an example, the NGOs/CSOs suggested incorporating practical activities like reviewing sample grant proposals to understand the structure and key components. NGOs/CSOs highlighted the importance of interactive, context-specific training focused on real-world applications. The trainers' lack of practical industry experience was seen as a drawback, as participants expected trainers who could provide real-world examples and insights. In this regard, the NCCSP project could provide hands-on support as organizations develop their individual strategic plans for organizational development and governance. An example provided by the NGOs/CSOs was bringing to the training events expert and professional trainers with practical sectoral experience. This would not only make the workshops more practical, but would also help the participants apply the training concepts to strengthen their own organization's management, operations, and procedures. To address this issue, the project team will need to prioritize the selection of experienced trainers with practical expertise in the relevant fields. Conducting a thorough assessment of trainers' qualifications and experience will ensure that they possess the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver the training content.
- The training provided by the NCCSP project was designed for young and semi-experienced organizations. However, feedback collected for this evaluation indicates that several participating NGOs/CSOs have significant experience and instead need more advanced training. Multiple respondents representing more experienced organizations suggested that additional specialized training modules are better suited to their needs. They indicated that more advanced training on topics such as project implementation, financial management, conflict resolution, and other technical areas, would be highly beneficial to them. The feedback received during the evaluation suggests that a "*one-size-fits-all*" training approach is less effective than a more tailored, needs-based approach that

is responsive to the varied capacities and needs within civil society organizations. Incorporating more advanced, specialized training options into the training programme would improve the relevance and impact of the capacity building activities for experienced NGOs/CSOs.

- While NGOs/CSOs were involved in the preparation of the training content through the “*needs assessment*” conducted by the project (implementing consortium), they also demanded stronger engagement in design and planning of the NCCSP project itself, to ensure that the project aligns with their needs and the needs of the communities they serve. The NCCSP project could have been formulated through a more participatory approach to encourage local ownership of capacity building. By involving local NGOs/CSOs in the identification of solutions to their challenges and needs, the project would have cultivated a stronger sense of self-reliance and ownership.

Overall, NCCSP is highly relevant in addressing the current needs facing Afghan civil society, especially in terms of capacity building, funding, and coordination. By strengthening the capacity of NGOs/CSOs in areas such as governance, management, and internal operational procedures, the NCCSP project has contributed to enhancing transparency, accountability, and good governance within the civil society sector. This, in turn, fosters public trust in NGOs/CSOs. The project’s relevance may be improved through longer-term capacity building support, increased practical and hands-on training, more advanced training options tailored to the CSOs/NGOs varying capacities, and stronger engagement of NGOs/CSOs in the project design and planning.

3.2. Effectiveness

This section presents an assessment of the project's effectiveness in the period until the point of this mid-term evaluation. This assessment of the project's effectiveness is organized on the basis of the project's main contributions which are organized in broad categories shown in the figure below.

3.2.1. Capacity Building (Training)

The main NCCSP component that has been delivered thus (under output area 1) far is the training programme, which has covered a wide range of topics—from financial management and advocacy to strategic planning—thus offering a holistic capacity-building solution. The following are the main steps the project has taken in the delivery of this component.

Mapping of NGOs/CSOs: Initially, the project conducted a mapping of all potential NGOs and CSOs, listing over 1,400 NGOs/CSOs. The distribution of these organizations by region and type of organization is shown in the table below. The table also shows the distribution of the organizations selected to receive training from the project (as of the end of June 2023).

Table 2: Mapping of NGOs/CSOs in Numbers¹⁸

Region	Mapping completed in #			Capacity assessment completed in #			Selected # for capacity building under the Project		
	NGOs	CSOs	Subtotal	NGOs	CSOs	Subtotal	NGO	CSO	Subtotal
Central	687	93	780	90	10	100	81	7	88
North	129	21	150	16	4	20	22	4	26
Northeast	84	21	105	14	5	19	17	4	21
South	51	13	64	9	3	12	12	1	13
Southeast	12	2	14	4	1	5	4	0	4
West	93	22	115	10	2	12	12	0	12
East	77	17	94	13	4	17	21	1	22
Central Highlands	65	15	80	10	4	15	11	3	14
Totals	1198	204	1402	167	33	200	180	20	200

Training Needs Assessment: Following the mapping exercise, the project conducted a comprehensive training needs assessment. The assessment revealed several important findings regarding the strengths, gaps, and potential areas for improvement in the sector:

- The selected NGOs/CSOs were focused on human development sectors like education, health, and nutrition. However, other sectors like disability, employment, and livelihoods needed more attention and capacity building to ensure sustainable and inclusive outcomes.
- Gender mainstreaming and policy was a critical concern, especially given the recent ban affecting women's roles in organizations. Supporting female-headed groups and enhancing gender focal points was identified as a key need. Promoting gender equality, women's empowerment, and implementing sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) policies were identified as crucial areas requiring immediate focus.

¹⁸ The information presented in the table is as of the end of June 2023.

- Financial management practices and accountability emerged as areas of concern, with limited audits and heavily reliant on international funding. Building financial management capacities and promoting transparency and discipline around finances emerged as essential for sustainability and the effective use of resources.

Development of the Training Content: Based on the findings of the needs assessment, the training provider developed ten training modules, each inclusive of the requisite training materials. These modules encompassed a wide range of topics vital to the organizational development and effectiveness of NGOs and CSOs. Each module incorporated Social and Environmental Standards and a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) to ensure adherence to best practices and accountability throughout the training process. The ten training modules were as follows:

1. Fundraising and Grant Proposal Writing
2. Project Planning and Implementation
3. Advocacy and Lobbying Techniques
4. Community Mobilization and Engagement
5. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
6. Human Resources Management and Development
7. Financial Management and Budgeting
8. Strategic Planning and Organizational Development
9. Gender Mainstreaming, Inclusivity, and Prevention of Sexual Harassment/Exploitation/Abuse (SH/SEA)
10. Conflict Resolution and Training & Capacity Building

The project team used advertisements to attract eligible organizations interested in strengthening their capacities. The application and selection process for training participants was reported to have generally gone well. The project has provided two rounds of training, with 200 NGOs and CSOs participating in each. About 90% of the organizations involved have been NGOs and 10% CSOs. The representation of women-led organizations has been pretty good – in Round 1 a total of 91 organizations were women-led and 109 men-led.

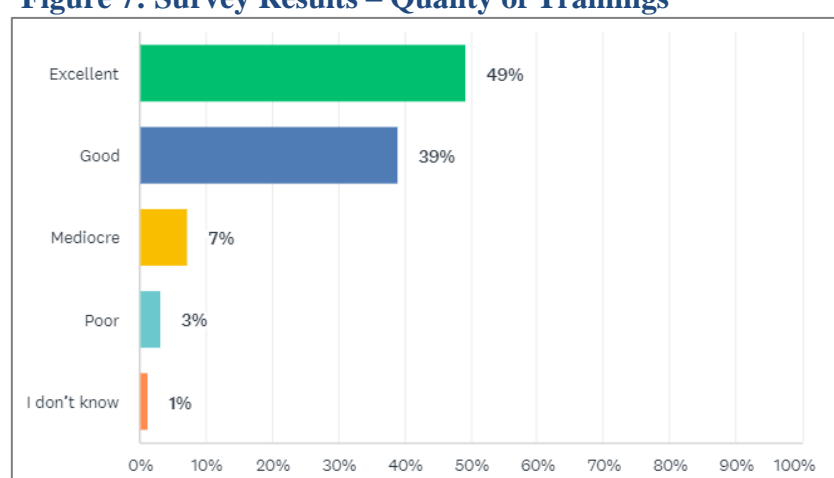
The feedback of survey participants on the training programme was generally positive, indicating that the project has made tangible impact on the participating organizations. The representatives of these organizations mentioned the following specific trainings as the most beneficial for them:

- Fundraising and Grants Proposal Writing
- Project Planning and Implementation
- Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)
- Financial Management and Budgeting
- Gender Mainstreaming
- Human Resource Management
- Advocacy and Lobbying

The surveyed organizations highlighted trainings on fundraising and grants proposal writing, as well as project planning and implementation, as the most interesting and pertinent to their interests. Some of them demanded for the project to allocate more training days for modules like Fundraising and Grants Proposal Writing. M&E, financial management, and budgeting were also highly valued by a significant number of organizations. A few organizations mentioned gender mainstreaming, human resource management, and advocacy and lobbying as specific areas of training that had been beneficial to them.

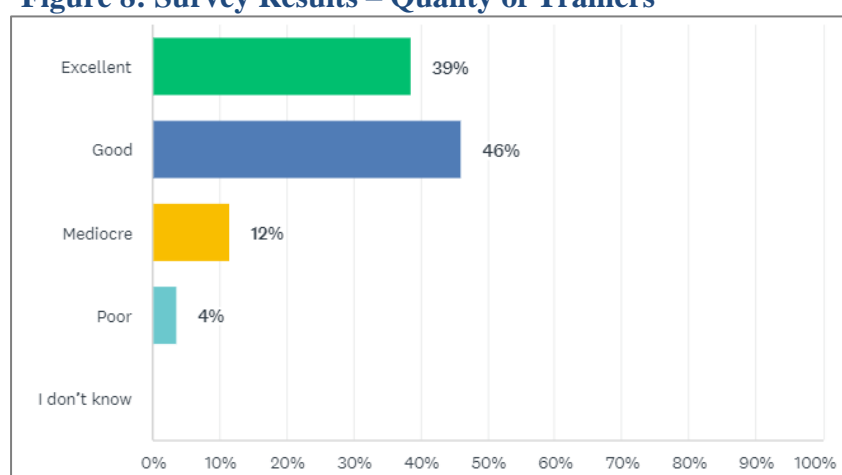
The following figure shows the level of satisfaction of the NGOs/CSOs that participated in the evaluation survey with the training provided by the NCCSP project.¹⁹ The organizations emphasized the value of trainings in improving their internal capabilities, from senior management to operational staff.

Figure 7: Survey Results – Quality of Trainings



The figure below shows the level of satisfaction with the trainers that delivered the training programme.²⁰

Figure 8: Survey Results – Quality of Trainers

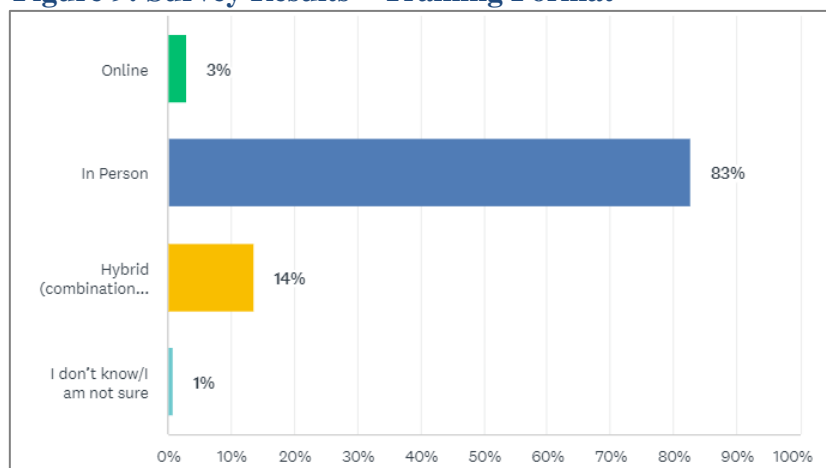


¹⁹ The precise question was “If you have attended any trainings organized by UNDP’s NCCSP project, please rate the overall quality of trainings”.

²⁰ The precise question was “Please rate the quality of the trainers who delivered the training content.”

The survey with NGOs/CSOs also revealed that in general they were satisfied with the “in-person” format of the training provided by the NCCSP project. This is seen in the figure below which shows a preference for this format of training by more than 80% of survey respondents.²¹

Figure 9: Survey Results – Training Format



The surveyed organizations noted the following observable improvements in their capacities:

- Positive changes in reporting and meeting donor expectations
- Enhanced skills in grants and proposal writing
- Improved project planning and proposal development
- Strengthened financial management and budgeting practices
- Renewed motivation and hope in organizational activities
- Application of learned skills in fundraising and grant proposal writing
- Application of learned skills in monitoring and evaluation

Overall, the organizations have experienced tangible improvements in certain areas of their operations as a result of their involvement in the NCCSP project. These improvements suggest that the training and capacity-building interventions have had a positive impact on their organizational capacities and have empowered them to perform more effectively and efficiently in their areas of work. However, the evaluation also identified some aspects of the training programme that require further improvement. The following are some key factors identified by the participants of the evaluation.

- One eligibility challenge that the project encountered was the issue of **licensing**, as many CSOs and NGOs in Afghanistan do not have a renewed license. Evaluation interviewees reported that licensing of civil society entities has become a controversial issue in the new political climate. In the framework of the NCCSP project, UNDP had to work with licensed organizations, as part of the project’s approach. In future iterations of training, UNDP may choose to provide training to individuals (e.g., academics, activists, journalists, professionals, etc.) if the licensing issue becomes a serious constraint.

²¹ The precise question was “What type of training format do you generally prefer?”

- Currently, the consortium is the only service provider that conducts all training. While, as shown above, the beneficiary NGOs/CSOs are satisfied with the training, there is a risk that a single provider brings a narrow perspective. Some of the surveyed NGOs/CSOs suggested the *diversification of training providers* as a way of introducing a broader perspective and fresh insights into the training content. To this end, the NCCSP could explore the possibility of tapping into local academic institutions, think tanks, sector experts and others to provide training. Building local training capacity also supports sustainability after the end of the project (this point is discussed in more detail in the Sustainability section of this report).
- Multiple respondents felt that the *timeframe of training sessions was too short*. They felt that the 1-3 day trainings were too short to absorb substantive content. Some suggested that training sessions could be extended to 5-7 days for certain topics requiring extensive learning and practice. Additionally, training content could be divided into multi-phase modules delivered over several months. This allows time to apply learnings before the next session.
- Some interviewees brought up the issue of the *translation quality* of training materials from English to local languages, identifying it as one of the challenges. The lack of expert translators and a rigorous translation/quality checking process seems to have contributed to the issues, affecting the effectiveness of the training materials. This highlights the need for greater focus on localization of content and checking the competency of translators. To address this issue, the contractor needs to engage professional translation services to ensure accurate and high-quality translations. Moreover, regular reviews and feedback from participants needs be sought to continuously improve the clarity and effectiveness of the training materials.
- Some interviewees also raised the need for the NCCSP project to track more rigorously the impact of the training programmes it offers. Interviews with evaluation stakeholders showed that the feedback collected from the recipients of the training programme is fragmented and would benefit from further improvement through surveys, pre- and post-tests, observations, and regular communications with beneficiaries. To this end, it is necessary to assess and monitor more systematically the effect of the training content on the participating NGOs/CSOs. This can be achieved by incorporating a comprehensive monitoring system that tracks and measures the effect of the training programmes on participating NGOs/CSOs.

3.2.2. Grant Initiatives

Another key component of the NCCSP project (Component 2) is the provision of grants to NGOs/CSOs, providing a multi-faceted support system for these organizations. Under this component, the project will select 200 NGOs/CSOs which will receive low-value grants after graduation from the raining activities under Component 1. This component is designed to roll out in two rounds, with each round of selection for Component 2 starting in the fourth month of the Component 1 selection rounds and aiming to select 100 NGOs/CSOs.

Given this interconnectivity between components, progress on Component 2 has been dependent to some extent on Component 1. So far, under this component, the project has developed the criteria for the selection of the beneficiaries of grants. These criteria have already been approved by the Steering Committee (PSC). The criteria emphasize grant objectives, financial management practices, and adherence to specific guidelines. In addition, UNDP has completed the procurement process for the consultants²² who will conduct the due diligence of beneficiary organizations.

This component is by far the most complex of the project and the months ahead will see a lot of complexity and intensity in the activities around the disbursement and implementation of the grant initiatives. Disbursing grants will face many challenges stemming from Afghanistan's difficult context, as well as the transaction-intensive coordination needed across numerous stakeholders. Additionally, genuine, sustainable capacity building through grant implementation usually takes more time than allotted in projects like NCCSP. Several evaluation participants noted that the timeline for completion of the grants' component is extremely tight given the large budget, number of beneficiaries, and Afghanistan's challenging political climate. Even with the recent extension of the project, the grants' implementation schedule is extremely tight and ambitious. The tight timeline compounds the challenges of working in an uncertain environment and managing a complex web of grantees, with their own challenges in a rapidly evolving environment with increasing restrictions on their operations.

The following are some major risks that in the opinion of the evaluation participants that in the opinion of stakeholders have the potential to represent significant challenges for the project.

