



# FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

## KNOWLEDGE FOR DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PHASE II

Economic Relations Division (ERD)

Ministry of Finance

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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# **Final Evaluation Report**

## **Knowledge for Development Management Phase II Project**

**Country of the evaluation intervention:** Bangladesh

**Organization commissioned the evaluation:** UNDP

**Timeframe of evaluation:** September-November 2023

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Ferdous Arfina Osman  
November 2023

## Project and evaluation information details

### 1. Project Information:

Project/outcome Information		
Project/outcome title	Knowledge for Development Management (K4DM), Phase II	
Atlas ID	00093428	
Corporate outcome and output	UNDAF Outcome 1/CPD Outcome 2: Develop and implement improved social policies and programmes that focus on good governance, reduction of structural inequalities and advancement of vulnerable individuals and groups.	
Country	Bangladesh	
Region	South Asia	
Date project document signed	11 March 2021	
Project dates	<b>Start</b>	<b>Planned end</b>
	01 January 2021	30 June 2024
Total committed budget	USD 3,148,900.00	
Project expenditure at the time of evaluation	USD 722,709.50	
Funding source	UNDP Track Fund, Seoul Policy Centre (UNDP Korea), Embassy of Switzerland, Government of Bangladesh	
Implementing party <sup>1</sup>	Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh	

### 2. Final Evaluation Information:

Evaluation information		
Evaluation type (project/outcome/thematic/country programme, etc.)	Project Evaluation	
Final/midterm review/ other	Final Evaluation	
Period under evaluation	<b>Start</b>	<b>End</b>
	April 2022	July 2023
Evaluators	Professor Dr. Ferdous Arfina Osman	
Evaluator email address	arfinaosman@du.ac.bd	
Evaluation dates	<b>Start</b>	<b>Completion</b>
	August, 2023	November, 2023

<sup>1</sup> This is the entity that has overall responsibility for implementation of the project (award), effective use of resources and delivery of outputs in the signed project document and workplan.

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## ACRONYMS

CDP	Committee for Development Policy
CPD	Country Program Document
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
ERD	Economic Relations Division
FAMS	Foreign Aid Management
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GED	General Economic Division
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
ICT	Information Communication Technology
INFF	Integrated National Financing Framework
IWPL	Inter Wing Peer Learning
K4DM	Knowledge for Development Management
KII	Key Informant Interview
LDC	Least Developed Country
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millenium Development Goals
MoEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NHDR	National Human Development Report
NPD	National Project Director
NPD	National Project Director
NRB	Non-Resident Bangladeshi
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PIC	Project Implementation Committee
ProDoc	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RRF	Resource and Results Framework
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SOFR	Secured Overnight Financing Rate
SS&TrC	South South and Triangular Cooperation
TAPP	Technical Assistant Project Proposal
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nation Development Program
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of the current study was to conduct the final evaluation of the Knowledge for Development Management (K4DM) Phase II Project. The Project emerged as a joint initiative of the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) and the UNDP in March 2021 but it effectively started from April 2022 and will continue until June 2024. The project is being implemented and coordinated by the UN Wing of the Economic Relations Division (ERD) of the Ministry of Finance and supported by the UNDP. The project aimed *to achieve a lasting impact that enables the Government of Bangladesh to accelerate resource mobilization towards LDC Graduation*. The focus of the project was to address two specific development challenges that Bangladesh may encounter during the project period (2021-2024), which includes: i) How to accelerate the capacity of ERD to undertake evidence based decision making and engage effectively in the international arena for promoting national development interest; ii) How to mobilize maximum external resources through developing a comprehensive external resource mobilization strategy that would explore alternative funding sources.

The targeted outcomes of the Project were:

**Outcome 1:** Evidence-based policymaking towards national development aspirations practiced.

**Outcome 2:** External resource mobilization strategy and international economic collaboration strengthened.

To produce the above outcomes, the following are the **four outputs** the project aimed to achieve:

Output 1: Institutional approach for capacity building adopted.

Output 2: Enabling environment for evidence-based policymaking strengthened.

Output 3: External resource mobilization capacity strengthened.

Output 4: Institutions and modality for South-South & Triangular Cooperation strengthened.

**Objective of the evaluation:** The principal objective of the current evaluation was to assess the **outputs** and **results** achieved by the K4DM Phase-II Project across the targets defined in the Resource and Results Framework (RRF) during its active lifespan starting from **April 2022 to July 2023**. The final evaluation also assessed the project activities across the OECD criteria for evaluation: relevance, efficiencies, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

**Methodology of the Study:** Methodology of the current evaluation relied on both secondary and primary data collected through both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

*Secondary data* for the study were collected through documentary survey, which included the review of the Project Document (ProDoc), Theory of change and Results Framework, Technical Assistance Project Proforma (TAPP), Project quality assurance reports, Annual work plans and budgets, Quarterly and annual progress and expenditure reports, Results-oriented monitoring reports, Minutes of Project Executive Board, PIC and PSC meetings and technical/financial monitoring reports.

*Primary data* for the study were collected through adopting both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative data were collected through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and FGDs while quantitative data were collected through questionnaire survey. Respondents of KIIs included 22 high and mid-level officials of ERD, UNDP, Project officials, other relevant organizations, and development

partners. Two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted in both supply and beneficiary sides. At the supply side, 1 FGD was held with the mid-level K4DM project officials (5) and at the beneficiary side 1 FGD was held with the mid-level officials of ERD (14) who received capacity development training from the Project.

Questionnaire Survey was conducted to assess *relevance, efficiency, effectiveness* and *sustainability* of the project by using a rating scale. The survey was administered on all the respondents of the KIIs and FGDs. Thus, the respondents of the questionnaire survey were 41.

Data obtained for the study were processed manually. Information obtained from interviews and FGDs were recorded, analysed and cross checked/matched with the data/information gathered from the documentary and questionnaire survey.

### **Findings of the Study:**

**Relevance:** The findings of this evaluative study found that the Project objectives, Outcome and Outputs were relevant to the national priorities that include: the 8<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2020-2025) and the Perspective Plan (2021-2041). The Project outputs were also found relevant to SDG 17 and the UNDP Priorities.

**Efficiency:** The findings of the study demonstrate that the Project was efficient in terms of budget spent vs plan and value for money earned. Overall, upto June 2023, the Project could spend 70.59% of its allocated budget. The Project also earned value for money. Output 2 aimed for creating an enabling environment for evidence-based policy making consumed the highest share (39%) and Output 4 aiming for strengthening South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SS&TrC) consumed the second highest share (31%) of project expenditure, producing many tangible results. Majority of the respondents of the Stakeholder perception survey conducted for this study also highly acclaimed the project's performance in achieving value for money terming this as satisfactory (meant for having minor shortcomings).

**Effectiveness:** Among the four intended outputs of the Project, Outputs 1, 2 and 4 progressed very well in terms of both producing tangible outputs and in undertaking various initiatives (which are still underway) to achieve the project outputs. Amongst all, the achievement of the Project Output 1 aiming for institutionalizing capacity building initiatives was the highest as it could create a lot of impact on improving the capacity of the ERD officials in performing their day-to-day work at ERD. Output 2 aiming for creating an enabling environment for evidence-based policy making could also produce a good number of tangible achievements which includes: upgradation of FAMS software, publication of NHDR, and revision of ERD handbook. Output 4 aiming at strengthening South South &TrC could produce a tangible output by establishing a South South Knowledge Hub and could achieve almost all targets of RRF although three of its activities were left unachieved. On the other hand, output 3 aiming for strengthening external resource mobilization could not materialize its planned activities as expected. Other than producing two national workshops, Output 3 could not execute any of its planned activities. Thus, a good number of planned activities under different outputs also could not be achieved or dropped from the Project activities at the implementation stage.

The findings of the stakeholder perception survey also endorsed this fact. More than a half of the respondents (55%) labelled the performance of output 1 as “highly satisfactory” while Output 2 and 4 were also found to be largely “satisfactory”. Thus, from all dimensions, overall effectiveness of the Project was found to be “satisfactory”.

The chapter tried to identify the factors that contributed to the achievements and non-achievements of the desired Outputs of the Project. The findings of the study revealed that *efficient project leadership, strong relationship between the ERD and the UNDP, ERD ownership of the Project and the change in the mindset of the officials, designing the project based on the capacity need assessment of the ERD* contributed to the achievements of the Project Outputs. On the other hand, non-achievements of the Project outputs were caused mainly due to i) the *delay in getting the TAPP signed, ii) budgetary constraints, iii) frequent change of ERD leadership accompanied by the changes of priorities of ERD , iv) Covid-19 pandemic and v) too ambitious ProDoc.*

The Project could bring about many positive changes at ERD which include: i) capacity improvement of the ERD officials ii) inculcating a participatory culture in decision making iii) change in the mindset of the officials towards learning new things and improving capacity iv) awareness building about the upcoming challenges of LDC graduation.

**Sustainability:** The current evaluative study found that the K4DM Phase II Project has immense potential to be sustainable since the ERD has already owned the Project. The interventions having the potential of being sustainable include: FAMS software, revision of ERD Handbook and the South-South Knowledge Hub. The Project will be able to influence the national policies through its SS&TrC knowledge hub and the NHDR publication.

**Lessons Learned:** The study has identified the factors that facilitated the implementation of the Project, which include: i) Project objectives were timely ii) ERD Ownership at all Levels created a congenial environment for Project implementation iii) Horizontal learning was found to be an effective means of capacity development iv) Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), which made the Project attractive among the ERD officials in general and the young officials in particular v) Dedicated and efficient Project leadership.

Factors that affected the project implementation were: i) ProDoc was too ambitious ii) Frequent priority changes in Project interventions caused uncertainty in implementation iii) Lack of the required level of understanding of the ERD officials about Project activity affected project implementation.

**Recommendations:** Based on its findings, the study recommends that the Project be continued in a new form so that it can address the challenges on the way to LDC Graduation scheduled for 2026 and puts forward the following recommendations:

- i) *The new form of the Project should be designed in alignment with the national priorities for dealing with the challenges on the way to LDC graduation:* To attain a sustainable graduation with momentum Government has developed a National Committee on LDC Graduation (NCG) in 2021. In the next phase the Project should closely align with the areas identified by the NCG.
- ii) *Resource mobilization should be the key focus of the next Phase of the Project:* The K4DM Phase II Project couldn't make any headway in external resource mobilization. In its new form,

resource mobilization should be given strong focus since in the aftermath of the LDC graduation resource mobilization will become the prime concern for all ministries, and especially for the ERD. A new approach must be adopted by the Project to identify potential funding sources and to create networking with development partners.