- With many NGO/CSO applicants expected to compete for 200 grants, many qualified organizations will be rejected, likely resulting in complaints and grievances from those not selected. Applicants passed over may perceive biases or inconsistencies in selection, undermining perceptions of fairness. Clear selection criteria and communication around decisions will be vital to address this risk.
- Other development partners, such as UN Women and ACBAR, pointed out that they are providing similar grant support to NGO/CSOs. In such a situation with multiple sources

²² One international and one national consultant.

of funding, without coordination duplication is highly likely, with grantees "double-dipping" from multiple funders for the same work. Such accountability risk requires a unified database that consolidates information on registered NGO/CSOs and their focus areas, grantees selected by UNDP and other agencies, grant amounts, project timelines and objectives, and other similar information. In fact, a Contractor Information Management System (CIMS) already exists in Afghanistan, and it serves as a centralized database for UN agencies to share information on partner profiles, contract values, performance metrics, and debarment. However, this system is closed to the public due to the sensitivity of information and it excludes non-UN development partners interviewees. Overall interviewees for this evaluation indicated that the real-time data sharing across UN agencies and other development partners remains a challenge.

- With 200 grants initiatives underway, ensuring accountability and proper usage of funds will be extremely challenging for the NCCSP project. The project must guarantee all grant initiatives meet social, environmental, and other safeguard standards. UNDP's Integrated Risk Management Unit (IRMU) has thus far provided the project with vital support in the screening of the grantees.²³ However, this only the beginning of a long process in which the project team will need to rigorously track expenses and verify programmatic progress for each grantee, monitor all grant initiatives by means of field visits and constant communications. This will be a very demanding process and will require substantial staff time and financial oversight expertise. This expertise might exceed current project capabilities. Additionally, on-the-job training is planned to be provided to each grant recipient over the implementation period of the grant initiatives, which adds further complexity to the delivery of project activities. Given these challenges, one interviewee suggested that the project might consider the option of contracting an experienced²⁴ NGO or third-party entity to administer the grants component. This is an option that has strengths and weaknesses. On the plus side, it might help with efficiencies. But on the minus side, it adds an additional layer of complexity in the accountability relationships, which might pose challenges for the transparent management of the funds. The role of the IRMU will be crucial in this regard, bolstered by the two dedicated consultants hired by the project to handle the due diligence of the grant proposal. However, what has transpired so far on this front is only a fraction of the work that will be required to ensure the integrity and transparency of 200 grant initiatives in a geography like Afghanistan's.

²³ The Integrated Risk Management Unit (IRMU) is an operational component of UNDP Afghanistan that conducts risk assessments and enables adaptive responses to volatility, in order to support UNDP programs and commitments in the country. IRMU's scope encompasses compliance, auditing, anti-fraud measures, capacity building, and coordination with stakeholders.

²⁴ With specialized expertise in grants management, compliance, M&E, with systems and tools to effectively track grantee budgets, activities, outputs, etc.

3.2.3. Networking

The evaluation survey with the CSOs/NGOs showed a strong interest from CSOs/NGOs for networking domestically and internationally. The establishment of a platform for networking and coordination among NGOs and CSOs is the focus of the project's third component.

This is the component where the project has lagged in terms of progress. Initially, the project had agreed to establish this platform with ACBAR, which is a coordinating civil society organization in Afghanistan. However, after changes in ACBAR's Senior Management, this agreement fell through. Additionally, ACBAR's exclusive focus on working with NGOs and limited engagement with CSOs hindered the comprehensive representation of civil society, limiting networking opportunities.

The project is currently in consultations with civil society stakeholders on the form and format of the platform to be established. A recent consultative meeting was held in April 2023 on this matter. There was a unanimous agreement among participants that establishing a national platform would be highly beneficial for the entire civil society. Such a platform would serve as a unifying mechanism and enhance collaboration among stakeholders. During the June 2023 PSC meeting, several activities were proposed and approved to enhance development and coordination of the NGO/CSO platforms based on the consultation meeting conclusions. UNDP will organize monthly hybrid meetings with diverse stakeholders like NGOs/CSOs, UN, donors, and women's groups to enable information sharing, collaboration, and advocacy on development issues. A regularly updated database of development projects will serve as a resource for informed decision-making. Two NGO/CSO advocacy events in neighboring countries are also planned for late 2023 and early 2024 to promote their work and partnerships. These activities aim to facilitate regular dialogue, updated project data, and strengthened networks to further develop the platforms for cooperation.

The project is now considering partnering with multiple existing networks, rather than only the Afghan Civil Society Forum (ACBAR). The project team is exploring potential partnerships with networks like the Afghan Women's Network (AWN), the Afghan Women's Educational Center (AWEC), and other relevant civil society organizations. These networks have experience engaging diverse stakeholders, making them valuable partners for building an inclusive coordination platform. However, the practical steps for how these multiple networks will interact to establish the platform remain unclear.

To address this, a capacity analysis of each network will be needed to determine which are best suited for specific roles in the platform. Additionally, developing a concept note that outlines a clear vision and goals for the coordination platform will be beneficial. This concept note could include terms of reference or a work plan detailing the concrete actions needed to set up the platform. With a defined vision, capacity mapping, and action plan, the project can move forward with a strategic approach for partnering with networks to create an effective coordination platform.

3.2.4. Achievement of Objectives

Table 4 below presents the project's indicators baseline and targets, and the status of achievement as of the time of this evaluation. As can be seen from that table, two indicators have been achieved, whereas one remains to be achieved. Specifically, the indicator *"NGO/CSO personnel capacity enhanced in core management and service delivery focused areas"* has exceeded its target. Also, the indicator *"Share of NGOs/CSOs trained in GBV prevention and response and demonstrating proper protocols in-place to support survivors of GBV"* has met its target. The indicator *"NGOs/CSOs benefiting from improved coordination and access to better information and networking"* has not been achieved yet.

The following table (Table 3) provides a summary of the status of achievement of project objectives by output area based on data provided by the project team. As can be seen from the table, as of the point of the evaluation, 5 out of the 10 output indicators had been achieved, whereas on 4 indicators the project has not made progress yet. The latter are the indicators pertaining to outcome areas 2 and 3, which as noted in the previous section the project has yet to start full implementation. Furthermore, one indicator had not yet been measured.²⁵

Table 3: Achievement of Project Results

Indicator Number	Output Indicator	Achievement Status
1.1	Select NGOs/CSOs received a minimum of six training packages offered under the Project (Number)	Achieved
1.2	NGOs/CSOs that underwent project trainings report improved staff performance in training areas (Percentage)	Not Measured
1.3	NGO/CSO personnel trained under the Project reporting satisfaction with the capacity building activities (Percentage)	Achieved
1.4	NGO/CSO personnel trained under the Project reporting satisfaction with the capacity building activities, of which female (Percentage)	Achieved
2.1	Select NGOs/CSOs provided with operational support sub-grants under this Project (Number)	Not Achieved
2.2	Operational support sub-grants benefitted women-led NGOs/ CSOs or delivered activities benefitting primarily women and girls (Percentage)	Not Achieved
2.3	NGOs/CSOs that received Sub-grants have continued to be functional in areas of public outreach/community mobilization and/or service delivery (Number)	Not Achieved

²⁵ Indicator: "NGOs/CSOs that underwent project trainings report improved staff performance in training areas".

Indicator Number	Output Indicator	Achievement Status
3.1	The NGO platform(s) was established and/or an existing platform was enhanced for national and local NGOs (Yes/No)	Not Achieved
4.1	Grievances addressed within the time specified in the Project Operations Manual (Percentage)	Achieved
4.2	Significant representation and inclusion of women among the non-support staff related to this Project (Percentage)	Achieved

Starting with the overarching outcome, the focus is on enhancing capacities, sustaining operations, and strengthening cooperation of select NGOs and CSOs. The data demonstrates that 55% of NGO/CSO personnel have had their capacities enhanced, exceeding the target of 50%. This can be seen as an unequivocal success, especially given that the data derives from a pre-test and post-test methodology, which offers some degree of objectivity. Similarly, the goal of having 100% of NGOs/CSOs trained in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention and response has been met, again indicating a favorable result.

However, data on improved coordination and access to information is not yet available, though a coordination meeting is scheduled for October 2nd. This will be a critical data point to assess how well NGOs/CSOs are benefiting from networking and improved access to information, given that the target is set at 70%.

- For Output 1, which focuses on Mapping & Capacity Strengthening, all indicators demonstrate significant progress or attainment of targets. Specifically, 400 NGOs/CSOs have received at least six training packages. 91% of NGO/CSO personnel trained are satisfied with the capacity building activities, surpassing the 70% target, and even more noteworthy, 93% of female participants have reported satisfaction, exceeding expectations.
- Output 2, centered on operational support to NGOs/CSOs, presents a gap in implementation. No NGOs/CSOs have been provided with operational support sub-grants as yet. Grant proposals are still under review, and winning proposals are to be announced in the coming months. This is an area requiring urgent attention, as it is fundamental to the sustainability and operational effectiveness of the NGOs/CSOs involved.
- Output 3 aims to establish or enhance an NGO platform for national and local organizations. While the platform has not yet been established, a meeting with 1,400 NGOs/CSOs has been arranged for October 2nd. The outcome of this meeting will provide key insights into the potential for coordinated action and knowledge sharing among NGOs/CSOs.
- Output 4 focuses on Project Management and Implementation Support. Here, the project has exceeded its targets for grievance resolution, with 97% of grievances addressed within the stipulated timeframe. Also, the representation of women among non-support staff has surpassed the target, standing at 36%.

In summary, the project shows strong performance in capacity building and gender inclusion but has work to do in terms of operational support and the establishment of coordination platforms. The pending evaluations and meetings in October will offer additional data points to assess the full spectrum of the project's impact. Given the critical role of civil society in Afghanistan's development, the data points suggest that the project is largely on track but must expedite efforts in certain areas to fulfill its stated objectives fully.

Table 4: Status of Project Results

Output and Activity Results	Output Indicators	Baseline	Targets	Current	Explanation
Outcome: Enhancing capacities, sustaining operations and strengthening cooperation of select NGOs and CSOs	NGO/CSO personnel capacity enhanced in core management and service delivery focused areas (percent) (Percentage)	0	50	55	Achieved The data is provided based on the pre test and post test of the first round
	Share of NGOs/CSOs trained in GBV prevention and response and demonstrating proper protocols in-place to support survivors of GBV (percent) (Percentage)	0	100	100	Achieved All the NGOs/CSOs received Gender mainstreaming training
	NGOs/CSOs benefiting from improved coordination and access to better information and networking (percent) (Percentage)	0	70	0	Not achieved yet A coordination meeting is arranged for 2nd October
Output 1: Mapping & Capacity Strengthening of Select NGOs and CSOs	Select NGOs/CSOs received a minimum of six training packages offered under the Project. (Number)	0	400	400	400 NGOs/CSOs received capacity building trainings on 10 different modules
	NGOs/CSOs that underwent project trainings report improved staff performance in training areas. (Percentage)	0	60%	n.a	Not yet measured, only pre test and post test are done.
	NGO/CSO personnel trained under the Project reporting satisfaction with the capacity building activities. (Percentage, Custom) (Percentage)	0	70%	91%	91% are happy with trainings they received
	NGO/CSO personnel trained under the Project reporting satisfaction with the capacity building activities, of which female (Percentage)	0	70%	93%	93% female participants are happy with the trainings

Output and Activity Results	Output Indicators	Baseline	Targets	Current	Explanation
Output 2: Operational Support LVGs to Select NGOs/CSOs	Select NGOs/CSOs provided with operational support sub-grants under this Project. (Number)	0	200	0	Grant proposals from the 200 NGOs/CSOs of the first round were received on 16 July and are under the technical review of the team. Winning proposals will be announced in mid October. The grant proposals from the second round 200 NGOs/CSOs received in 17 September and the evaluation process will be done in month of October and the winning proposals will be announced in November 2023.
	Operational support sub-grants benefitted women-led NGOs/ CSOs or delivered activities benefitting primarily women and girls. (Percentage)	0	30%	0	No progress yet
	NGOs/CSOs that received Sub-grants have continued to be functional in areas of public outreach/community mobilization and/or service delivery for the full duration of the project (Number)	0	100%	0	No progress yet
Output 3: Development and Coordination of NGO platform	The NGO platform(s) was established and/or an existing platform was enhanced for national and local NGOs in Afghanistan to represent members of all relevant stakeholders. (Yes/No)	No	Yes	No	The first monthly coordination meeting with 1400 NGOs/CSOs which were mapped by the NCCSP project is arranged for 2nd October
Output 4: Project Management and Implementation Support	Grievances addressed within the time specified in the Project Operations Manual. (Percentage)	0	80%	97%	97% of the cases are resolved within the timeframe indicated in the GRM Manual and the rest is in progress.
	Significant representation and inclusion of women among the non-support staff related to this Project under UNDP and its contracted implementation support partners. (Percentage)	0	30%	36%	8 out of 22 project staff are female

3.3. Coherence

The NCCSP project shows adequate internal coherence through well-aligned objectives and outputs tailored to enhance the performance and effectiveness of NGOs and CSOs in Afghanistan. As noted previously in this report, the project is strategically integrated into broader UNDP and UN frameworks, ensuring that it complements existing initiatives. Its multi-faceted outputs encompass a wide range of capacity-building measures - from training and low-value grants to improved coordination mechanisms - that directly correspond to its overarching objectives. Additionally, the project incorporates lessons from past initiatives and embeds an adaptive monitoring component, enhancing its responsiveness to a complex and changing environment.

As far as external coherence is concerned, the NCCSP project operates in the broader context of UNDP's programme for Afghanistan that includes other interventions that are directly relevant to civil society. The most important UNDP programme in relation to NCCSP is the Area Based Approach for Development Emergency Initiatives (ABADEI) programme, an initiative of UNDP Afghanistan primarily aimed at addressing multiple facets of community development and resilience, particularly in the context of Afghanistan. The ABADEI programme prioritizes interventions in four key areas:

1. ***Provision of Essential Services:*** ABADEI focuses on ensuring that communities have access to basic services, which may include healthcare, education, and utilities, among others.
2. ***Community Livelihoods and Local Economic Activities:*** The ABADEI programme aims to invigorate local economies by supporting livelihoods, potentially through skills development, employment generation, and small business support.
3. ***Disaster and Climate Resilient Critical Infrastructure:*** ABADEI puts an emphasis on building and reinforcing infrastructure that is resilient to both natural disasters and the impacts of climate change. This could involve constructing flood barriers, earthquake-resistant buildings, or similar projects.
4. ***Community Planning and Social Cohesion:*** ABADEI also focuses on fostering a sense of community and improving social cohesion. This is achieved through community planning activities that may include conflict resolution mechanisms, social audits, or participatory budgeting.

Both NCCSP and ABADEI are highly synergetic in nature, as they contribute to community development and resilience, but approach this objective from different angles. NCCSP focuses on capacity-building for registered national and local NGOs and CSOs, aiming to improve their performance and effectiveness. On the other hand, ABADEI targets the communities directly, with a focus on essential services, livelihoods, infrastructure, and social cohesion. The enhancement of NGO/CSO capacities through the NCCSP will directly benefit the ABADEI programme. Given that ABADEI aims for comprehensive community development, the improved performance of NGOs/CSOs will result in more effective

implementation of projects under ABADEI's umbrella. NGOs/CSOs are often the ground-level implementers of community projects and are critical in the provision of essential services and community planning, two of ABADEI's key pillars.

NCCSP's implementation of the grants' component will be crucial for taking advantage of potential synergies between the two programmes. They can complement each other in achieving the overarching goal of community development and resilience. The NCCSP's capacity-building focus has the potential to significantly enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of ABADEI's community-focused projects, especially through the grants' component. Therefore, a more strategic coordination and integration of the implementation of these two initiatives will yield amplified outcomes, greater resource efficiency, and a more holistic approach to development.

The NCCSP project has put in place some mechanisms for coordination with the other development partners that are in the business of capacity building for civil society organizations. A key structure for coordination has been the project's Steering Committee which has included key players in this area such as the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development (ACBAR)²⁶ and UN Women. ACBAR is implementing in cooperation with OCHA a similar project funded by the UK Aid. Similarly, UN Women is implementing a capacity building project targeting civil society organizations. The Steering Committee has provided the space where the NCCSP project interacts with the other partners and facilitates coordination.

While the project's willingness to collaborate with existing programs and platforms such as ACBAR indicates a flexible approach and an aversion to "reinventing the wheel," most participants in this evaluation identified significant potential for further improvement in how the project coordinates with other development partners assisting civil society. Some interviewees noted cases where the same organizations have been beneficiaries of multiple training programmes, raising questions about resource allocation efficiency. They noted certain overlaps in training topics like project management, proposal writing, and financial sustainability. While some duplication may be inevitable given the universal relevance of these themes, better coordination could allow for more comprehensive and synergistic capacity building.

Interviewees pointed out that multiple agencies and projects are conducting parallel training and grant initiatives, often with limited alignment in terms of target beneficiaries, geographic coverage, and training content. This fragmented landscape risks duplication of efforts, whereby different organizations invest in developing similar materials and training programmes, without drawing on each other's work. These risks leading to what one interviewee referred to as "*flooding*" of certain local organizations with more resources than they can effectively manage. In a context of limited organizational capacity such as

²⁶ The Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development (ACBAR), is an Afghan independent body that brings together 183 national and international NGOs working in Afghanistan and abiding by the humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality, impartiality and humanity.

Afghanistan's, such over-resourcing raises the risk of resource misuse. Furthermore, without a coordinated approach, there's the added risk of beneficiaries receiving the same training multiple times. The urgency for improved coordination is particularly acute when it comes to grant making. Each agency tends to maintain its own list of NGOs they are supporting with grants. However, there is no consolidated, shared database that provides updated information on the recipients of grants. This fragmentation makes it challenging to ensure that there are no overlaps in grant allocation.

The NCCSP project needs to map the assistance that is currently provided by development partners for local NGOs and CSOs. Such information does not seem to be able to the project or UNDP, as several attempts were made by the evaluation team to access such information. The lack of such information restricts the NCCSP project's ability to identify synergies between its objectives and the ongoing initiatives by other development partners. It is therefore important for the NCCSP project, in conjunction with UNDP, to prioritize the mapping of development assistance to local NGOs and CSOs. This will serve as a valuable resource not just for the NCCSP but also for the broader development community.

Further, evaluation interviews identified gaps in capturing and sharing lessons learned between international organizations and their projects. For example, UNDP could benefit from UN Women's specialized expertise in gender mainstreaming, which is particularly valuable considering the constraints faced by women in Afghanistan. Furthermore, UNDP can draw important insights from the experience of other agencies, and conversely share with them its experience. A case in point is the substantive training programme that UN Women is currently implementing for civil society organizations in Afghanistan. While UNDP has opted for broad reach, UN Women had focused more on quality through its highly individualized and tailored approach. These differences in approach are described in more detail in the box below. Despite their divergent strategies, there exist exciting opportunities for synergy if both projects leverage each other's strengths. UNDP could enrich its model by incorporating UN Women's specialized modules and interactive pedagogical tools, especially around gender mainstreaming. With almost identical timelines and budgets, both projects target the same CSOs, risking resource flooding and diluted focus. UN Women's expertise in gender programming is particularly valuable considering the acute struggles faced by women's organizations in Afghanistan.

Box 2: UNDP's and UN Women's Training Approaches

UNDP and UN Women have adopted different approaches in their capacity building projects for NGOs/CSOs in Afghanistan, which stem from their distinct goals, opportunities and constraints.

Although the NCCSP has planned to provide on-the-job training to each grant recipient over the implementation period of the grant initiatives, the main training component it is delivering is through large-scale, lecture-based trainings. The merit of this approach lies in its ability to rapidly disseminate information and training to a considerable number of organizations. While this expands access, it risks diluting the depth and quality of interactions.

In contrast, UN Women's project focuses on in-depth, quality interactions through a two-phase model - core skills training followed by practical implementation. Small batches of participants

attend workshops at UN compounds, with customized modules based on individual organizational needs. This facilitates deep engagement and optimized learning. However, the small-scale approach limits the number of organizations reached within a given timeframe.

There is an evident trade-off between scale and depth. Each approach comes with distinct advantages and disadvantages, determined by the agencies' goals, opportunities, and constraints. The way forward is to explore mechanisms for integrating these approaches in a complementary fashion.

The above analysis raises the need for enhanced coordination and communications between UNDP and the NCCSP project and other development partners to exchange experiences and avoid repeated mistakes. The interviewees advocated for consultations involving all relevant stakeholders to improve coordination on training topics, geographical reach, sectoral focus, and avoiding duplication. More frequent communication, even bi-monthly, was suggested to enable mid-course corrections of initiatives supporting civil society based on training effectiveness and engagement data.

Further, during programme design, consultations need to be used to identify overlaps and synergies, ensuring that efforts are complementary rather than redundant. Also, the development partners will benefit from the establishment of a platform for information sharing on beneficiaries, locations, training topics, and so on. Such platform would help development partners streamline planning and execution by providing a consolidated view of ongoing and upcoming initiatives. While recognizing the value of in-person training, especially for fostering women's participation, such a platform would be instrumental in avoiding duplication and ensuring consistent quality. Another idea worth exploring is the conduct joint training workshops that bring together different organizations, fostering a collaborative learning environment. In terms of content, there is potential in sharing training modules for repurposing across different programmes.

* * *

Overall, evaluation interviews highlighted pressing needs to strengthen coordination to optimize resource allocation, achieve complementarity, facilitate mutual learning, avoid duplication, and ultimately maximize the impact of capacity building for Afghan civil society. Better coordination would optimize the allocation of resources, expand reach, avoid duplication, and enhance the overall impact of capacity building efforts from the multiplicity of actors involved. It would help develop an integrated, complementary ecosystem of support for Afghan civil society.

3.4. Efficiency

This section provides an assessment of the efficiency with which the project was planned, financed, and implemented.

Project Management

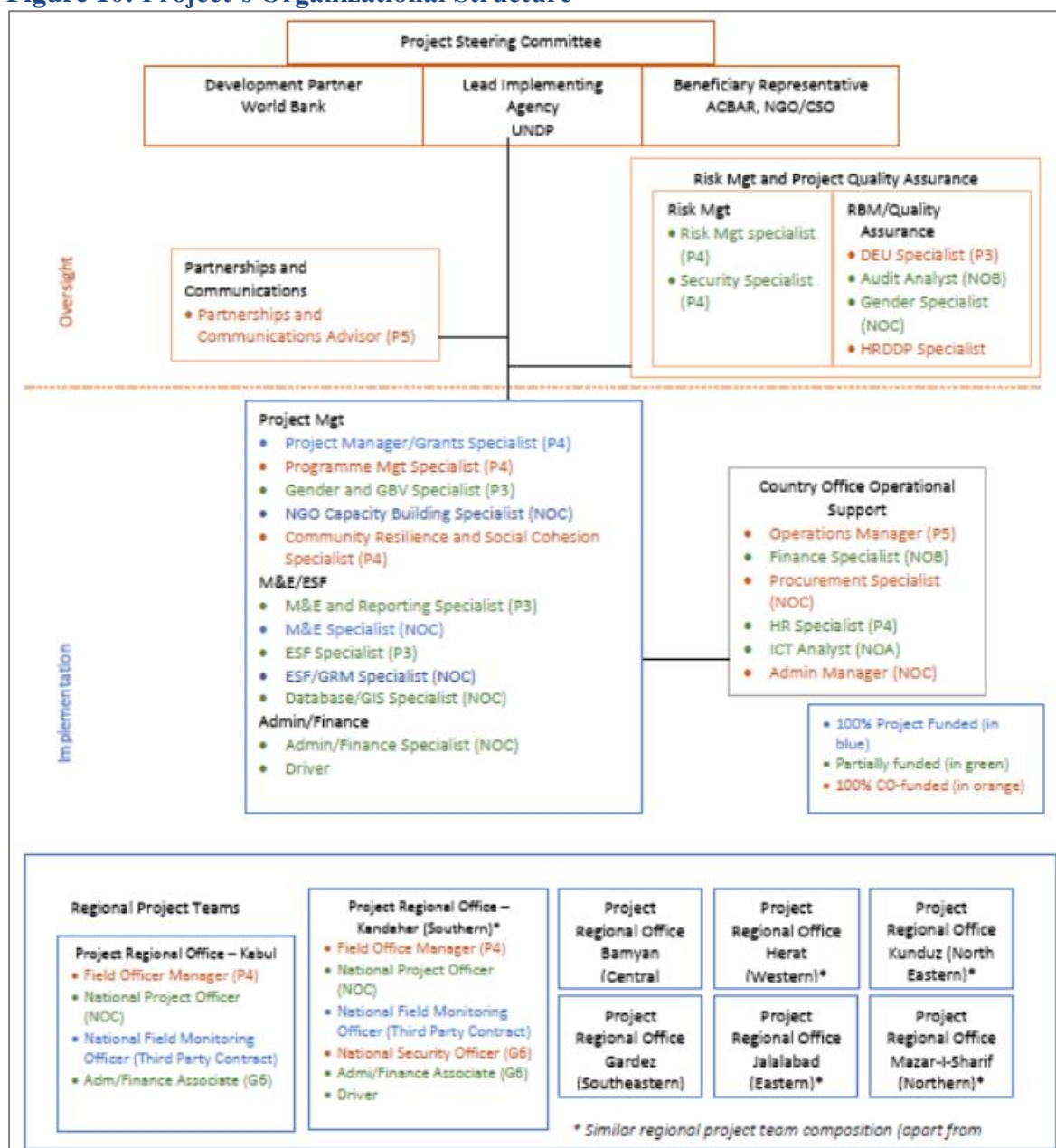
The project's management is carried out by UNDP under the Direct Implementation Modality (DIM). As such, UNDP has led the implementation of the project and assumed responsibility for overall coordination. This has encompassed procurement arrangements with contractors, engagement with beneficiary NGOs/CSOs, as well as fiduciary and safeguards management. This is the most appropriate modality for this project given the context of Afghanistan, described in the previous sections of this report. As part of this implementation modality, UNDP has ensured quality assurance, monitoring and reporting, and the management of technical assistance activities. To execute these responsibilities, UNDP has leveraged its team in Kabul and its eight regional offices. Based on the conditions of the Project Document, a Project Operations Manual (POM), was agreed by UNDP and the World Bank, which set the operating principles and procedures to be monitored and reported upon.

The management and implementation of the project is carried out by a lean Project Implementation Unit, which at the time of the evaluation consisted of 19 persons - seven women and twelve men. The project's organizational structure – as envisaged in the Project Document – is shown in Figure 8 below. The PIU is headed by a dedicated Project Manager, and includes an NGO/CSO Capacity Building Specialist, an Environmental and Social Framework/Safeguards Specialist, and a Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist. Additionally, the project has recruited a NGOs/CSOs Capacity Support Specialist, two UN Volunteers as Finance Assistant and Administration Assistant, a Finance and Administration Specialist, and three regional GRM Coordinators. The recruitment process has been slow throughout 2022. Recruitment delays have been a key challenge, for the project with the international Project Manager only hired in December 2022. In 2023, the pace of recruitment has picked up, with most recruitment taking place in the first and second quarters of 2023. Crucial in this period has been the recruitment of the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) coordinators, which has accelerated the completion of the establishment of the GRM system (more on this further in this section of the report). Most of the PIU is now in place, with only one post expected to be filled in the rest of 2023.

The project is overseen by a Steering Committee, which has acted as the project's main decision-making body and provided the project team with overall guidance and strategic direction. The Steering Committee consists of senior representatives of the WB and UNDP. Since the launch of the project, the Steering Committee has met three times, with the last meeting held on 19 June 2023. Steering Committee participants have included representatives of the World Bank, Afghanistan Women Education Centre (AWEC), Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development (ACBAR), Afghan NGOs' Coordination Bureau (ANCB), Afghanistan Women Chamber and Commerce (AWCC), and Afghan Women Network (AWN).

The Steering Committee has played a key role in the approval of key strategic decisions, selection criteria for NGOs/CSOs, grant-making choices, and other significant initiatives. It has also addressed issues such as concerns regarding eligibility, gender balance, and organizations with expired licenses. A key Steering Committee decision has been the inclusion of 43% of women-led NGOs/CSOs in the selected organizations. One member of the Steering Committee interviewed for the evaluation suggested that communications by the project team with Steering Committee members could be further enhanced by providing more frequent insights and recommendations for course corrections.

Figure 10: Project’s Organizational Structure



A key role in the project’s Component 1 is played by the Implementing Consortium, which comprises MGTwell Consulting, an Afghan company, and Public Affairs Center India, an Indian company. This consortium has been engaged by the NCCSP project as the service

provider for the organization of the training programme. Documentary evidence and interviews for this evaluation indicate that the division of labor between the two partners within the consortium has been clear. MGTwell has focused on ground implementation and data collection, while the Indian partner has provided technical support. The Indian partner has supported development of training modules and assisted with the planning process during the inception phase. Ongoing technical support is expected from the Indian partner for the upcoming on-the-job training during the grant implementation phase.

Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

The project experienced significant delays in the implementation of the activities, especially throughout 2022. While partly related to the slow recruitment process for the PIU team, they have also been due to challenges in procurement of the service provider for Component 1. There has been a marked improvement in 2023, and this is obvious in the volume of activities completed by the project. The contracting of the service provider was completed at the end of the first quarter of 2023, which enabled the launching of the training programme. With most recruitment completed by the time of this evaluation, the PIU is now mostly functional.

The implementation of the project has been flexible, adapting to the changing conditions in Afghanistan. Importantly, taking into consideration the delays experienced by the PIU, the stakeholders agreed to a restructuring process which included the extension of the project period. As a result, the project period was extended to October 31, 2024. The World Bank and UNDP signed the restructuring agreement on May 16, 2023.²⁷ The amendment added monitoring indicators 3.1 and 5.1 from the UN Harmonized Monitoring and Reporting Indicators for Afghanistan Response. This extension will allow the project to provide additional subgrants to NGOs/CSOs, but also gives grant beneficiaries more time to complete their activities, without incurring additional costs. Thanks to this restructuring, it is realistic to expect the project team to achieve all objectives laid out in the Project Document despite the delays which have already occurred.

An example of the project's adaptability was the change in the training format. NCCSP project primarily utilized in-person training delivery, with online training only arranged in certain regions to ensure the security of female participants. However, satisfaction with the online training was low. Therefore, in the second round of training, online delivery was discontinued and changed to in-person training sessions held in safer locations instead.

Another example of the project's adaptability is the exploration by UNDP of the addition of community kitchens to the project design. UNDP proposed including community kitchens as a new project component to the World Bank, submitting a \$20 million proposal. Community kitchens are communal spaces where people, often women, come together to cook affordable, nutritious meals for their families and vulnerable community members. This model has been successful across Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Islamic countries. Community kitchens

²⁷ The restructuring was done based on a request letter by UNDP in response to the changing circumstances in Afghanistan.

address food insecurity and women's empowerment while promoting social cohesion. Currently, 47 pilot community kitchens employ 474 people, 70% women, across five provinces under the ABADEI initiative. On average, they serve 73 people daily at discounted rates. The goal is to support women-led social enterprises through grants and digital payments. The proposed \$6 monthly allocation per beneficiary would provide one meal per day. Adding community kitchens leverages an established, culturally-aligned concept.

However, as noted in previous sections of this report, the timeline for implementation is very tight and ambitious given the large budget, number of beneficiaries, and volatile context in Afghanistan. Given the size of the budget and number of beneficiaries involved, combined with the challenging conditions of Afghanistan's uncertain and evolving political environment, it is clear the project operates on a very *tight schedule* – even accounting for the extension provided to the PIU recently. Several interviewees for this evaluation noted that the timeframe for the implementation of the project is very restrictive. The most challenging part of the project, which is the grants component, has not even fully started yet. And that will involve a lot of challenges emanating from the difficult context of the country, but also from the transaction-intensive nature of grant initiatives which involve a very large number of stakeholders. In general, projects like NCCSP necessitate longer timeframes for genuine and sustainable capacity building.

Some interviewees noted that donor pressure to rapidly disburse funds might be a risk not only for the project, but also for the recipients of funds. Injecting significant resources into fledgling organizations without sufficient capacity for project or financial management could perpetuate the challenges these organizations already face. Therefore, a longer-term strategy that combines capacity building with phased resource allocation would be more effective.

Risk Management

The NCCSP project is being implemented under challenging external circumstances, which have had a tangible effect on project activities and could potentially affect the project more significantly. The project faces many risks, some of which have been discussed in previous sections of this report. The following are additional risk factors which are external to the project, but could have a significant impact on it and therefore need to be monitored with great care by the project team.

- ***Involvement of the ITA in the Grant Selection and Implementation:*** The potential for interventions by the ITA in the selection of grant beneficiaries and the implementation of their activities poses a significant risk for the NCCSP project. ITA could exert undue influence on the selection process to favor organizations that align with their interests, thereby compromising the integrity and objectives of the NCCSP. Such influence may result in the allocation of resources to entities that do not fully meet the eligibility criteria or are not best positioned to serve the most vulnerable populations effectively. The risk extends to the implementation phase where the ITA could dictate activities to serve their agenda rather than community needs.