- iii) *Capacity building initiative should be redesigned in a holistic manner:* Capacity building initiative should be redesigned in a holistic manner. Along with the officials of the ERD, it should involve officials of other ministries particularly the strategically important ministries in the journey towards LDC graduation. In addition to this, capacity building initiative should also include the private sector to prepare them for the future development paradigm of the country.
- iv) *Training Curriculum should be redesigned:* The frequency and extent of ODA will decrease after the LDC graduation and commercial financing strategies might be required to be adopted. Therefore, training curriculum would need to focus on these changes to make the ERD officials informed and prepared for this.
- v) *Emphasis should be given on the Knowledge products/ Research/Studies:* In order to comprehend the future scenario of development transition and to identify the appropriate policy actions adequate focus should be given on research.
- vi) *A Systematic approach to the South South and Triangular Cooperation (SS&TrC) to be adopted:* The Project couldn't implement many of the planned activities under SS&TrC due mainly to a lack of a clear understanding of the ERD officials about the issue. The future form of the Project may consider adopting a more systematic approach to the SS&TrC component clarifying its objectives and targets further and distinguishing it from other similar projects being implemented by the UNDP and ERD.

### **Recommendations Beyond the Project Scope**

- vii) *Projects should not set its targets with unfunded portion of the budget:* The current study found the shortage of funds as one of the prime challenges of Project implementation. Given this, this evaluative study recommends that projects should not set any target with unfunded portion.
- viii) *Fastening the TAPP approval process:* Although officially 180 days are fixed for the completion of the process of signing TAPP but the TAPP of the K4DM Phase II Project took nine months to get approved. Government should consider taking steps to fasten the TAPP approval process following the best practice of other countries e.g., Cambodia and Vietnam.
- ix) *Projects should be allowed to be implemented as per the ProDoc instead of frequently changing the Project interventions at the implementation stage:* Frequent change of ERD Leadership and the consequent changes of priority of the ERD regarding the Project interventions was one of the key constraints for smooth implementation of the Project. A mechanism should be in place that allows the Projects to be implemented as per the ProDoc inhibiting any change in the interventions at the implementation stage. For that to execute, the process of designing and approval of ProDoc should be made more rational so that it does not set inappropriate and ambitious targets compared to the time and resources available and reflects preferences of all the stakeholders.
- x) *Mid-level officials to be selected as the NPD to mitigate the effects of frequent change of leadership on Project implementation:* The study found that the K4DM Phase II Project being

a three-year Project, had three NPDs. Such a frequent change in leadership brought new perspectives, new understandings, and new priorities in the Project causing delays and uncertainties in implementation. Appointing NPDs from the Joint Secretary level would mitigate this challenge of project implementation, as it will take time for them to be promoted to the Secretaries.

- xi) *Institutional Reform is critical for smooth implementation:* Finally, and most importantly, the study suggests an institutional reform with a focus on bringing about the fundamental change in the bureaucratic system causing delays in the TAPP approval, changes in the project priorities/interventions at the implementation stage, frequent transfer of officials. Development partners also expressed their keen interest in the institutional reforms.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background and Context of the Project

Bangladesh is at the crossroads of its development transition. Over the past few decades, the country has achieved many development milestones and currently, it is aspiring to graduate from the least-developed country (LDC) in 2026. In the recent past, the COVID-19 pandemic has also caused many unforeseen shocks to the country's impressive economic growth. Given this context, attaining sustainable and inclusive economic growth is critical for pursuing Bangladesh's development agenda of LDC graduation. Moreover, LDC Graduation may give rise many potential economic costs due to the loss of duty-free market access and also a change in the aid regime leading to an increase in the share of loans as opposed to grants in total development assistance. To deal with the changed economic scenario the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) needs to tap all its actual and potential resources and has to scale up its policy capacity so that it can articulate, protect, and promote its strategic interests and guide the development process. Leveraging appropriate knowledge management tools is critical to improve this capacity (by making policies evidence-based) and to facilitate achieving the desired development transition.

To meet the national development challenges posed by COVID-19 on the way to LDC graduation, Knowledge for Development Management (K4DM) Phase-II Project emerged in 2021 for a period of three years until December 2023, which later, was extended upto June 2024. ***Phase II of the Project aimed to*** achieve a lasting impact that enables the Government of Bangladesh to accelerate ***resource mobilization for development initiatives***.

Phase I of the K4DM Project was launched in 2014 by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), with support from UNDP aiming to improve the policy capacity of the GoB in general and the Economic Relations Division (ERD) in particular so that it can explore alternative avenues of external resources and mobilize them to pursue its development agenda. Phase I of the K4DM Project concluded in December 2020 (with one-year extension) with considerable success in terms of i) leveraging the knowledge and know-how of non-resident Bangladeshi's (NRBs); ii) promoting South-South and Triangulation Cooperation in national development; iii) creating a national knowledge repository through ERDPEDIA; and iv) providing capacity building training to government officials to improve their decision-making capacity.

This final evaluation covered the project implementation of the project from April 2022 to July 2023. The purpose of the final evaluation is to assess the outputs and results achieved by the K4DM project phase-II compared to the targets defined in the RRF. The final evaluation also evaluated and documented the project activities' relevance, efficiencies, effectiveness, impact, coherence, and sustainability that the project has achieved. The evaluation also generated knowledge for wider use, assess the scope for scaling up the ongoing phase, and serve as a quality assurance tool for both upward and downward accountability.

The primary audience for this evaluation is Government officials from Economic Relations Division (ERD), National Project Director, Project Manager, other relevant government agencies, civil society representatives, and development partners as well as UNDP Country Office, Democratic Governance

cluster, and K4DM Phase-II project. UNDP will consider all useful findings, conclusions, and recommendations from the evaluation, prepare a systematic management response for each recommendation and implement follow-up actions as per the UNDP Evaluation Resource Center guidance/policies.

The final evaluation of the project suggested many areas for improvement. Broadly, the Evaluation Report recommended that Phase II of the project should: i) continue the project efforts for further capacity improvement of government officials and ii) strengthen local and global partnerships. The report also noted that further steps should be taken to fulfill the Non-Resident Bangladeshi (NRB) and South-South & Triangular Cooperation agenda that was established under Phase I.