- ***Volatile Security Environment:*** Afghanistan's volatile security environment poses risks to the NCCSP project. Deteriorating security limits public engagement and discourages civil society activism. Civil society organizations may face threats ranging from intimidation to violence, further hampering their work. Additionally, the unstable security situation could delay project implementation if it restricts access to stakeholder offices. With in-person activities planned across Afghanistan in coming months, continued instability threatens these efforts. To mitigate security risks, the project has established remote communication methods including phone calls, email, and online meetings. Relying on these alternative channels for stakeholder communication and information gathering will allow project work to advance despite limited in-person access. The project needs to closely monitor the security situation and be prepared to rapidly adapt activities to respond to any sudden changes on the ground.
- ***Shrinking Space for Civil Society:*** Under the evolving NGO regulations, civil society organizations are operating under a new and potentially restrictive set of rules.²⁸ This is a more controlled environment where the Interim Taliban Authority (ITA) exercises significant influence over these organizations' activities, mandates, and reach. Further restrictions may limit the capability of civil society to operate, thereby affecting its efficacy in advocacy, public service delivery, and human rights promotion. To mitigate this risk, the NCCSP project has provided training and capacity building for civil society groups. Additional support might be provided to assist organizations in understanding the new rules. The project may also need to adjust activities and expectations based on the tightening civic space. Ongoing monitoring of changes in the regulatory environment will be critical.
- ***Restrictions on the Role of Women:*** ITA's ban on women working for the UN threatens the project's gender equality goals. Although female staff resumed office work after an initial remote period, risks remain of strengthened restrictions. Excluding women from UN positions directly impacts commitments to women's empowerment and inclusive development. Losing skilled female personnel compromises efforts to address women's needs and rights. Their expertise is vital in designing programs for women and girls. The ban also obstructs building local women-led NGOs' capacities since they may lack UN female professionals' support. Having few women in project activities creates gender imbalance, limiting comprehensive addressing of Afghans' diverse needs. Also, recent decrees on female education and NGO employment further challenge service delivery, although they did not directly affect the project model since NGOs/CSOs are recipients, not implementing partners. To mitigate this risk, UNDP has taken measures to ensure the safety and security of women NGO workers and female personnel. Alternative modalities for training delivery to women NGO/CSO workers were also planned.

²⁸ More analysis can be found in the publication "AFGHANISTAN: Working under the ITA's evolving NGO regulations", ACAPS, Thematic Report, 31 July 2023.

- ***SEA/SH Risks:*** The NCCSP project has incorporated mitigation and response mechanisms for Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Sexual Harassment (SEA/SH) as part of its training modules. This indicates an acknowledgment of the security and protection risks that NGOs/CSOs face in volatile environments and seeks to equip them with tools to manage such risks effectively.

In the context of such a high-risk environment, a key instrument that UNDP Afghanistan has put in place is the Integrated Risk Management Unit (IRMU) which conducts risk assessments and enables adaptive responses to volatility, in order to support UNDP programmes and commitments in the country. IRMU's scope encompasses compliance, auditing, anti-fraud measures, capacity building, and coordination with stakeholders. The risk management process in the context of the NCCSP project consists of two layers – at the first level, the project has hired two dedicated consultants who are tasked to conduct the due diligence of the grant applicants. These cases are further escalated to the IRMU that reviews all cases on the basis of risk factors.

Monitoring Framework

M&E System: The M&E system is operational, with activities like NGO visits, surveys, and training evaluations underway. A baseline study of 74 NGOs/CSOs across 8 regions provided initial understanding of circumstances. Since May 2023, the M&E team has worked closely with the service provider for the training component to validate the mapping and needs assessments. The M&E team has also conducted a thorough verification and selection process for the first 200 NGOs/CSOs to receive training, including document review, interviews and site visits. For the verification of the proposed organizations, the project team undertook direct field visits and phone surveys with 429 NGOs/CSOs across eight regions. The key purpose of these field visits and verifications was the selection of 200 NGOs/CSOs for capacity building trainings who met the eligibility and priority areas for the selection. This ensured eligibility and alignment with selection criteria. Knowledge sharing sessions were held with selected organizations on data protection and monitoring activities to secure their cooperation. As the primary implementing partner, UNDP submits quarterly progress reports to the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) as the Administrator of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). Overall, the M&E framework that has been put in place enables adequate monitoring and evaluation.

Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) System: The project has established an accessible, confidential and timebound GRM system for transparently resolving project-related grievances through a three-tier structure comprising regional, national and UNDP-PMU level grievance committees. Multiple channels like email, WhatsApp, toll-free number, suggestion boxes enable anonymous complaints filing. The process involves uptake, acknowledgement, investigation, verification, monitoring, reporting and feedback within defined timelines. Guiding principles of responsiveness, accountability and no retaliation are followed, including mandatory reporting and investigation of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (SEA/SH) cases. The GRM is now fully operational with regional coordinators, established committees, distribution of manuals/brochures, and training held. Most

grievances so far pertained to beneficiary selection and were resolved through clarification of criteria. As of early September 2022, 72 grievances and 231 information requests had been received and 69 grievances had been resolved. The project exhibits a high grievance resolution rate – based on project data, over 90% of 72 cases received have been resolved so far. No SEA/SH cases have been reported thus far. Overall, the GRM aims to provide an accessible and responsive platform for grievance redressal through systematic uptake, monitoring and transparency measures.

Project Budget and Expenditure

Table 5 provides a summary of the project’s budget and expenditure for each year. As can be seen from the table below, the project’s total budget was US\$20,000,000 with an overall expenditure of \$1,754,637 as of the point of this evaluation. The budget execution rate across all periods was 9%. Output 1, with an allocation of \$4,982,085, exhibits a 22% execution rate, with spending of \$1,081,306. Output 4, allocated \$2,362,713, shows a 28% execution rate, with an expenditure of \$665,619. Output 2 and Output 3 each have an execution rate of only 0.06%, despite significant budget allocations of \$11,850,423 and \$804,780, respectively.

Table 5: Project Budget and Execution

No.	Output Area	Budgeted (as per ProDoc)	Spent	Execution Rate
Year 2022				
1	Output 1	\$60,462	\$60,462	100%
2	Output 2	\$0	\$0	0%
3	Output 3	\$0	\$504	0%
4	Output 4	\$338,804	\$436,371	129%
5	Total	\$399,267	\$497,337	125%
Year 2023				
1	Output 1	\$4,921,622	\$1,020,844	21%
2	Output 2	\$11,716,706	\$7,208	0.06%
3	Output 3	\$399,419	\$0	0.00%
4	Output 4	\$1,408,285	\$229,248	16%
5	Total	\$18,446,032	\$1,257,299	7%
ALL YEARS				
1	Output 1	\$4,982,085	\$1,081,306	22%
2	Output 2	\$11,850,423	\$7,208	0.06%
3	Output 3	\$804,780	\$504	0.06%
4	Output 4	\$2,362,713	\$665,619	28%
5	Total	\$20,000,000	\$1,754,637	9%

This financial picture is reflective of the significant delays that the project has experienced in output areas 2 and 3, which were discussed in more detail in the previous sections of this report.

* * *

Overall, the project's management structure appears efficient, with a lean PIU overseen by an engaged Steering Committee providing strategic guidance. The Direct Implementation Modality leveraging UNDP's expertise and presence is particularly suitable to the context of Afghanistan. The project has experienced significant delays in implementation in 2022, especially in recruiting PIU staff and contracting the service provider for training. Furthermore, the project faces major external risks - primarily, potential influence by the ITA on grant selection and implementation, a deterioration in security limiting project activities, shrinking space for civil society, and bans on women's roles. Risk management mechanisms like IRMU conducting due diligence on grants and adapting women's engagement modalities mitigate external risks. No significant materialization of risks has occurred yet. The 9% budget execution rate represents a significant challenge, reflecting the daunting challenge of overseeing the implementation of 200 grant initiatives. The pace of implementation has accelerated in 2023, with the management structure, M&E system and GRM system now in place. Nevertheless, the ambitious timeline and budget scale remain a concern given the volatile context. More time may be needed for sustainable capacity building over phased funding disbursement. This reduces risks of misuse of funds by entities lacking full capacity.

3.5. Sustainability

The project is still at a stage where it is difficult to assess the sustainability of its contributions. Of the three substantive components, only the first one related to training had been running at full speed by the time of this evaluation. Therefore, a discussion of the project's sustainability will have to stay within the confines of the training programme.

Clearly, the NCCSP project is helping equip NGOs/CSOs with the necessary tools and resources to navigate the challenging and evolving context, strengthening overall civil society resilience in Afghanistan. The project is supporting institutional development of NGOs/CSOs, improving their efficiency and effectiveness through various capacity-building activities such as training and hands-on implementation of grant initiatives. The notion of “sustainability” is implicit but significant. Organizations anticipate that the skills and knowledge acquired will not only improve current operations, but also contribute to long-term resilience and adaptability. This indicates a strategic foresight that extends beyond immediate gains. By providing these opportunities, the NCCSP project is contributing to the development of more capable civil society actors. A stronger and more resilient civil society will consequently be able to withstand more effectively the effects of restrictions and political pressure.

However, the project does not have an explicit exit strategy which outlines how the project's supporting role might be transferred to a local non-governmental institution. The fact that a local Afghan NGO was used for the preparation and delivery of the training content is a good indication of sustainability, in that the NCCSP experience strengthens its capabilities in the delivery of training programmes locally. But, nevertheless, financial support from organizations will be vital for the capacity development of civil society organizations in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future. It is impossible for these NGOs and CSOs to become self-sustainable on their own account, especially in the increasingly restrictive context.

Furthermore, there is potential to strengthen the sustainability of the training content that the NCCSP project is making available. The following are some ideas based on the interviews and survey conducted for the evaluation of the project.

- ***Integrated Training Offer:*** One idea that UNDP and other development partners can consider jointly – in close consultation with the project team and stakeholders in Afghanistan – is the idea of consolidating and further integrating the training content across the various projects in Afghanistan. By consolidating training materials and aligning learning objectives across these initiatives, UNDP and the development partners can create a comprehensive and unified training package (offer) that addresses the diverse needs of NGOs/CSOs in Afghanistan. This integrated approach will not only promote greater synergy and cooperation among development partners but also enhance the overall effectiveness and impact of their efforts in supporting the region's civil society sector. To ensure the long-term sustainability and accessibility of the integrated training content, it can be placed under the management of a local entity.

- ***Training Platform:*** Given that an extensive body of training material has been created by the NCCSP and other UNDP projects in Afghanistan, it will be useful to create a platform that makes this material easily available to interested NGOs/CSOs on a permanent basis. This material could be placed online and interested NGOs/CSOs could access it free of charge at any point in time. This will require the establishment of a platform that hosts the training content. Online platforms exist, such as UNICEF's Agora. But there are two challenges that need to be borne in mind. There are some intrinsic limitations to online platforms for capacity building in specific contexts. While these platforms offer a plethora of resources for training, the prerequisites of stable internet connectivity and a conducive learning environment are not uniformly available. While online resources are undoubtedly valuable, especially for standardizing training content and reaching a broader audience, they should complement, not replace, in-person interactions in environments where the latter add multidimensional value. In-person training takes on even more relevance given the sociocultural nuances that shape the learning experience, particularly for women. The physical act of leaving the house to attend these trainings can be, in itself, an empowering experience, particularly in contexts where women's mobility is often restricted. These trainings also allow for immediate feedback and adaptation. Therefore, while online resources are undoubtedly valuable, especially for standardizing training content and reaching a broader audience, they should complement, not replace, in-person interactions in environments where the latter add multidimensional value.
- ***Greater Focus on Training of Trainers (ToT):*** A challenge reported by the implementing consortium is the limited availability of experienced trainers in Afghanistan, especially after the brain drain that ensued in 2021. Surveyed NGOs and CSOs indicated that UNDP should pay greater attention to the creation of training capabilities locally (in Afghanistan), rather than procuring them internationally. This will require greater focus on the training of trainers – significantly more so than during the second phase. For example, implementing a two-day Training of Trainers (ToT) programme will be beneficial, as it will provide an opportunity for trainers to enhance their understanding of training delivery methodologies and techniques. The ToT will equip trainers with the necessary tools and resources to engage participants effectively and create an interactive and impactful learning environment.
- ***Capitalizing on Existing Training Resources:*** NGOs and CSOs in Afghanistan require two distinct types of training. The first category is generic and covers universally applicable topics such as strategic management, financial management, and fundraising. The second category is context-specific, tailored to the unique operational environment of Afghanistan, and includes topics like the local legal framework and tax requirements. The evaluation indicates that for the generic training, the project need not allocate resources to develop new content, as such material is readily available online. Instead, the focus should be on aiding NGOs and CSOs in efficiently navigating and translating online resources into relevant languages to access the required information.

- ***Importance of Knowledge Sharing:*** The NGOs/CSOs engaged in this evaluation highlighted the importance of knowledge transfer and sharing best practices between organizations, as a key factor of sustainability. Such a process of sharing and transferring knowledge requires civil society connectivity and cooperation through networks that systematically capture and disseminate lessons learned. This would expand the scalability and replication of successful approaches across civil society. Such networks can facilitate not just the transfer of best practices, but also enable more effective collaboration and coordinated advocacy. While the third component of the NCCSP project focuses on networking and coordination, it is not yet fully operational. The project team will need to prioritize networking among NGOs/CSOs and various stakeholders with the aim of knowledge transfer and sharing of lessons learned. To this end, it will be important to explore options for facilitating partnerships and cross-organizational learning, and choose feasible solutions that fit Afghanistan's context. Moving forward, UNDP should design training sessions and grant initiatives to actively promote partnerships and collaboration between participating NGOs/CSOs.

The NCCSP project is strengthening organizational resilience and adaptability of NGOs/CSOs through capacity building, contributing to a more capable civil society sector. However, the sustainability of the training component can be improved by consolidating and integrating training content across projects into a comprehensive package, establishing an online training platform, greater focus on training of trainers locally, utilizing existing generic training resources, and promoting knowledge sharing and partnerships between NGOs/CSOs. Overall, the project has the potential to contribute to a more resilient civil society in Afghanistan if sustainability considerations are integrated into the design.

3.6. Cross-cutting Issues

The following is a brief assessment of how the NCCSP project has aligned with key principles, including a human rights-based approach, gender mainstreaming, inclusion of marginalized groups, and integration of conflict sensitivity and environmental sustainability considerations.

Human Rights Based Approach

All available evidence indicates the NCCSP project has upheld a human rights-based approach by prioritizing inclusivity and improving the situation of vulnerable local populations as rights holders. In line with international human rights and humanitarian law, the project has focused on enhancing inclusion, especially for the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups. The project has made concerted efforts to promote inclusivity and ensure no marginalized populations are left behind. By targeting women, youth, ethnic minorities, and other vulnerable groups, the project has demonstrated a commitment to social impact and support for all members of society. The project also recognized intersectional vulnerabilities by giving special attention to ethnic minorities and other multiply marginalized communities. It explicitly aims to reach various marginalized groups including women, ethnic/rural populations, persons with disabilities, and youth not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

Extensive stakeholder consultations, notably with vulnerable and marginalized groups, have been integral to the project design. This consultative approach helped identify the specific needs of these groups and also empowers them by providing a voice in planning and implementation. Concerns for vulnerable groups have been crucial in the criteria for the selection of training beneficiaries and grantees.

Overall, the project's emphasis on inclusion, targeting vulnerable populations, and consultative design adheres closely to rights-based approach principles.

Gender Mainstreaming

The NCCSP project has made deliberate efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The project has prioritized gender equality, women and youth empowerment, and supporting and protecting women and girls, with a notable number of women-led organizations and female participants in capacity building activities. To create a safe and supportive learning environment, measures have been put in place to protect women during the training sessions. Separate sessions for men and women have been conducted, facilitated by trainers of the same gender.

The responses of NGOs/CSOs to the evaluation survey suggest a mixed picture regarding the participation of women in these organizations. While some organizations have a positive and satisfactory level of participation, others acknowledge the need for improvement to ensure greater inclusivity and gender equality.

Some additional issues were raised by evaluation participants:

- Only 28% of survey respondents were women, indicating room for improvement in participation.
- Gender training was delayed until after initial capacity building, resulting in inadequate early focus on gender issues.
- Collaboration with UN Women could have enhanced gender mainstreaming given their technical expertise.
- The grant component could further prioritize gender perspectives in project selection criteria, technical guidance for proposals, required objectives/indicators, and impact evaluations.
- Organizational policies, processes, and staff capacities for gender mainstreaming need reinforcement.
- Disaggregated data collection and analysis needs improvement.

While NCCSP has taken steps to advance gender equality and women's empowerment, a more intentional, multidimensional approach is required to fully realize impact. Areas like grantmaking, policies, data, organizational development, partnerships, and project design need enhancement to embed gender considerations systematically. Continued evolution to amplify women's inclusion, participation, and benefits will maximize NCCSP's contribution to gender equality in Afghanistan.

Disability Inclusion

So far, the NCCSP project has had limited focus on disability. The very few references to disability in the project documentation and interviews for this evaluation revealed little evidence of any meaningful involvement with this marginalized group. It remains to be seen what impact the grant initiatives will have on the disability dimension. The grant initiatives funded by NCCSP could have greater focus on persons with disabilities. There is an opportunity for these initiatives to include actions, such as improving access to social and physical rehabilitation for children with disabilities and their families, supporting children with disabilities through rehabilitation services, promoting socialization and empowerment of people with disabilities through peer-to-peer support and awareness-raising. They could also address the cultural and social stigmatization of persons with disabilities, who face discrimination and obstacles in receiving adequate education, employment opportunities, and leading fulfilling lives.

Contributions to Poverty Reduction and Conflict Resolution

The NCCSP project has contributed to poverty reduction and conflict resolution efforts in Afghanistan. This is achieved this by strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations for socio-economic development and supporting initiatives that address the root causes of poverty and conflict. The training provided by the project, as well as the upcoming grant initiatives, are designed to tackle social, economic and political challenges such as

unemployment, inadequate basic services, and poor infrastructure. By building the capacity of local civil society organizations, NCCSP is equipping them to more effectively participate in economic activities, access social services, and promote stability. The skills and resources being provided have helped empower these groups to drive development and mediate conflicts at the local level. Moving forward, the project aims to fund grant initiatives that will tangibly improve incomes, service delivery, and infrastructure. By promoting socio-economic progress at the grassroots level, NCCSP is providing its contribution in alleviating sources of poverty that can otherwise fuel instability and discord.

Environmental Sensitivity and Sustainability

Although not central to the NCSSP project – given its focus and the context in which it operates – the training programmes developed by the project incorporate elements of environmental sustainability, natural resource management, and sustainable practices. This helps build awareness and skills among local stakeholders. Grant eligibility criteria include elements that require participants to assess and mitigate environmental risks. This screening ensures supported activities are eco-friendly. Further, community-level projects are designed using a participatory approach that considers local dynamics including natural resource limitations. The networking component has the potential to facilitate partnerships among environmental CSOs/NGOs to promote technical expertise on minimizing ecological footprints.

Overall, the project has followed a human rights-based approach by prioritizing the inclusion of vulnerable groups. It has promoted gender equality through measures, like the selection of women-led organizations for the training programme and the establishment of safe training environments. However, a more systemic focus is needed in the grants and networking components. Disability inclusion is an area where the project's engagement has been limited so far. The project contributes to poverty reduction and conflict resolution by building capacity for socioeconomic progress and funding local initiatives to address root causes. It remains to be seen how the project will incorporate environmental sustainability through the grants criteria.

4. LESSONS LEARNED

Lesson 1: Need for Long-Term Commitment

The experience of the NCCSP project underscores the importance of adopting a long-term perspective and maintaining flexibility when supporting civil society organizations in Afghanistan. Meaningful results often take time to materialize in the Afghan context. This necessitates a longer-term commitment to the civil society organizations being supported in order to achieve impact. The NCCSP project's approach of providing multi-year assistance to civil society organizations has proven valuable and should be preserved. Ongoing, sustained support enables these organizations to effectively implement programs over time and gradually build capacity. Short-term or inflexible assistance risks disrupting this process. Therefore, a key lesson is that future interventions aiming to support Afghan civil society must maintain a long-term perspective. By learning from NCCSP's experience, similar projects will benefit from making longer-term commitments to civil society organizations through adaptable, sustained support. This is essential to foster meaningful results from civil society strengthening initiatives in Afghanistan's complex environment.

Lesson 2: Importance of In-Person Interaction in Capacity Building Events

The NCCSP project primarily utilized in-person training delivery, with online training only arranged in certain regions to ensure the security of female participants. However, satisfaction with the online training was low. Therefore, in the second round of training, online delivery was discontinued and changed to in-person training sessions held in safer locations instead. This experience highlights limitations of relying solely on online platforms for capacity building in certain contexts. While online resources efficiently standardize training content and expand reach, they cannot replicate the multidimensional benefits of in-person training. Hands-on, interactive sessions are often more impactful for skills development and empowerment, especially for women. In restrictive environments, the act of physically convening allows for cooperative learning, relationship building, and public engagement that online modules cannot provide. Therefore, online training should complement, not replace, in-person interactions where the latter enable contextualized learning and empowerment. A blended approach that combines standardized online content with in-person training customized to the local environment could optimize outcomes. The NCCSP project underscores the need for nuanced capacity building strategies that recognize opportunities for impact within each unique context.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the evaluation's main conclusions organized according to the evaluation criteria and aligned with the evaluation questions identified in the evaluation's Terms of Reference. This section also includes a set of recommendations that will be useful to UNDP and project stakeholders for the remainder of the NCCSP project and future iterations of the project.

Relevance

The NCCSP project exhibits strong alignment with Afghanistan's needs through its provision of critical capacity building for civil society organizations. By targeting priority service sectors and vulnerable groups, it adheres to the "Leave No One Behind" principle. However, the highly ambitious timeline and large budget scale create efficiency concerns given the volatile operating context. While adaptive management mechanisms have been leveraged, the grant component will test absorptive capacities of fledgling civil society amidst tightened civic space. Sustained, long-term capacity support with phased funding may be more effective than short, rapid injection of resources.

Recommendation 1: Enhancing the Training Content in Response to Civil Society Needs

The following are recommendations directed at UNDP primarily in relation to the training component. They are forward looking in nature, given that most training activities under the project have been already delivered.

- Consider the development and provision of sustained, long-term capacity building support over a longer timeframe, rather than one-off workshops.
- Incorporate more hands-on, interactive activities into the training workshops. Prioritize experienced, professional trainers with practical expertise relevant to the training topics. Where possible and feasible, design training with a follow up mentoring component.
- Create more than one stream of training to respond to the diverse needs of NGOs/CSOs. For the more experienced NGOs/CSOs, develop advanced, specialized training modules.
- Enable NGOs/CSOs to participate more directly in the design projects like NCCSP through a participatory design and planning approach.

Effectiveness

The NCCSP project has made important strides in building civil society capacity through its training component, exceeding targets for organizations trained. However, the implementation complexity inherent in the grants component, involving selection, monitoring and coordination of a large number of stakeholders, poses risks of delays and calls for adaptive management. The establishment of an inclusive networking platform also requires further visioning and planning to move forward.

While the training element has been a success, the project now enters its most challenging phase around grant-making and networking in an operating environment with tightened civic space. Therefore, continued flexibility and risk mitigation will be key to navigating uncertainties. The NCCSP project has laid a solid groundwork, but needs to leverage partnerships and maintain responsiveness to achieve comprehensive impact across all components. A phased approach to funding disbursement tied to capacity levels may better serve fledgling civil society over rapid, large-scale resource injection.

Recommendation 2: Improving the Measurement and Tracking of Results

The following are recommendations related to the project, in the context of the significant risks that the project faces.

- Given the fact that the project's timeline is very tight, it is advisable for the project to develop a clear implementation plan for the grants' component, with milestones for each key stage of the process.
- As an option for dealing with the tight timelines for the grants' component, the project could consider contracting an experienced third-party administrator to manage the grants.
- In addition, given the elevated risks associated with the grant initiatives, the project should invest in a robust M&E system that tracks very closely the implementation of the grant initiatives and which helps the team to quickly identify corrective measures.
- The project should also establish stringent financial control mechanisms to monitor the flow of resources, especially in the grants' component, given its transaction-intensive nature. These safeguards will prevent misallocation or misappropriation of funds. Care should be taken to employ sporadic checks/audits on the use of grants and on the implementation of activities. This would serve as an additional layer of accountability, particularly useful in counteracting undue influences on the project.

The following are recommendations for UNDP, based on the experience of NCCSP, for its future efforts in support of civil society.

- UNDP should consider providing longer trainings for topics requiring extensive learning. It could also break up the delivery into multi-phase modules over several months to allow application of learnings.
- It will also be important to verify rigorously the translators' competency and engage professional translation services to ensure high quality training material.
- UNDP should establish sound assessment systems that track training impact through surveys, pre- and post-tests, observation, and regular communication.

Coherence

While the NCCSP project exhibits internal alignment between components, there is potential to enhance external coherence through greater coordination with other development partners

active in the civil society space. Overlaps in training topics and beneficiaries indicate risks of duplication without a consolidated approach. A coordinated database capturing grant recipients could help optimize resource allocation. Further, specialized expertise of partners like UN Women on gender could have enriched the training curriculum. The project will benefit from a shared platform for partners to align efforts, avoid duplication and leverage comparative strengths. Information exchange and coordination are key to ensuring coherent impact amidst the influx of resources from multiple actors. A coherent approach also mitigates risks of over-funding fledgling civil society without absorptive capacity. The project's upcoming networking component should focus on enabling joint learning and synergy.

Recommendation 3: Strengthening Cooperation with Development Partners

The following are recommendations for UNDP, based on the experience of NCCSP, for its future efforts in support of civil society.

- Given the absence of a consolidated source of information on grant recipients, UNDP is well-positioned to advocate for and support the development of a shared, real-time database of NGOs/CSOs that receive support. Such a database would help avoid overlaps and ensure efficient resource allocation. The database should include details like the amount of the grant, duration, objectives, and target beneficiaries.
- UNDP should map the support provided by development partners to civil society organizations in Afghanistan. This information should be used to inform the provision of grants to the organizations, ensuring that such support is fully synergetic with the efforts of other development partners.
- UNDP should cooperate on the development of training curricula with other agencies such as ACBAR and UN Women, so that training efforts are coordinated and make use of existing resources.
- A centralized training repository could be considered for storing and sharing training materials, allowing partners to leverage existing resources rather than developing similar materials independently.
- To make better use of resources and enhance the quality of capacity-building efforts, UNDP should consider conducting joint training workshops that bring together different organizations. This will foster a collaborative learning environment and will allow for knowledge transfer across agencies and projects.
- UNDP should integrate UN Women's expertise and specialized knowledge on gender into training programmes for civil society.
- UNDP could contribute to the establishment of an inter-organizational mechanism among development partners that allows for the capturing and sharing of lessons learned in initiatives in support of civil society like NCCSP.

Efficiency

While facing initial delays, especially in staffing and procurement, the NCCSP project has regained momentum in 2023 by establishing key structures and accelerating activities. However, the volatile external environment poses enduring risks around potential ITA interference, security deterioration, and tightened civic space. Combined with the highly ambitious timeline for a large-scale budget, this necessitates vigilant risk monitoring and adaptive contingency planning. In particular, the complex grant component involving high transaction volumes remains a formidable challenge and substantial risk. With only 9% budget execution so far, absorptive capacities of fledgling civil society will be tested amidst the compressed timeline. Therefore, phased funding disbursement tied to capacity may better serve impact and accountability aims rather than rapid, large-scale injection of resources. While regaining implementation traction, the project operates in a high-risk environment. Success will hinge on responsive risk management and flexibility to fulfil objectives by the deadline. Partnering with other actors could also boost coherence and leverage specialized expertise to navigate uncertainties.

Recommendation 4: Addressing Challenges and Mitigating Risks

The following are recommendations related to the project, in the context of the significant risks that the project faces.

- The project should fast-track the recruitment of the remaining PIU members to get team fully staffed.
- Given the complexities involved, the project is advised to schedule more frequent Steering Committee meetings for timely guidance.
- The project should develop a comprehensive risk matrix and risk mitigation strategy that takes into account Afghanistan's political volatility and the logistical challenges it brings. Such a strategy should involve regular monitoring and a contingency plan that can be quickly enacted should destabilizing events occur.
- The project should conduct project review meetings every 2-3 months for mid-course corrections.

The following are recommendations for UNDP, based on the experience of NCCSP, for its future efforts in support of civil society.

- Using the experience of NCCSP, UNDP should engage with development partners in a discussion about the challenges and risks of rapid fund disbursement in a volatile and complex environment. More realistic fund disbursement timelines and expectations will minimize the risks associated with rapid financial injections.

Sustainability

The NCCSP project has promoted civil society resilience and adaptability in Afghanistan through its capacity building work, contributing to sectoral sustainability. Engaging local partners for training delivery boosts sustainability. However, the acute need for financial support for civil society organizations persists given the challenging operating context. The

sustainability of the training component could be enhanced through consolidating content across partners to optimize resources and bolstering training cascades to mitigate trainer shortages. Further emphasizing networking and knowledge exchange is imperative for civil society to share best practices amid volatility. While the project sets the stage for sustainable outcomes, continued coordinated investment in civil society capacity building is indispensable in the volatile Afghan context. Prioritizing the networking component and phasing funding tied to organizational maturity can optimize sustainable impact.

Recommendation 5: Enhancing the Sustainability of Training and Partnerships

The following are recommendations related to the project, in the context of the significant risks that the project faces.

- The project team should prioritize the project's third component to facilitate partnerships and knowledge exchange between NGOs/CSOs through networking events and online platforms.
- The project's grant component could be designed to reward collaborative initiatives between NGOs/CSOs to incentivize partnerships.

The following are recommendations for UNDP, based on the experience of NCCSP, for its future efforts in support of civil society.

- In close cooperation with development partners, UNDP should explore the possibility of consolidating existing and future training materials into a comprehensive integrated package that meets diverse needs. This effort might benefit from the establishment of an online platform to host training content and make it freely accessible to NGOs/CSOs.
- There is also an opportunity to leverage existing online resources for generic training content like financial management.
- UNDP should pay greater attention to the training of trainers (ToT) to build local training capabilities.

Cross-cutting Issues

The NCCSP project has applied a human rights lens through its targeting of vulnerable groups, contributing to inclusion and equity. However, a more systematic approach is required to advance gender equality across all areas like grants, data and partnerships. Greater focus on disability inclusion is also needed. By developing civil society capacities for socioeconomic initiatives and service delivery, the project has promoted sustainable development and social cohesion. It has also integrated environmental sustainability through the training programme, as well as the grant guidelines and community engagement. While the project's rights-based approach and targeting of marginalized groups has fostered empowerment, a sharper focus on gender, disability and environmental sustainability would optimize impact.

Recommendation 6: Strengthening Gender Mainstreaming and Disability Inclusion

The following are recommendations directed at UNDP in relation to gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion.

- Prioritize gender training in capacity building activities to integrate gender considerations from the start. To the extent possible, collaborate with expert agencies like UN Women to bring their expertise to the project activities. Balance the provision of training on empowerment of women with the “*do no harm*” principle.
- Strengthen the gender focus in grants component through criteria, objectives, technical guidance, and gender-sensitive monitoring.
- Strengthen the collection and utilization of sex-disaggregated data to inform gender-sensitive programming.
- Include disability inclusion in project objectives, activities and monitoring frameworks and to the extent possible seek to partner with disability focused CSOs/NGOs.

ANNEX I: EVALUATION'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

Services/Work Description:	The Mid-term Evaluation (MTE) of NCCSP
Project/Programme Title:	NGO & CSO Capacity Support Project (NCCSP)
Consultancy Title:	1. International Consultant for The Mid-term Evaluation of NCCSP 2. National Consultant for The Mid-term Evaluation (MTE) of NCCSP
Duty Station:	Kabul, Afghanistan
Duration:	1 months
Expected start date:	1 st July 2023

PROJECT/OUTCOME INFORMATION		
Project/outcome title	NGO & CSO Capacity Support Project (NCCSP)	
Atlas ID	00145556	
Country Programme Results Framework (CPRF) Outcome and Output	Outcome 3: Economic growth is accelerated to reduce vulnerabilities and poverty, strengthen the resilience of the licit economy, and reduce the illicit economy in its multiple dimensions Output 6: Improved economic livelihoods, especially for vulnerable populations and women	
Country	Afghanistan	
Region	Asia	
Date project document signed	28 July 2022	
Project dates	Start date	Planned end date
	1 July 2022	31 June 2024
Project budget	US\$ 20,000,000	
Project expenditure at the time of evaluation	(Expected) US\$ 6.7 million (including commitment)	
Funding source	World Bank	
Implementing party	MgtWell Consulting Firm	

1. Background and context

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Afghanistan Country Office with financial contributions from the World Bank commenced the NGOs & NGOs/CSOs Capacity Support Project (NCCSP) on 1st July 2022 with the current end date on 31st June 2024 originally considered a life span of two years to complete the project successfully.

The Project Development Objective (PDO) of the NGO/CSO Capacity Support Project (NCCSP) is to enhance the capacities of selected registered national and local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (NGOs/CSOs) to improve their performance and effectiveness. The project contributes to UNDP Afghanistan's priority focus to support basic human needs, complementing short-term humanitarian life-saving assistance with the safeguarding of

livelihoods and the strengthening of community resilience under ABADEI, and under Outcomes 1, 2, and 3 of the UN Transitional Engagement Framework (TEF)²⁴ in Afghanistan.

The proposed **Objective** of the Project is to enhance the capacities of selected registered national and local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (NGOs/CSOs) to improve their performance and effectiveness.

The desired **outcome** is to build the capacities of select NGOs and NGOs/CSOs, ultimately contributing to sustaining the provision of basic services and to providing life-saving support to the most vulnerable populations, in the short to medium term.

Output 1. NGO/CSO personnel capacity enhanced on core management functions and service delivery focused areas (including project management; fiduciary capacity; reporting on results; outreach and mobilization of women; and SEA/SH mitigation and response); (percent)

Output 2. NGOs/NGOs/CSOs benefitting from Project grant awards have enhanced their programs (including women outreach/mobilization and GBV mitigation and response mechanisms); (percent).

Output 3. NGOs/NGOs/CSOs benefitting from improved coordination and access to better information and networking (percent).

Output 4. Project Management and Implementation Support.