## 1.2 Project Information

<b>Project title</b>	Knowledge for Development Management (K4DM), Phase II	
<b>Country</b>	Bangladesh	
<b>Region</b>	South Asia	
<b>Date project document signed</b>	11 March 2021	
<b>Project dates</b>	<b>Start</b> 01 January 2021	<b>Planned end</b> 30 June 2024
<b>Funding source</b>	UNDP Track Fund, Seoul Policy Centre (UNDP Korea), Embassy of Switzerland, Government of Bangladesh	
<b>Implementing party</b>	Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh	

## 1.3 Structure of the Report

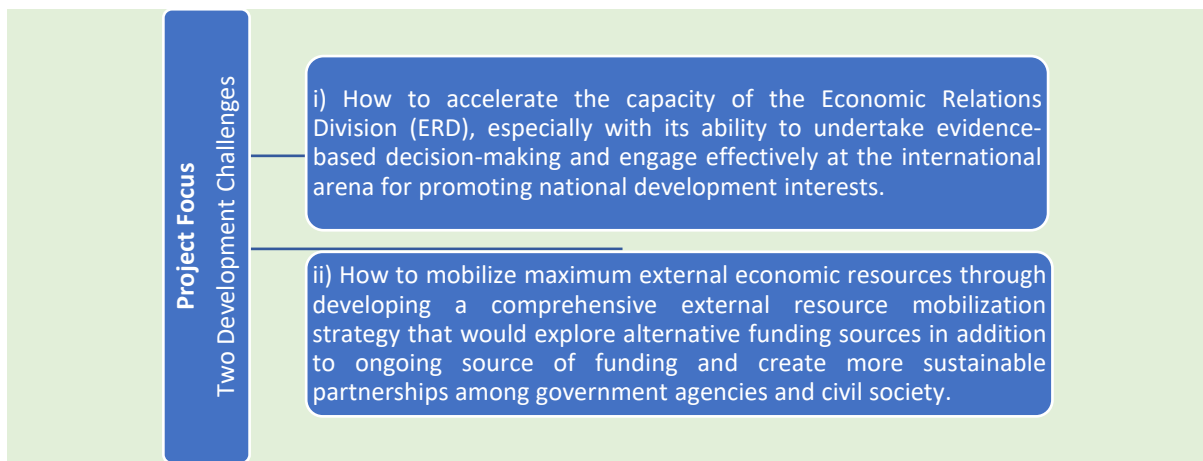
The report consists of introductory chapter, description of the intervention, evaluation scope and objectives, evaluation approach and methodology, findings, theory of change and lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations.

## Chapter 2: Description of the intervention

### 2.1 Project Focus

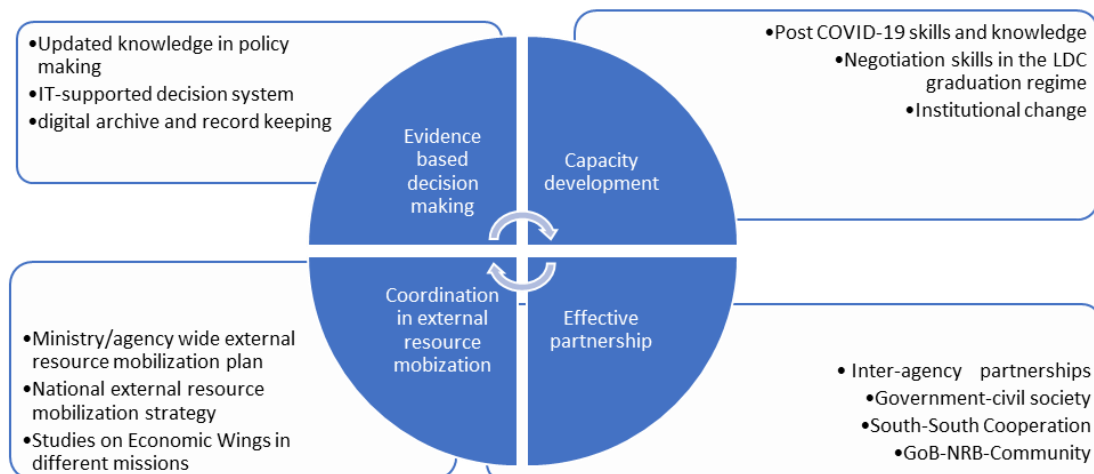
Being encouraged by the successes achieved by Phase-I of the project and to meet the national development challenges posed by COVID-19 on the way to LDC graduation, Phase-II of the K4DM Project emerged in March 2021, but it became fully active from April 2022. The focus of the project was to address two specific development challenges that Bangladesh may encounter during the project period (2021-2024) as presented below in Figure 1:

**Figure 1 Focus of the K4DM Phase II**



The Project Document (ProDoc) has translated these two development challenges into **four** specific areas that have been included as the Project interventions under Phase II: evidence-based decision making, capacity development, coordination in external resource mobilization and establishing effective partnerships, as presented below (Figure 2):

**Figure 2 Areas of intervention of K4DM Phase II**



Source: ProDoc of K4DM Phase-II



## 2.2 Intervention results

The project sets *to achieve a lasting impact that enables the Government of Bangladesh to accelerate knowledge management and external resource mobilization towards LDC graduation*. Thus, the targeted outcomes of the project are:

**Outcome 1:** Evidence-based policymaking towards national development aspirations practiced.

**Outcome 2:** External resource mobilization strategy and international economic collaboration strengthened.

To produce the above outcomes, the following are the five outputs aligning with the above mentioned two outcomes the project is designed to achieve:

Output 1: Institutional approach for capacity building adopted.