Under Output 1, NCCSP maps the current landscape of the Afghan civil society across all 34 provinces and keep track of the NGOs and NGOs/CSOs that have remained active. It includes an analysis of the legal and regulatory environment under which NGOs/NGOs/CSOs are operating and monitoring policy changes in the short to medium term (including to take stock of the registration process and potential changes). The rapid mapping and analysis will extend to all NGOs/NGOs/CSOs, including those engaged in advocacy (human rights, rule of law, women and youth, peace and security, etc.). This Output will also finance an integrated approach combining direct training and hands-on support. Lessons learned from past experiences highlight the limitations of one-time training. The delivery of capacity-building will therefore include three sub-activities: (i) direct provision of training; (ii) on-the-job training; and (iii) production of self-instruction handbooks and kits to promote self-study on delivery of services and local engagement.

Under output 2, NCCSP provides Low -Value Grants³⁷ to 200 NGOs/NGOs/CSOs to support their capacity to deliver basic services, by helping them to reactivate their operations, retain key staff and solicit development solutions in support of the most vulnerable populations. Typically, LVGs aim to provide core funding, boost organizational capacity and to promote innovate approaches and projects (including Quick Impact Projects) for which no repayment is required. This Output will provide cash awards to select trained NGOs/NGOs/CSOs according to a set of predefined eligibility and selection criteria. Ultimately, it will serve to enhance the capacity of NGOs/NGOs/CSOs, provide life-saving support when needed, and contribute to levelling the playing field in support of a more vibrant civil society.

Under Output 3, NCCSP ensures close collaboration with existing structures (e.g., ACBAR) to determine the best approach to enhance coordination at national and provincial levels, avoid overlaps and duplications, and strengthen communication channels, notably on gender equality and human protection. Most notably, the proposed project will first examine the feasibility of leveraging ACBAR, given its leading role in representing and defending the interests of its member NGOs and its ongoing capacity -building programs

Basic Project information can also be included in table format as follows:

2. Evaluation purpose, scope and objectives

The Purpose and Objectives of the Midterm Evaluation

The Midterm Evaluation (MTE) aims to inform UNDP Afghanistan and its partners of lessons learned, results achieved and areas for improvements. The MID-TERM EVALUATION will draw out progress toward project deliverables, identify gaps in programming, and any course correction required for the current implementation process as well as for future programming. Furthermore, the findings of MID-TERM EVALUATION will inform the future designing of UNDP's work. The MID-TERM EVALUATION will be able to produce valuable lessons and experiences, providing useful findings to the other relevant projects and various initiatives organized by UNDP Afghanistan and other Country Offices (COs) globally. MID-TERM EVALUATION is expected to produce a report on the achievements of the NCCSP project and success stories on the project, which will be published on UNDP website.

Responding to the Theory of Change (ToC) as described in the project document, the agreed results framework (RF) and the approved workplans, the MID-TERM EVALUATION is expected to look at the relevance of the project, quality of the project design, effectiveness, and efficiency of the implementation to date, sustainability of the overall project results, impact of intervention, and forward-looking directions for future. To meet these ends, MID-TERM EVALUATION will serve to:

- assess project performance and progress against the expected outputs, targets including indicators presented in the results framework and contribution to expected outcome.
- Project's contribution to higher level results such as CPRF Outputs and Outcomes, through the selected indicators
- review and document the success and lessons learned
- assess the effectiveness of the project in terms of engagement with the local stakeholders, NGOs, NGOs/CSOs and their key staff for capacity development
- identify challenges and the effectiveness of the strategic approaches that project adopted for addressing those challenges.
- ascertain the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the project activities.
- outline recommendations, including potential realignments in scope and approach in line with the project's outcome
- provide forward looking recommendations that contributes to enhancing the implementation process as well as for future programming
- report on the achievements of the NCCSP project and success cases that can be widely shared by the comms team of the UNDP and donor.

The Scope of the MID-TERM EVALUATION

This mid-term evaluation will assess the NCCSP project progress against the Project Document, targets stipulated in the Results Framework and the achieved results from 1 July 2022 to 31 June 2024 and propose recommendation which will inform and help improving the current implementation of the project and designing any future interventions. The mid-term evaluation will be based on a desk review of project related documents and in-depth interviews and surveys as outlined in the methodology section. The study will also intend to document achievements, good practices, success cases, lessons learned and experiences. Based on the achievements to the date, the mid-term evaluation will provide forward looking programmatic recommendations for the project's next months, using the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria on (a) relevance; (b) effectiveness; (c) efficiency; (d) sustainability; (e) impact; and (f) coherence. It will also focus importantly on the cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, human right based approach and do-no-harm.

The mid-term evaluation will geographically focus on the provinces and zones that the NCCSP project is being implemented. NCCSP covers all the national NGOs and NGOs/CSOs across eight regions and 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The beneficiaries will primarily be the NGOs, NGOs/CSOs, employees who receive trainings and the local stakeholders including INGOs who will be approached for the betterment of the national coordination platforms.

The evaluation should cover the following cross-cutting themes: (a) Rights-Based Approach (RBA); (b) protection mainstreaming; (c) disability inclusion; (d) gender mainstreaming; (e) environmental sensitivity and sustainability; and (f) accountability to affected populations (AAP). All the above-mentioned themes have an equal priority to the UNDP that should be taken into account in this evaluation and the data collection process should be able to equally and effectively address these cross-cutting themes.

The evaluation may require field visits and Key Informant Interviews (KII) with UNDP and World Bank staff, and the local stakeholders covering a representative number out the 34 provinces where NCCSP has a footprint of delivering capacity building activities. It may also require direct observation of project sites where NCCSP supported NGOs and CSO or indirectly support the local communities through provision of economic and livelihood support.

3. Evaluation criteria and key guiding questions

In response to the evaluation purpose as stated above, the evaluation will investigate the six OECD/DAC main evaluation criteria as recommended by the UNDP Evaluation Policy: 1) Relevance; 2) Coherence; 3) Effectiveness; 4) Efficiency; 5) Impact; and 6) Sustainability.

The below table details the evaluation criteria²⁹ and an inexhaustive list of questions that should serve as a guide. These should be adapted/supplemented by another set of detailed and specific sub-questions by the evaluator(s) in consultation with UNDP before commissioning the evaluation.

Table 2 - Criteria and Guiding Questions

Criteria	Guiding Questions
Coherence (the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector, or institution.	1- Do synergies exist with other interventions carried out by UNDP as well as intervention partners and stakeholders including the donor? 2- To what extent is NCCSP consistent with international norms and standards to be applied to the existing context? 3- To what extent is NCCSP complementary to other actors' interventions in the same context? To what extent does NCCSP add value and avoid duplication in the given context?
Relevance (the extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and	Relevance of the project: review the progress against project outputs and contribution to outcome level results as defined in the project's ToC whether assumptions and risks remain valid. Identify any other intended or unintended, positive, or negative, results using following guiding questions. 1. To what extent did the project design align with the needs of local NGOs and NGOs/CSOs especially women-led once and to the other relevant stakeholders (national/regional/global priorities)? 2. Were the project activities and outputs consistent with the intended

²⁹ Based on Revised Evaluation Criteria adopted by the OECD DAC at its meeting on 10 December 2019.

<p>priorities; and continue to do so if circumstances change)</p>	<p>outcomes and objectives?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. To what extent has the project adapted to the changing external conditions following the recent ban on women education and work by the Taliban interim government? 4. To what extent the project has adopted to the changing external conditions following the change happened at the national level after the Taliban takeover in Aug-21? 5. How adequately were cross-cutting themes such as human rights, gender equality, age and environment considered in the NCCSP project? 6. To what extent is the project in line with the regional development priorities and UNDP strategic Plan? 7. To what extent the overall design and approaches of the project were relevant? 8. To what extent, the inputs and strategies identified were realistic, appropriate, and adequate to achieve the results? 9. To what extent did the project achieve its overall outputs? Are the project's contributions to outcomes clear? 10. To what extent does the project contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment?
<p>Effectiveness (the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups)</p>	<p>Effectiveness of implementation approaches: review project's technical as well as operational approaches, the regionality and deliverables, quality of results and their impact, alignment with national priorities and responding to the needs of the NGOs and NGOs/CSOs; covering the results achieved, the partnerships established, as well as issues of capacity using following guiding questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent did the project outputs contribute to the achievement of outcomes and what factors were contributing to? 2. Did the capacity support services deliver by NCCSP address the needs of beneficiaries and communities? 3. Were the target beneficiaries reached as expected? (Are there significant differences between male and female beneficiaries?) 4. Did the capacity support services deliver by NCCSP addressed the needs of NGOs, NGOs/CSOs and communities? 5. Were the target beneficiaries satisfied with the services provided? 6. What are best practices and lessons learned from project implementation? 7. To what extent did NCCSP promote best practices and lessons learned in transferring power to beneficiaries and local stakeholders to ensure engagement, transparency, and accountability? 8. To what extent the project activities were delivered effectively in terms of quality, quantity, and timing and what factors were contributing to this effectiveness or ineffectiveness? 9. How effective were the strategies used in the implementation of the project? 10. What are the key internal and external factors (success & failure factors) that have contributed, affected, or impeded the achievements, and how UNDP and the partners have managed these factors? 11. In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? Why and what have been the supporting factors? How can the project build on or expand these achievements? 12. In which areas does the project have the fewest achievements? What

	<p>have been the constraining factors and why? How can or could they be overcome?</p> <p>13. To what extent have UNDP partners been involved in project implementation? To what extent are project management and implementation participatory?</p> <p>14. What factors have contributed to achieving or not achieving intended outcomes?</p>
Efficiency (the extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way)	<p>Efficiency of the project management structure and the added value of the project's approach: review planning, management, monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms for the delivery of the project interventions and the added value of the project set up.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How cost-effective was the project? Were the financial resources used appropriately to achieve the intended results? 2. How efficient was the overall management of the project (e.g., project team composition, coordination modalities, implementation processes)? 3. What system and tools were developed for monitoring the implementation of the project? What challenges were experienced in monitoring of the project implementation? 4. To what extent is the existing project management structure appropriate and efficient in generating the expected results? 5. Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve outcomes? 6. Was the process of achieving results efficient? Were the resources effectively utilized? 7. Has the UNDP partnership strategy been appropriate and effective?
Sustainability (the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue)	<p>Sustainability of the project results and risks along with opportunities related to future interventions: review and assess if the current project setup has plans for future resource mobilization, synergy, long term partnership and / or considering institutionalization of the project impact for continued support after the project end using following questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What exit strategies are in place and how effective are they in ensuring the sustainability beyond the project life cycle? 2. Did the NCCSP activities take specific measures to guarantee sustainability? Is NCCSP activities supported by the local stakeholders and communities and well-integrated into local social and economic structures? 3. Are structures, resources, and processes in place to ensure the benefits generated by NCCSP are continued after the World Bank funding ceases? 4. How do beneficiaries at the individual and institutional levels perceive sustainability of NCCSP, for capacity building support? Do they plan to continue making use of the services/products produced? 5. Describe key factors that will require attention to improve the prospects of sustainability of Project outcomes and the potential for replication of the approach? 6. To what extent do UNDP implementing partners support the project's long-term objectives? 7. To what extent will financial and economic resources as well as political wills be available to sustain the benefits achieved by the project? 8. Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize

	sustainability of project outputs and the project's contributions to country program outputs and outcomes?
Impact (the extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects)	<p>4- To what extent is the project likely to contribute to improved capacity at the individual (employees of NGOs/NGOs/CSOs) and institutional level (NGOs & NGOs/CSOs management and operations)?</p> <p>5- What positive and/or negative changes are the beneficiaries experiencing as a result of their participation in NCCSP activities?</p> <p>6- Did the UNDP staff take timely measures for mitigating any unplanned negative impacts of the NCCSP project?</p> <p>7- How significant will be the changes to the NGOs/NGOs/CSOs, their employees and communities that will be created as a result of the NCCSP project?</p>
Cross-cutting themes:	<p>1. To what extent has the project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women? Were there any unintended effects?</p> <p>2. How can the project reconsider its approach to contribute to enhancing diversity and inclusion?</p> <p>1. To what extent have local communities, women, youth, people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups benefited from the project either direct or indirectly?</p>

4. Methodology

The evaluation will apply the standard OECD/DAC criteria using a mixed-methods approach, i.e., qualitative and quantitative data collection. This should be further developed by the evaluator(s) and approved by the evaluation manager during the inception phase of the evaluation.

This document therefore envisages a general approach for conducting the evaluation, as well as data sources and tools that will likely yield the most reliable and valid answers to the evaluation questions within the limits of resources. However, final decisions about the specific design and methods for the evaluation should emerge from consultations among the UNDP NCCSP project team the evaluators about what is appropriate and feasible to meet the evaluation purpose and objectives and answer the evaluation questions, considering the limitations of budget, time and data.

Methodological approaches may include some or all of the following:

- Evaluation should employ a combination of both qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods and instruments.
- **Document review of all relevant documentation.** This would include a review of inter alia
 - Project document (project proposal).
 - Theory of change and results framework.
 - Annual workplans.
 - M&E SOP for TPMA
 - Quarterly and monthly reports.
 - Implementation Support Mission (ISM) report of the World Bank
 - Highlights of project board meetings.
 - Technical/financial monitoring reports.
- **Semi-structured interviews** with key representatives of the NGOs, NGOs/CSOs and their employees, and service provider:
 - **Development of evaluation questions** around relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability and designed for different UNDP NCCSP project beneficiaries, local stakeholders and service provider to be interviewed.

- Key informant and focus group discussions with the project beneficiaries including men and women.
- All interviews should be undertaken in full confidence and anonymity. The final evaluation report should not assign specific comments to individuals.
- **Field visits** and on-site validation of key tangible outputs and deliverables.
- The evaluator is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach that ensures close engagement with the evaluation managers, service provider and direct beneficiaries.
- **Other methods** such as outcome mapping, observational visits, group discussions, etc.
- **Data review and analysis** of monitoring data and other data sources and methods.
 - Ensure maximum validity, reliability of data (quality) and promote use; the evaluation team will ensure triangulation of the various data sources.

The final methodological approach including interview schedule, field visits and data to be used in the evaluation should be clearly outlined in the inception report and be fully discussed and agreed between UNDP and the evaluators team.

5. Evaluation products (deliverables)

The terms of reference should clearly outline the outputs UNDP expects from the evaluation team as well as a detailed timeline and schedule for completion evaluation products. Where relevant, the TOR should also detail the length of specific products (pages). These products could include:

- **Evaluation inception report (10-15 pages).** The inception report should be carried out following and based on preliminary discussions with UNDP after the desk review and should be produced before the evaluation starts (before any formal evaluation interviews, survey distribution or field visits) and prior to the country visit in the case of international evaluators.
 - **Evaluation debriefings.** Immediately following an evaluation, UNDP may ask for a preliminary debriefing and findings.
 - **Draft evaluation report (within an agreed length).** The UNDP Evaluation Reference Group (Consisting of Development Effectiveness Unit, Programme Management Unit and Project Management) should review the draft evaluation report and provide an amalgamated set of comments to the evaluator within an agreed period, addressing the content required (as agreed in the TOR and inception report) and quality criteria as outlined in these guidelines.
 - **Evaluation report audit trail.** Comments and changes by the evaluator in response to the draft report should be retained by the evaluator to show how they have addressed comments.
 - **Final evaluation report, reflecting the achievements and success stories of the project.**
- Presentations to UNDP and World Bank.**

ANNEX II: PROJECT'S RESULTS FRAMEWORK

RESULTS MONITORING MATRIX								
Output and Activity Results	Output Indicators	Baseline	Project Target (12 months aggregate)	Milestone 2023				Means of Verification
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Data source type
Outcome: Enhancing capacities, sustaining operations and strengthening cooperation of select NGOs and NGOs/CSOs	NGO/CSO personnel capacity enhanced in core management and service delivery focused areas (percent) (Percentage)	0	50	50	50	50	50	Measure: application and utilization of trainings received by CSO/NGOs
	Share of NGOs/NGOs/CSOs trained in GBV prevention and response and demonstrating proper protocols in-place to support survivors of GBV (percent) (Percentage)	0	100	100	100	100	100	Measure: application and utilization of trainings received by CSO/NGOs
	NGOs/NGOs/CSOs benefiting from improved coordination and access to better information and networking (percent) (Percentage)	0	70	70	70	70	70	Measure: a) number of meetings conducted, b) action plan implementation as meeting outcome, c) impact of the platform
Output 1 (Atlas Output 00132321): Mapping & Capacity Strengthening of Select NGOs and NGOs/CSOs	Select NGOs/NGOs/CSOs received a minimum of six training packages offered under the Project. (Number)	0	400	0	100	400	400	Measure: application and utilization of trainings received by CSO/NGOs
	NGOs/NGOs/CSOs that underwent the Project trainings report improved staff performance in training areas. (Percentage)	0	60%		60%	60%	60%	Measure: application and utilization of trainings received by CSO/NGOs