Output 2: Enabling environment for evidence-based policymaking strengthened.

Output 3: External resource mobilization capacity strengthened.

Output 4: Engagement of NRBs with the Government improved.

Output 5: Institutions and modality for South-South & Triangular Cooperation strengthened.

The theory of change of the suggests that its targeted Outputs will contribute to the achievement of the Project Outcome areas and its broader objective of accelerating knowledge management and resource mobilization towards LDC Graduation.

It is important to note here that even though the final evaluation of Phase I emphasized on strengthening the engagement of NRBs with the Government; nevertheless, this component was dropped from the approved Project's activity in May 2022 with the argument that the issue conformed more with the mandate of the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) than that of the ERD. After several high-level meetings with the MoEWOE, the ERD senior management consented to hand Output 4 over to the MoEWOE.

To accommodate the changes in the project outputs and funding, the ProDoc and TAPP were revised in June 2023. Accordingly, the Results and Resource Framework (RRF) of the revised ProDoc grouped the expected project outputs along with their indicators under the desired relevant project outcomes. In June 2023, the Embassy of Switzerland committed to funding the K4DM Phase II Project amounting to US\$ 300,000.00 towards: (i) Institutionalizing and enhancing capacity-building initiatives; and (ii) Leveraging appropriate knowledge through policy analysis & research.

## Chapter 3: Evaluation Scope and Objectives

### 3.1 Evaluation Scope

The final evaluation aims at critically reviewing and identifying what has worked well in the project, what challenges have been faced and what lessons were learned throughout the implementation period. The evaluation will also generate knowledge for wider uses, assess the scope for scaling up the ongoing phase, and serve as a quality assurance tool for both upward and downward accountability. The evaluation should provide credible, useful, evidence-based information that enables timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of UNDP, and the Government.

The principal objective of the evaluation was to assess the **outputs** and **results** achieved by the K4DM project phase-II across the targets defined in the Resource and Results Framework (RRF) during its active life span starting from **April 2022 to July 2023**. The final evaluation also assessed the project activities across the OECD criteria for evaluation: relevance, efficiencies, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

The evaluation has also generated knowledge for wider use, assessed the scope for scaling up the ongoing phase, and served as a quality assurance tool for both upward and downward accountability.

The scope of the work for this assignment is outlined below:

- i) Detailed methodological notes of the evaluation: The consultant developed detailed methodologies including 1) Overall evaluation strategies, 2) Detailed work plan, 3) Evaluation matrix, 4) Data collection methodologies & protocols, 5) Data quality control methods, 6) Data analysis methodologies, and 7) Gender data analysis plan. Methodologies were finalized in consultation with UNDP. The consultant (s) also reviewed primary and secondary project data. Before submitting the inception report, the firm consulted with the key persons of the project to finalize the data collection methodologies, tools, and data analysis plans.
- ii. Development of data collection tools: The consultant designed a set of tools to collect data from different stakeholders. This included 1) Key Informant Interview (KII) checklist/ semi-structured questionnaire, 2) Focus Group Discussion (FGD) checklist/semi-structured questionnaire. Except for these requirements, the consultant (s) had the freedom to propose data collection tools as appropriate for the evaluation in consultation with UNDP.
- iii. Data Analysis: The consultant ensured qualitative analysis and interpreted the findings properly.
- iv. Report: The consultant provided a draft report and shared its findings with K4DM Phase-II, UNDP and other relevant stakeholders through a power point presentation. The feedback received was incorporated into the report. The final report included programmatic recommendations on what needs to be considered for the sustainability of K4DM Phase-II project.

### **3.2 Evaluation Objectives**

The specific objectives of the evaluation are as follows:

- To assess the performance of K4DM Phase-II, against the outcome and output indicators as set out in the Result and Resource Framework (RRF).
- To assess how far K4DM Phase-II has come in achieving the objective measured through the impact indicators identified in the RRF.
- To draw the positive and negative, and foreseen and unforeseen, changes and effects driven by project-supported interventions.
- To examine the assumptions embedded in the Theory of Change of K4DM Phase-II and assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project drawn from its design and implementation.
- To draw lessons learned and good practices for the GoB and UNDP replication and/or up-scaling and provide forward-looking recommendations for the possible next phase.

### **3.3 Evaluation Criteria**

The evaluation has employed OECD evaluation criteria (Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact, and Sustainability). The final evaluation aimed at critically reviewing and identifying what worked well in the project, what challenges were encountered and what lessons were learned throughout the implementation period.

The evaluation also aims to provide credible, useful, evidence-based information that enables timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations, and lessons into the decision-making processes of UNDP, and the Government. The findings were collected through different methods from diversified stakeholders.

### **3.4 Evaluation Questions**

The evaluation followed the four OECD-DAC evaluation criteria - Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Sustainability. Human Rights and Gender Equality was added as crosscutting criteria. The guiding questions outlined below were further refined by the consultant and agreed with UNDP. As part of the evaluation, the consultant addressed the evaluation questions.

## Chapter 4: Evaluation Approach and Method

### 4.1 Evaluation Approach

The final evaluation of K4DM Phase-II is a combination of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods and instruments. The consultant followed a participatory and consultative approach that ensures close engagement with the evaluation manager, implementing partner and other stakeholders.

### 4.2 Evaluation Methods

The Evaluation Matrix provides the details of the methodology of the study. Please see Annex 2.

**Methods of Data Collection:** The study has adopted a mixed method relying on both qualitative and quantitative data collected from secondary and primary sources.