RESULTS MONITORING MATRIX

	NGO/CSO personnel trained under the Project reporting satisfaction with the capacity building activities. (Percentage, Custom) (Percentage)	0	70%		70%	70%	70%	Measure: a) personnel trained, b) level of satisfaction survey
	NGO/CSO personnel trained under the Project reporting satisfaction with the capacity building activities, of which female (Percentage)	0	70%		60%	60%	60%	Measure: a) personnel trained, b) level of satisfaction survey
Output 2 (Atlas Output 00132322): Operational Support LVGs to Select NGOs/NGOs/CSOs	Select NGOs/NGOs/CSOs provided with operational support sub-grants under this Project. (Number)	0	200		50	200	200	Measure: a) reconciliation data from bank, b) review invoice, vouchers, c) physical verification
	Operational support sub-grants benefitted women-led NGOs/NGOs/CSOs or delivered activities benefitting primarily women and girls. (Percentage)	0	30%			30%	30%	1) Number of women-led NGOs/NGOs/CSOs benefit with LVGs 2) Total number of NGOs/NGOs/CSOs benefit with LVGs
	NGOs/NGOs/CSOs that received Sub-grants have continued to be functional in areas of public outreach/community mobilization and/or service delivery for the full duration of the project (Number)	0	100%			100%	100%	Measure: a) reconciliation data from bank, b) review invoice, vouchers, c) physical verification
Output 3 (Atlas Output 00132323): Development and Coordination of NGO platform	The NGO platform(s) was established and/or an existing platform was enhanced for national and local NGOs in Afghanistan to represent members of all relevant stakeholders. (Yes/No)	No	Yes			Yes	Yes	Measure: a) number of meetings conducted, b) action plan implementation as meeting outcome, c) impact of the platform

RESULTS MONITORING MATRIX

Output 4: Project Management and Implementation Support	Grievances addressed within the time specified in the Project Operations Manual. (Percentage)	0	80%			80%	80%	Measure: a) number of cases registered and resolved, b) satisfaction level of complainant
	Significant representation and inclusion of women among the non-support staff related to this Project under UNDP and its contracted implementation support partners. (Percentage)	0	30%			30%	30%	a) Number of posts recruited b) Number of female recruited in the posts

ANNEX III: EVALUATION CRITERIA AND KEY QUESTIONS

Evaluation Criteria	Key Questions
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has NCCSP a relevant response to current needs and evolved to take account of changing circumstances? ▪ To what extent are lessons learned from previous and relevant programmes considered during NCCSP implementation? ▪ To what extent was the project oriented towards the needs of local civil society? To what extent did NCCSP provide integrative space for local minorities, all ethnic groups, women, disabled and economically vulnerable population? ▪ To what extent was NCCSP adapted to the local volatile environment? ▪ To what extent was this joint WB-UNDP initiative in line with the UNDP country programme's outputs and outcomes, the UNDP and WB Strategic Plan and the SDGs?
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent are the project outputs and outcomes being achieved? What factors have contributed to achieving or not achieving intended outputs and outcomes? ▪ In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? Why and what have been the supporting factors? How can the project build on or expand these achievements? ▪ In which areas has the project encountered challenges? What have been the constraining factors and why? How can or could they be overcome? ▪ What, if any, alternative strategies would have been more effective in achieving the project's objectives? ▪ What have been the constraining factors caused by COVID-19? How did the project overcome the challenges? What were the mitigation strategies used? ▪ To what extent are project management and implementation participatory and is this participation contributing towards achievement of the programme objectives? ▪ To what extent did the project take conflict sensitive and flexible approach to navigate the local volatile environment and effectively support local civil society?
Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent was the project complementary and synergetic with other projects of UNDP? ▪ To what extent was the project complementary and synergetic with other efforts of development partners in support of civil society?
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent was the project efficient in generating the expected results? ▪ To what extent have the UNDP programme implementation strategy and execution been efficient and cost-effective? To what extent have resources been used efficiently? ▪ To what extent have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner? ▪ To what extent did the local sensitivities effect the efficiency of project implementation? To what extent do the M&E systems utilized by the project ensure effective and efficient programme management?
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent can the changes (and benefits) brought about by project be expected to last after programme completion? ▪ Are there any social, financial or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outputs? Do the legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes within which project operates pose risks that may jeopardize sustainability of

Evaluation Criteria	Key Questions
	<p>project benefits?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent was the level of stakeholders' ownership encouraged in order to allow for the project benefits to be sustained? ▪ What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability?
Cross-Cutting Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rights-Based Approach (RBA) - To what extent have vulnerable groups, including the economically and physically challenged, women, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the project? ▪ Disability inclusion - To what extent has disability inclusion been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project? ▪ Gender mainstreaming - To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project? To what extent has the project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women? ▪ Environmental sensitivity and sustainability - To what extent has environmental protection been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project? ▪ Accountability to affected populations (AAP) - To what extent has AAP been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project?

ANNEX IV: EVALUATION MATRIX

Evaluation Criteria	Key Questions and Sub-Questions	Indicators/Success Standard	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods/Tools
Relevance				
To what extent has NCCSP been a relevant response to current needs and evolved to take account of changing circumstances?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did NCCSP successfully address the identified needs? To what extent were the adaptations effective in maintaining the relevance of NCCSP? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectiveness in addressing the identified needs. Adaptability to changing circumstances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports or reviews of the NCCSP project. Academic articles, case studies, or other research papers. Government reports or policy documents. News articles or media reports. project guidelines, programme plans, and other project documents. Interviews and survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis UNDP documentation Interviews with UNDP and project partners Focus Group Discussions Online Survey Interviews
To what extent were lessons learned from previous and other relevant programmes considered throughout NCCSP implementation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What lessons were learned from the previous and other relevant programmes? To what extent were these lessons learned considered during project implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which the lessons learned from the previous and other relevant programmes were identified and documented. Extent to which the lessons learned were incorporated into NCCSP planning and implementation. Evidence of the impact of the lessons learned on the success of NCCSP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme reports and evaluations from previous projects. Evaluation reports and case studies from other relevant programmes. NCCSP planning documents, such as programme plans, work plans, and monitoring and evaluation plans. Reports or other documents that describe the implementation of NCCSP. Interviews and survey with stakeholders involved in the planning and implementation of NCCSP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis UNDP documentation Interviews with UNDP and project partners Focus Group Discussions Online Survey Interviews
To what extent was the Programme oriented towards the needs of local civil society? To what extent did	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How were the needs of local civil society identified and prioritized in the NCCSP project? Were local civil society groups involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion of local civil society in the design and implementation of project activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NCCSP project reports and evaluations. Monitoring and evaluation reports of NCCSP activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis UNDP documentation Interviews with UNDP and project partners

NCCSP provide integrative space for local minorities, all ethnic groups, women, disabled and economically vulnerable population?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in the design and implementation of the project? To what extent did NCCSP prioritize the inclusion and engagement of local minorities, ethnic groups, women, disabled and economically vulnerable populations in its activities? Were specific measures put in place to ensure the participation and representation of these groups in the program? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent of alignment between NCCSP activities and the needs of local civil society. Representation and participation of local minorities, all ethnic groups, women, disabled, and economically vulnerable populations in NCCSP activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews and survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus Group Discussions Online Survey Interviews
To what extent was NCCSP adapted to the local volatile environment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What were the key social, political, economic, and environmental factors that contributed to the local volatile environment? To what extent was NCCSP adapted to the local volatile environment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of key risks and challenges associated with implementing NCCSP in a volatile environment. Specific adaptations made to NCCSP to address the challenges posed by the volatile environment. Effectiveness of the adaptations in mitigating risks and addressing challenges. Evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of the adaptations. Impact of adaptations on the achievement of NCCSP goals and objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NCCSP project reports that discuss the challenges and risks of implementing the program in a volatile environment. Risk assessments and analyses of the local environment that were conducted in order to inform the design and implementation of NCCSP activities. Reports or other documents that describe the specific adaptations that were made to NCCSP to address the challenges posed by the volatile environment. Monitoring reports that document the effectiveness of the adaptations in mitigating risks and addressing challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis UNDP documentation Interviews with UNDP and project partners Focus Group Discussions Online Survey Interviews
To what extent was this joint EU-UNDP initiative in line with the UNDP country project's outputs and outcomes, the UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was this joint EU-UNDP initiative aligned with the UNDP country project's outputs and outcomes and the UNDP Strategic Plan? To what extent was this joint EU-UNDP initiative aligned with the SDGs? What evidence exists to demonstrate the contribution of the joint EU-UNDP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of synergies and overlaps between the joint EU-UNDP initiative and the UNDP country programme/Strategic Plan outputs and outcomes. Identification of the key SDGs that the joint EU- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNDP country programme and strategic plan documents. project reports, etc. Monitoring reports of NCCSP activities. Interviews and survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis UNDP documentation Interviews with UNDP and project partners Focus Group Discussions Online Survey Interviews

	<p>initiative towards achieving the SDGs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What challenges or limitations were encountered in aligning the initiative with the SDGs? 	<p>UNDP initiative was designed to address.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear documentation of the alignment between the activities and outcomes of the joint EU-UNDP initiative and the targets and indicators of these SDGs. 		
Effectiveness				
<p>To what extent have project outputs and outcomes been achieved? What factors have contributed to achieving or not achieving intended outputs and outcomes? In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? Why and what have been the supporting factors? How can the project build on or expand these achievements?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What indicators were used to measure the achievement of the project outputs and outcomes? What is the status of the indicators of the project? What were the key factors that contributed to or hindered the achievement of the project outputs and outcomes? What were the major challenges encountered during the project implementation? What were the key factors that hindered the achievement of the project outputs and outcomes? How were these factors identified, and what measures were taken to address them? What were the factors that contributed to the success in these areas? What were the key outcomes and outputs achieved in these areas? What lessons were learned from the project, and how can these be used to inform future project design and implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of beneficiaries reached Improvement in the quality of life of the target population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNDP country programme and strategic plan documents. project progress reports, etc. Monitoring reports of NCCSP activities. Baseline and endline surveys Budget and expenditure reports Feedback from project beneficiaries and stakeholders External reviews or audits of the project. Interviews and survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis UNDP documentation Interviews with UNDP and project partners Focus Group Discussions Online Survey Interviews

<p>In which areas has the project encountered challenges? What have been the constraining factors and why? How can or could they be overcome?</p> <p>What, if any, alternative strategies would have been more effective in achieving NCCSP objectives? What have been the constraining factors caused by COVID-19? How did the project overcome the challenges? What were the mitigation strategies used?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the areas of the project where challenges were encountered? • What were the constraining factors that hindered the project's progress in these areas? • What were the root causes of these factors, and how were they identified? • What measures were taken to address the challenges, and were they effective? • What other strategies could be used to overcome the challenges in the future? • What were the original strategies and methods used to achieve the NCCSP objectives? • Were these strategies effective, and to what extent? • What alternative strategies could have been used to achieve the NCCSP objectives more effectively? • What were the potential risks and benefits of the alternative strategies, and why were they not chosen in the first place? • What were the challenges faced by the project due to COVID-19? • What were the constraining factors that hindered the project's progress in the face of COVID-19? • What measures were taken to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the project? • Were these measures effective, and to what extent? • What lessons were learned from the impact of COVID-19 on the project, and how can they be used to inform future project design and implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of areas where challenges were encountered • Identification of specific constraining factors and root causes • Effectiveness of measures taken to address the challenges • Identification of alternative strategies • Assessment of their potential effectiveness • Analysis of risks and benefits • Identification of specific challenges posed by COVID-19 • Effectiveness of mitigation measures • Lessons learned for future project design and implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project progress reports, etc. • Monitoring reports of NCCSP activities. • Baseline and endline surveys • Monitoring reports • Budget and expenditure reports • Feedback from project beneficiaries and stakeholders • Interviews and survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document analysis • UNDP documentation • Interviews with UNDP and project partners • Focus Group Discussions • Online Survey • Interviews
To what extent are	• To what extent is the project's	• Evidence of stakeholder	• project progress reports, etc.	• Document analysis

<p>project management and implementation participatory and is this participation contributing towards achievement of the project objectives? To what extent did the project take conflict sensitive and flexible approach to navigate the local volatile environment and effectively support local civil society?</p>	<p>management and implementation participatory?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is participation contributing towards the achievement of the project objectives? • To what extent did the project take a conflict-sensitive approach to navigate the local volatile environment? • To what extent did the project take a flexible approach to effectively support local civil society? 	<p>involvement in project design and decision-making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and quality of partnerships formed with local organizations and communities • Degree of local ownership of the project • Level of conflict sensitivity integrated into project design and implementation • Evidence of the project's ability to adapt to changing circumstances • Level of support provided to local civil society organizations and communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and evaluation reports of NCCSP activities. • Baseline and endline surveys • Monitoring and evaluation reports • Budget and expenditure reports • Feedback from project beneficiaries and stakeholders • External reviews or audits of the project. • Interviews and survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNDP documentation • Interviews with UNDP and project partners • Focus Group Discussions • Online Survey Interviews
Efficiency				
<p>To what extent was NCCSP efficient in generating the expected results? To what extent have the programme implementation strategy and execution been efficient and cost-effective? To what extent have resources been used efficiently?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent were the expected results achieved by the NCCSP? • Were there any delays or cost overruns and, if so, what were the reasons for them? • To what extent was the implementation strategy effective in achieving project objectives? • Were resources used efficiently and cost-effectively? • Were there any improvements that could be made to the project management process in order to increase efficiency? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of expected results achieved • project timeline adherence • Budget adherence • Resource utilization rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project progress reports • Project financial reports • Stakeholder feedback surveys • Project performance reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document analysis • UNDP documentation • Interviews with UNDP and project partners • Focus Group Discussions • Online Survey Interviews
<p>To what extent have project funds and activities been</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent were project funds and activities delivered according to the project timeline? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of project funds and activities delivered on or ahead of schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project progress reports and financial statements • Project assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document analysis • UNDP documentation • Interviews with UNDP and

<p>delivered in a timely manner?</p> <p>To what extent did the local sensitivities effect the efficiency of NCCSP implementation? To what extent do the M&E systems utilized by the project ensure effective and efficient project management?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What factors contributed to the timeliness or delays in the delivery of project funds and activities? • To what extent did local sensitivities affect the efficiency of NCCSP implementation? • How were local sensitivities considered and addressed in the project implementation process? • To what extent did the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems utilized by the project ensure effective and efficient project management? • How were M&E systems utilized in the project implementation process? • What feedback was received from stakeholders regarding the effectiveness of the M&E systems used by the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of M&E systems used by the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&E reports and audits • Stakeholder feedback and consultations 	<p>project partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus Group Discussions • Online Survey • Interviews
SUSTAINABILITY				
<p>To what extent can the changes (and benefits) brought about by NCCSP be expected to last after project completion?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the intended long-term impacts of NCCSP, and to what extent have they been achieved? • What sustainability measures have been put in place to ensure that project outcomes continue after project completion? • To what extent have local stakeholders and communities been involved in the project to ensure that benefits are sustained beyond the life of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which local civil society groups and organizations continue to engage in the development process and advocate for their rights and interests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project reports • Civil society publications and reports • Research on development initiatives and civil society engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document analysis • UNDP documentation • Interviews with UNDP and project partners • Focus Group Discussions • Online Survey • Interviews
<p>Are there any social, financial or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the social risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outputs? • What are the financial risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The identification and analysis of potential risks to project sustainability and mitigation strategies developed and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project progress reports, etc. • Monitoring reports of NCCSP activities. • Baseline and endline surveys • Monitoring and evaluation reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document analysis • UNDP documentation • Interviews with UNDP and project partners • Focus Group Discussions

project outputs? Do the legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes within which NCCSP operates pose risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project benefits?	<p>outputs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outputs? What legal What mitigation strategies can be implemented to address the identified risks to ensure sustainability of project outputs and benefits? 	<p>implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The degree to which stakeholders are actively engaged in project planning and implementation. The degree to which local communities are involved in decision-making processes related to the project. 	Interviews and survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online Survey Interviews
To what extent was the level of stakeholders' ownership encouraged in order to allow for the project benefits to be sustained? What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent were stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of the project? To what extent have stakeholders demonstrated commitment to the sustainability of the project outcomes? What measures have been put in place to ensure the sustainability of the project outcomes beyond the project lifespan? What additional steps can be taken to further strengthen the sustainability of the project outcomes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The level of stakeholder engagement and participation in project design and implementation The extent to which local communities and institutions have been empowered to take ownership of project activities and outcomes The development of sustainable partnerships with local organizations and institutions The availability and use of local resources to support project sustainability The existence and implementation of an effective exit strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project progress reports, etc. Monitoring reports of NCCSP activities. Baseline and endline surveys Monitoring and evaluation reports Interviews and survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis UNDP documentation Interviews with UNDP and project partners Focus Group Discussions Online Survey Interviews
Cross Cutting Issues				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent have vulnerable groups, including 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent were the needs of vulnerable groups taken into account in the design, implementation and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number or percentage of vulnerable groups that have benefited from the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> project progress reports, etc. Monitoring and evaluation reports of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis UNDP documentation Interviews with UNDP and

<p>the economically and physically challenged, women, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the project?</p>	<p>monitoring of the project?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have vulnerable groups been reached and directly benefited from the project? • To what extent have the benefits and opportunities provided by the project been equitable and inclusive for vulnerable groups? • To what extent have the project activities contributed to reducing the marginalization and exclusion of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, in the target areas? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in the living conditions or income of vulnerable groups • Inclusion of vulnerable groups in decision-making processes related to the program 	<p>NCCSP activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline and endline surveys • Monitoring reports • Interviews and survey 	<p>project partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus Group Discussions • Online Survey Interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project? • To what extent has the project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent has gender been mainstreamed into the project design, implementation, and monitoring? • To what extent have women been included and participated in the project activities and decision-making processes? • To what extent have project activities had a positive impact on gender equality and women's empowerment? • To what extent has the project contributed to the overall advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment in the project area or sector? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of women participating in project activities • Inclusion of gender equality indicators in project monitoring and evaluation systems • Increase in women's representation and participation in decision-making processes related to the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project progress reports, etc. • Monitoring and evaluation reports of NCCSP activities. • Baseline and endline surveys • Monitoring reports • Interviews and survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document analysis • UNDP documentation • Interviews with UNDP and project partners • Focus Group Discussions • Online Survey • Interviews

ANNEX V: SURVEY WITH BENEFICIARIES

Mid-term Evaluation of the NGO/CSO Capacity Support Project (NCCSP) Project

UNDP has commissioned a mid-term evaluation of the **NGO/CSO Capacity Support Project**.

The evaluation report will serve as an accountability tool for UNDP and the donor. It will assess the implementation and the results of the project, while providing recommendations to stakeholders in order to inform future programming.

The evaluation will be conducted through a participatory approach, involving all the main project stakeholders through a variety of instruments such as interviews, focus group discussions and surveys.

As part of the data collection process, the evaluators have designed this survey which is intended to gather the views and perceptions of the beneficiaries of the project on key aspects of the project. Your participation in this evaluation through the completion of this survey will be greatly appreciated.

The survey should take about **15 minutes** to complete. Wherever there is an opportunity for a write-in response, you are encouraged to make reference to concrete examples. If for any reason you cannot respond to a question, please skip it. We kindly request that you complete this survey by **15 September 2023**. The information you provide will be kept ***strictly confidential***.

Thank you!

1. Please indicate your age group:
 - 18-25
 - 26-35
 - 36-45
 - 46-55
 - Older 55

2. Please indicate your gender:
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other
 - Don't prefer to indicate my gender

3. Which type of organization do you represent?
 - National NGO
 - Sub-national/local NGO
 - Civil Society Organization (CSO)
 - Other (Please specify)_____

4. Please indicate the region where your organization operates:
Answer_____

5. What is your role (position) within the organization that you represent?
Answer_____

6. How do you rate your organization's capacity in terms of its ability to fulfill its objectives and coordinate with stakeholders at the provincial & national levels?
 - Very good
 - Good
 - Fair
 - Poor
 - Very poor
 - I don't know
 - I prefer to not answer

7. How would you rate the participation of women in your organization?
- Very good
 - Good
 - Fair
 - Poor
 - Very poor
 - I don't know
 - I prefer to not answer
8. Have you participated in any training or skills development opportunities provided by UNDP's NCCSP project?
- Yes/ If yes, please specify the type of training or skills development you received. _____
 - No
9. What motivated your organization to participate in this capacity-building project?
- Answer_____
10. If you have attended any trainings organized by UNDP's NCCSP project, please rate the overall quality of trainings:
- Excellent
 - Good
 - Mediocre
 - Poor
 - I don't know
11. How relevant was the training provided by UNDP's NCCSP project to your needs and expectations?
- Very relevant
 - Relevant
 - Not so relevant
 - Irrelevant
 - I don't know

12. What specific training or capacity-building interventions have been most beneficial for your organization?

Answer_____

13. How the ten training modules were distributed among the members of your respective organization?

Answer_____

14. Please rate the quality of the trainers who delivered the training content:

- Excellent
- Good
- Mediocre
- Poor
- I don't know

15. What significant and new things did you learn from the training organized by UNDP's NCCSP project? Please, provide some specific examples.

Answer_____

16. Can you provide specific examples of how you have used or are planning to use the knowledge and skills you derived from the training you received from UNDP's NCCSP project?

Answer_____

17. Have there been any observable improvements in your organization's operational or programmatic capacities since your involvement in the project?

Answer_____

18. Has the project contributed to enhancing gender equality or women's empowerment specifically?

Answer_____

19. Did your participation in UNDP's NCCSP project activities help you establish any contacts, cooperate and network with colleagues from other organizations? If so, how did that interaction take place and what was the result? Please, provide as much detail as you can.

Answer_____

20. What type of training format do you generally prefer?

- Online
- In Person
- Hybrid (combination of online and in person)
- Don't know/I am not sure

21. What kind of support or training would you like to receive from UNDP's NCCSP project in the future? Please, provide as much detail as you can. Include thematic areas which you would like the training to cover.

Answer_____

22. What do you think the impact of the training provided by UNDP's NCCSP project has been for your organization? Please, provide as much detail as you can.

Answer_____

23. What aspects of the NCCSP project do you think could be improved?

Answer_____

24. Are there any additional comments or recommendations you wish to make for the consideration of the evaluation team? Please share any additional comments or suggestions you have for improving this project.

Answer_____

Thank you for your kind participation!

ANNEX VI: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

No.	Name	Designation	Designation/Organization
1	Mr. Olivier Lavinal	Task Team Leader	World bank
2	Ms. Nancy Khweiss	Project Manager	Project Manager
3	Ms. Kochi Hassan	Director	AWEC (Afghanistan Women Education Centre)
4	Mr. Emmanuel Bashiel Comehn	Head of Program	ACBAR
5	Mr. Yoshiaki Noguchi	Project Manager	UNDP/NCCSP
6	Ms. Samila Daluwatte	Technical Specialist /SES	UNDP/ABADEI
7	Mr. Wahdatullah Wardak	GRM/SES Specialist	UNDP
8	Ms. Nancy Khweiss		UN Women
9	Mr. Nematullah Rahi	Component 1 Lead	MgtWell
10	Ms. Merita Jorgo	Head of UNDP's Integrated Risk Management Unit	UNDP Afghanistan

ANNEX VII: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This evaluation was conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG ‘Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation’. The evaluation team safeguarded the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees, and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The evaluation team also ensured security of collected information before and after the evaluation and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information knowledge and data gathered in the evaluation process is solely used for the evaluation and not for other uses with the express authorization of UNDP and partners.



UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

UNEG, March 2008

The Code of Conduct was formally approved by UNEG members at the UNEG Annual General Meeting 2008.

Further details of the ethical approach to evaluation in the UN system can be found in the *Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation in the UN System* (UNEG/FN/ETH[2008]).

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EVALUATION IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

1. The conduct of evaluators in the UN system should be beyond reproach at all times. Any deficiency in their professional conduct may undermine the integrity of the evaluation, and more broadly evaluation in the UN or the UN itself, and raise doubts about the quality and validity of their evaluation work.
2. The UNEG¹ Code of Conduct applies to all evaluation staff and consultants in the UN system. The principles behind the Code of Conduct are fully consistent with the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service by which all UN staff are bound. UN staff are also subject to any UNEG member specific staff rules and procedures for the procurement of services.
3. The provisions of the UNEG Code of Conduct apply to all stages of the evaluation process from the conception to the completion of an evaluation and the release and use of the evaluation results.
4. To promote trust and confidence in evaluation in the UN, all UN staff engaged in evaluation and evaluation consultants working for the United Nations system are required to commit themselves in writing to the Code of Conduct for Evaluation² (see Annexes 1 and 2), specifically to the following obligations:

Independence

5. Evaluators shall ensure that independence of judgement is maintained and that evaluation findings and recommendations are independently presented.

Impartiality

6. Evaluators shall operate in an impartial and unbiased manner and give a balanced presentation of strengths and weaknesses of the policy, program, project or organizational unit being evaluated.

¹ UNEG is the United Nations Evaluation Group, a professional network that brings together the units responsible for evaluation in the UN system including the specialized agencies, funds, programmes and affiliated organisations. UNEG currently has 43 such members.

² While the provisions of the Code of Conduct apply to all UN staff involved in evaluation, only UN staff who spend a substantial proportion of their time working on evaluation are expected to sign the Code of Conduct, including staff of evaluation, oversight or performance management units directly involved in the management or conduct of evaluations. All evaluation consultants are required to sign when first engaged by a UNEG member.

Conflict of Interest

7. Evaluators are required to disclose in writing any past experience, of themselves or their immediate family, which may give rise to a potential conflict of interest, and to deal honestly in resolving any conflict of interest which may arise. Before undertaking evaluation work within the UN system, each evaluator will complete a declaration of interest form (see Annex 3).

Honesty and Integrity

8. Evaluators shall show honesty and integrity in their own behaviour, negotiating honestly the evaluation costs, tasks, limitations, scope of results likely to be obtained, while accurately presenting their procedures, data and findings and highlighting any limitations or uncertainties of interpretation within the evaluation.

Competence

9. Evaluators shall accurately represent their level of skills and knowledge and work only within the limits of their professional training and abilities in evaluation, declining assignments for which they do not have the skills and experience to complete successfully.

Accountability

10. Evaluators are accountable for the completion of the agreed evaluation deliverables within the timeframe and budget agreed, while operating in a cost effective manner.

Obligations to participants

11. Evaluators shall respect and protect the rights and welfare of human subjects and communities, in accordance with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights conventions. Evaluators shall respect differences in culture, local customs, religious beliefs and practices, personal interaction, gender roles, disability, age and ethnicity, while using evaluation instruments appropriate to the cultural setting. Evaluators shall ensure prospective participants are treated as autonomous agents, free to choose whether to participate in the evaluation, while ensuring that the relatively powerless are represented. Evaluators shall make themselves aware of and comply with legal codes (whether international or national) governing, for example, interviewing children and young people.

Confidentiality

12. Evaluators shall respect people's right to provide information in confidence and make participants aware of the scope and limits of confidentiality, while ensuring that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source.

Avoidance of Harm

13. Evaluators shall act to minimise risks and harms to, and burdens on, those participating in the evaluation, without compromising the integrity of the evaluation findings.

Accuracy, Completeness and Reliability

14. Evaluators have an obligation to ensure that evaluation reports and presentations are accurate, complete and reliable. Evaluators shall explicitly justify judgements, findings and conclusions and show their underlying rationale, so that stakeholders are in a position to assess them.

Transparency

15. Evaluators shall clearly communicate to stakeholders the purpose of the evaluation, the criteria applied and the intended use of findings. Evaluators shall ensure that stakeholders have a say in shaping the evaluation and shall ensure that all documentation is readily available to and understood by stakeholders.

Omissions and wrongdoing

16. Where evaluators find evidence of wrong-doing or unethical conduct, they are obliged to report it to the proper oversight authority.

(Each UNEG member to create its own forms for signature)

Annex 1: United Nations Evaluation Group – Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

Evaluation Staff Agreement Form

To be signed by all staff engaged full or part time in evaluation at the start of their contract.

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

Name of Staff Member: _____

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

Signed at (place) on (date)

Signature: _____

(Each UNEG member to create its own forms for signature)

Annex 2: United Nations Evaluation Group Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

Evaluation Consultants Agreement Form

To be signed by all consultants as individuals (not by or on behalf of a consultancy company) before a contract can be issued.

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

Name of Consultant: Elinor Bajraktari

Name of Consultancy Organisation (where relevant): _____

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

Signed at (place) on (date)

Signature: 



UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

UNEG, March 2008

The Code of Conduct was formally approved by UNEG members at the UNEG Annual General Meeting 2008.

Further details of the ethical approach to evaluation in the UN system can be found in the *Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation in the UN System* (UNEG/FN/ETH[2008]).

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EVALUATION IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

1. The conduct of evaluators in the UN system should be beyond reproach at all times. Any deficiency in their professional conduct may undermine the integrity of the evaluation, and more broadly evaluation in the UN or the UN itself, and raise doubts about the quality and validity of their evaluation work.
2. The UNEG¹ Code of Conduct applies to all evaluation staff and consultants in the UN system. The principles behind the Code of Conduct are fully consistent with the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service by which all UN staff are bound. UN staff are also subject to any UNEG member specific staff rules and procedures for the procurement of services.
3. The provisions of the UNEG Code of Conduct apply to all stages of the evaluation process from the conception to the completion of an evaluation and the release and use of the evaluation results.
4. To promote trust and confidence in evaluation in the UN, all UN staff engaged in evaluation and evaluation consultants working for the United Nations system are required to commit themselves in writing to the Code of Conduct for Evaluation² (see Annexes 1 and 2), specifically to the following obligations:

Independence

5. Evaluators shall ensure that independence of judgement is maintained and that evaluation findings and recommendations are independently presented.

Impartiality

6. Evaluators shall operate in an impartial and unbiased manner and give a balanced presentation of strengths and weaknesses of the policy, program, project or organizational unit being evaluated.

¹ UNEG is the United Nations Evaluation Group, a professional network that brings together the units responsible for evaluation in the UN system including the specialized agencies, funds, programmes and affiliated organisations. UNEG currently has 43 such members.

² While the provisions of the Code of Conduct apply to all UN staff involved in evaluation, only UN staff who spend a substantial proportion of their time working on evaluation are expected to sign the Code of Conduct, including staff of evaluation, oversight or performance management units directly involved in the management or conduct of evaluations. All evaluation consultants are required to sign when first engaged by a UNEG member.

Conflict of Interest

7. Evaluators are required to disclose in writing any past experience, of themselves or their immediate family, which may give rise to a potential conflict of interest, and to deal honestly in resolving any conflict of interest which may arise. Before undertaking evaluation work within the UN system, each evaluator will complete a declaration of interest form (see Annex 3).

Honesty and Integrity

8. Evaluators shall show honesty and integrity in their own behaviour, negotiating honestly the evaluation costs, tasks, limitations, scope of results likely to be obtained, while accurately presenting their procedures, data and findings and highlighting any limitations or uncertainties of interpretation within the evaluation.

Competence

9. Evaluators shall accurately represent their level of skills and knowledge and work only within the limits of their professional training and abilities in evaluation, declining assignments for which they do not have the skills and experience to complete successfully.

Accountability

10. Evaluators are accountable for the completion of the agreed evaluation deliverables within the timeframe and budget agreed, while operating in a cost effective manner.

Obligations to participants

11. Evaluators shall respect and protect the rights and welfare of human subjects and communities, in accordance with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights conventions. Evaluators shall respect differences in culture, local customs, religious beliefs and practices, personal interaction, gender roles, disability, age and ethnicity, while using evaluation instruments appropriate to the cultural setting. Evaluators shall ensure prospective participants are treated as autonomous agents, free to choose whether to participate in the evaluation, while ensuring that the relatively powerless are represented. Evaluators shall make themselves aware of and comply with legal codes (whether international or national) governing, for example, interviewing children and young people.

Confidentiality

12. Evaluators shall respect people's right to provide information in confidence and make participants aware of the scope and limits of confidentiality, while ensuring that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source.

Avoidance of Harm

13. Evaluators shall act to minimise risks and harms to, and burdens on, those participating in the evaluation, without compromising the integrity of the evaluation findings.

Accuracy, Completeness and Reliability

14. Evaluators have an obligation to ensure that evaluation reports and presentations are accurate, complete and reliable. Evaluators shall explicitly justify judgements, findings and conclusions and show their underlying rationale, so that stakeholders are in a position to assess them.

Transparency

15. Evaluators shall clearly communicate to stakeholders the purpose of the evaluation, the criteria applied and the intended use of findings. Evaluators shall ensure that stakeholders have a say in shaping the evaluation and shall ensure that all documentation is readily available to and understood by stakeholders.

Omissions and wrongdoing

16. Where evaluators find evidence of wrong-doing or unethical conduct, they are obliged to report it to the proper oversight authority.

(Each UNEG member to create its own forms for signature)

Annex 1: United Nations Evaluation Group – Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

Evaluation Staff Agreement Form

To be signed by all staff engaged full or part time in evaluation at the start of their contract.

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

Name of Staff Member: _____

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

Signed at (place) on (date)

Signature: _____

(Each UNEG member to create its own forms for signature)

Annex 2: United Nations Evaluation Group Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

Evaluation Consultants Agreement Form

To be signed by all consultants as individuals (not by or on behalf of a consultancy company) before a contract can be issued.

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

Name of Consultant: Sabahuddin Sabah

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): _____

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

Signed at (place) on (date)

Signature:  _____ 24-10-2023