**Secondary data** for the study were collected through documentary survey, which included the review of the Project Document (ProDoc), Theory of change and Results Framework, Technical Assistance Project Proforma (TAPP), Project quality assurance reports, Annual work plans and budgets, Quarterly and annual progress reports, Quarterly and annual expenditure reports, Results-oriented monitoring reports, Minutes of Project Executive Board, PIC and PSC meetings and technical/financial monitoring reports.

**Primary data** for the study were collected through adopting both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative data were collected through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and FGD, while quantitative data were collected through questionnaire survey.

**Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):** The study interviewed 22 key stakeholders of the project, which included: the high-level decision makers from ERD (6), UNDP management (6); K4DM project officials, including the National Project Manager, current and previous National Project Directors (3); officials of relevant ministries and agencies, (2); officials of Planning Commission (3); development partners other than UNDP having a stake in the Project (2). The list of respondents of the interviews is available in **Annex 9** while **Annexes 3-6** provide the questionnaire for interviews and survey. Among the KII respondents, six were women.

**Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** 2 FGDs were conducted on both supply and beneficiary sides. At the supply side, 1 FGD was held with 5 mid-level K4DM project staff of UNDP and at the beneficiary side 1 FGDs was held with 14 mid-level officials of ERD. Among the FGD respondents, six were women.

**Questionnaire Survey:** Quantitative data were obtained through a questionnaire survey in order to assess relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the project by using a rating scale. In this regard, the Rating Scale for project dimensions (UNDP, 2011)<sup>2</sup> was used. **Annex 8** provides the details of Rating Scale. The survey was administered on all respondents of the KIIs and FGDs. Thus, the respondents of the questionnaire survey were 41 (22 KII respondents+19 FGD respondents).

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<sup>2</sup> UNDP (2011) UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF-Financed Projects Version for External Evaluators.

### **4.3 Stakeholder Participation**

The KII, FGD and Questionnaire survey was administered on UNDP and GoB officials. Thus, the respondents of the KII, FGD and Questionnaire survey were 41 (22 KII respondents+19 FGD respondents). Among them, twelve were women.

### **4.4 Data Analysis**

The study collected similar data/information by adopting multiple methods and techniques. Data/Information collected from various sources were cross-checked and matched with each other, which ensured data quality.

Data (both qualitative and quantitative) collected for the study were processed manually. Data and information obtained from interviews and FGDs were recorded, analyzed and cross-checked/matched with the data/information obtained from the documentary and questionnaire survey. Thus, data and evidence were triangulated to address the evaluation questions.

### **4.5 Quality Control**

Since the quality of the survey data is of utmost importance, sufficient care has been taken to ensure the quality of data collection. After developing the instruments, the researcher shared with UNDP, and finalized them. Necessary precautions were taken in the data management activities.

### **4.6 Ethical considerations**

**Participatory Approach:** Participatory approach was followed to involve allowing the respondents to express their views without any fear of consequences or interference.

**Inclusiveness:** Given the nature of women and girl centeredness of the project, it was selectively inclusive for all categories of marginalized girls and women deprived from the benefits of education and skills.

**Other considerations:** The evaluation was guided by the principals outlined in the UNEG “Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation” (UNEG, 2020).

### **4.7 Background information on evaluator**

Ferdous Arfina Osman PhD is a Professor at the Department. She got her doctoral degree in 1999 in Public Policy and Administration from the University of Manchester, UK. She did her post-doctoral research at Johns Hopkins University, USA in 2015 under the Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program. Dr. Osman has published extensively in academic journals at home and abroad on issues and areas relevant to public policy and governance. She has published a book titled, “Policy Making in Bangladesh: A Study of the Health Policy Process”. Her major research focus includes public policy, health policy, local governance, urban governance and public management. In addition to her 25 years teaching experience at the undergraduate and post graduate level she has a vast work experience (in consulting capacities) with international organizations including UNDP, World Bank, KOICA, ADB, Rockefeller Foundation in the fields of local government, political governance, health policy, urban

poverty, institutional development, capacity building and evaluation of development projects /programs, policy review and analysis.

#### **4.8 Major Limitations of the study**

The evaluation was conducted nine months before the end of the project which missed the opportunity to capture many of the remaining intervention results. On the other hand, it was difficult to manage and maintain the busy schedule of the senior level government officials. Time was not sufficient to undertake a comprehensive in-depth enquiry.

## Chapter 5: Findings

### 5.1 Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence, Impact, Sustainability

This is the core chapter of the final evaluation. The criteria are a combination of evaluation criteria used by OECD and UNDP. In the following evaluation has been done on the basis of data collected with subsequent analysis, interpretation, lessons learned, conclusion and recommendations along with a brief reflection on theory of change.

### 5.2 Relevance of the Project

To ensure the long-term sustainability and viability of a project, the goals of the project must be in alignment with the national as well as international goals and visions. The K4DM Phase II Project emerged with a view to address the challenges on the way to LDC graduation in 2026. In view of this, the Project aimed to develop capacity of the (ERD) so that it can leverage all possible conventional and non-conventional sources of external resource mobilization for a sustainable LDC graduation. The Project also designed its outputs in harmony with the development aspirations of Bangladesh and the current global priorities. The current chapter analyzes the degree to which the K4DM project's objectives are relevant with both national and international priorities and visions.

#### 5.2.1 Relevance with National Priorities

In several national documents, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) outlines its priorities, and the Project has been designed in alignment with those documents, which include: i) Perspective Plan (2021- 2041); and iii) the 8<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan.

##### 5.2.1.1 The Perspective Plan 2021-2041

Perspective Plan 2041 outlines comprehensive strategies for the eradication of poverty, inequality, and human deprivation. The PP 2041 serves as a road map for increased economic growth and is based on two ideas, one of which is to transform Bangladesh into a developed nation by 2041 with complete digital integration. This transition can only be accomplished through a process of rapid inclusive growth that boosts productive capacity, establishing an innovative knowledge economy, and conservation of the environment. The K4DM phase II recognizes the significance of productive capacity and innovative knowledge-based economy and is therefore designed in relevance with the PP 2041 of the government.

##### 5.2.1.2 The 8<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2020-2025)

The Perspective Plan 2041 is planned to be put into action in four 5-year stages. The 8FYP is the first step of implementation of the Perspective Plan. Hence, the prime role of the 8 FYP is to initiative PP2041 in a way that moves Bangladesh closer to its goals of becoming an Upper Middle-Income Country, meeting all of the SDG targets.

In November 2026, Bangladesh is projected to move out of the category of Least Developed Country (LDC), which it currently occupies. After 46 years of being enlisted in the category, the nation has met all three criteria as assessed triennially by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) of the United

Nations, for the second time in February 2021, and has obtained the final recommendation to graduate. Therefore, LDC graduation is a top priority of the government. K4DM phase II has been designed to facilitate and assist the government in its journey of LDC upgradation.

**Table 1 Relevance of the K4DM project phase II with the national priorities**

National Priorities	Core themes	Relevance with the components of the phase II of the K4DM project
Perspective Plan 2041	To achieve economic growth and to transform Bangladesh into a developed nation by 2041 with complete digital integration.	K4DM phase II Project has designed many of its outputs (1&2) with a focus on digitization. It aimed to create e-platform for capacity building, IT supported decision making system, create digital archive and record to facilitate evidence based decision making.
8 <sup>th</sup> five-year plan (2020-2025)	i)Attaining LDC Graduation ii)Improving public sector capacity iii)Mobilization of external resources	The K4DM has designed its outputs to facilitate the government in its preparation to face the challenges on the way to LDC graduation. Aligning with the 8 <sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, Project’s Output 1 and 3 focused on improving the capacity of the ERD so that the institution can mobilize more external resources.

## 5.2.2 Relevance with the International Priorities

The K4DM project phase II objectives were formulated in alignment with the international priorities of the UNDP and the SDG.

### 5.2.2.1 Relevance with SDG goals

As the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) came to an end, the international community came together to establish a new set of development goals known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include seventeen goals out of which the goal 17 is directly connected to the K4DM project.

**Table 2 Relevance of K4DM project with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

Relevance of the SDG goal with K4DM	Relevance of the targets of the SDG goal	Relevance of the K4DM phase II outcome with the SDG goal
Goal 17 <i>Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development</i>	<i>Target 17.3:</i> Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources.	Target 17.3 is relevant to the Project Outputs 1 and 3 which emphasizes on the capacity and skill development of ERD officials with a view to enable them to explore conventional and nonconventional sources of funding opportunities for ensuring a sustainable LDC graduation of the country.
	<i>Target 17.6:</i> Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among	Output 4 of the Project closely relevant with this SDG target as it thrives to establish and strengthen south-south and triangular regional collaboration. The project seeks to network with newly LDC-graduated nations to learn from their successes, failures, and best practices.



Relevance of the SDG goal with K4DM	Relevance of the targets of the SDG goal	Relevance of the K4DM phase II outcome with the SDG goal
	existing mechanisms, at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism	
	Target 17.9: Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the Sustainable Development Goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.	This Target is relevant to the Output 4 of the Project as it focuses on drawing attention of the international community by showcasing its best practices and also learn lessons from others, which might be helpful for improving the government decisions and plans
	Target 17.17: Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnership	This target is relevant to the output 2 aiming for evidence based policy making through creating partnerships with other public and private agencies for knowledge development and through creating a Policy Expert Pool with the eminent persons from public, private and civil society. Output 4 of the Project aiming for South South Triangular cooperation is also relevant to this Target.

### 5.2.2.2 Relevance with UNDP Priorities

The Country Programme Document (CPD) 2022-2026, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), currently known as the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and the Strategic Plan collectively illustrate the priorities of the UNDP. In the ProDoc, it is stated that the Project makes a direct contribution to the accomplishment of the UNDP priorities for Bangladesh.

**Table 3 Relevance of K4DM Phase II Project with UNDP Priorities**

UNDP Policy Documents	Outputs/Outcomes having relevance with K4DM Phase II	Relevance with the Outputs of K4DM Phase II Project
Country Programme Document (CPD) Output	Output 3.2: Public institutions and other quasi-formal institutions and normative and policy frameworks have enhanced capacities and frameworks to ensure accountable and gender-responsive governance according to the rule of law.	Output 1 of the Project aims to institutionalize capacity building initiatives at ERD which would contribute to the evidence-based policy making towards national development aspirations practiced is relevant to this priority of UNDP
United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) Output	Output 4.2: Public institutions, local government and other quasi-formal institutions and normative and policy frameworks are more gender-responsive, accountable, and governed by the rule of law.	Outcome area 1 and Output 2 of the Project aiming for evidence-based policy making towards national development is relevant to this priority. To achieve an inclusive and accountable institutions, the Project emphasized on evidence based policy making and data driven approaches.
Strategic Plan (SP) Output	Output 2.1 Open, agile, accountable and future-ready governance systems	With its focus on digitization, the Project aimed to create an accountable and

UNDP Policy Documents	Outputs/Outcomes having relevance with K4DM Phase II	Relevance with the Outputs of K4DM Phase II Project
	in place to co-create and deliver solutions to accelerate SDG achievement	transparent governance system at ERD. Upgradation of FAMS software through which all foreign aid agreements will be made available online is a mechanism to ensure it.
	Output 2.4 Democratic institutions and processes strengthened for an inclusive and open public sphere with expanded public management	Output 1 adopted an inclusive approach through creating an e-learning platform so that all the officials of ERD can access to all the videos, presentations of capacity building initiatives uploaded there. In addition to this, output 2 also upgraded the FAMS software access to which will be open to all the ministries of the government including the ERD.

Thus, it was found that the Project objectives and targeted Outputs had close relevance with both national and international priorities. Stakeholder perception survey also confirmed this finding as all its respondents expressed positive opinion about this.

### 5.2.3 Relevance of Theory of Change with the expected results of the Project

The theory of change of the K4DM Phase II Project suggests that its targeted Outputs will contribute to the achievement of the Project Outcome areas and its broader objective of accelerating knowledge management and resource mobilization towards LDC Graduation. Table 2.4 shows how the Theory of Change is to be actualized through four inter-related Project Outputs:

**Table 4 Relevance with the Theory of Change**

Principles of Theory of Change	Relevance with the Expected Results
Knowledge and capacity development	The Project addresses these issues by utilizing capacity development to improve access to knowledge and drive evidence-based policy making. The two outcome areas—evidence based policy making, external resource mobilization and increased international cooperation—contain capacity development activities at its core to achieve long term successes.
Innovation and exchange	To achieve innovation and exchange, the Project output 3 contains activities including resource mobilization tracking tools and Output 4—South South Triangular cooperation, aims to develop a framework to promote exchange among other developing countries.
Collaboration and partnership among different ministries and agencies	Output 2 of the Project intends to build partnership with different agencies and individuals to create a Policy Expert Pool for making their expertise available to Government.
Services and resources	Output 2 of the Project aimed to create an enabling environment for evidence-based policy making. Under this Output the Project took an initiative of providing digital archive and record keeping service to the ERD officials through increasing the usage of ERDPEDIA, which contains all signed contracts, MoUs and proposals in an accessible format.

Principles of Theory of Change	Relevance with the Expected Results
Institutions and systems	Output 1 of the Project aimed for institutionalizing the capacity building initiatives through creating a learning platform, archiving the institutional memory. Output 2 of the project aimed at creating a system that enables the policy makers to undertake evidence-based policy making.

#### 5.2.4 Adoptions of the Lessons Learnt from Phase-I in designing the Phase-II

While designing its activities, the K4DM Phase II avidly adopted the lessons learnt from Phase I. Recommendations of the final evaluation report of the Phase I centered on continuing capacity development of government officials and the need to mobilize resources more effectively in the context of LDC Graduation. The report also emphasized on strengthening local and global partnerships and to take further steps to meet the NRB and South-South & Triangular Cooperation agenda.

Keeping the suggestions in mind, phase II of the project worked extensively in capacity development and was successful in bringing about visible changes in the work practice within the ERD. There has been some initiative to strengthen the South South Triangular cooperation, but it is unfortunate that phase II had to witness the omission of the NRB agenda right after its initiation.

The preceding discussion demonstrates that the objectives of the K4DM Phase II Project were relevant with both national and international priorities. It is evident that the objective of the Project has a direct and indirect alignment with the national priorities outlined in the Perspective Plan (2010-21), and the 8th Five Year Plan (2020 -2025). In a similar vein, it was found that the Project objectives and the desired outputs were closely relevant to the SDG 17 and the UNDP priorities. Desired Outputs of the Project were also found closely relevant with the principles of theory of change of the Project.

### 5.3 Efficiency of the Project

This chapter analyzes the efficiency of various initiatives of the K4DM phase II Project in terms of the results achieved out of these initiatives vis-à-vis resources invested within the Project, as well as the quantum of resources that were allocated and spent for the purpose. The chapter has also examined the efficiency of the implementation and institutional arrangements of the Project.

#### 5.3.1 Budgeting and Procurement Procedures of K4DM Phase II Project

The total budget of the K4DM Phase II Project was USD 3.15 million for a period of four years (2021-24). Out of this the UNDP committed to provide USD 1 million while the remaining portion was left unfunded. Later, in January 2021 UNDP Korea provided USD 28,000 specifically for the activities of Output 4 which aimed at strengthening the SS&TrC and very recently in July 2023, the Embassy of Switzerland provided USD 3000,000 for the activities of Output 2 aimed at creating an enabling environment for evidence-based policy making. Government's contribution was only 2.9% of the total budget (USD 90,900.00) and the entire contribution was in kind (office rent, entertainment, allowance of the ERD officials etc.). However, up to June 2023, out of the total budget, USD 1,730,000 million was found to be left unfunded.

##### 5.3.1.1 Budget Spent vs Plans

Although the current study evaluates the Project since its active life started in April 2022 after getting its TAPP approved but some parts of the Project's budget were also spent in 2021 when it was initiated upon the approval of the ProDoc. These expenditures were incurred mainly for some outputs that were carried forward from the Phase I of the Project. To get a fuller picture about the efficiency of the Project's budgetary allocation and its spending, the evaluation has looked at the financial activities of the Project from its initiation in 2021 to June 2023.

Table 5 presents year wise budgetary allocation and the pattern of expenditure, which demonstrates that the allocated budget of the Project was mostly spent as planned. The Table reveals that Output 2 of the Project aiming for creating an enabling environment for evidence based policy making could spend the highest of its allocated budget (88.97%) Under this output the Project had to hire a prominent IT Firm for the upgradation of Foreign Aid Management System (FAMS) software to keep an accurate record of the development assistance and its disbursement in order for making development assistance effective. The second highest amount of expenditure (82.79%) was incurred for technical assistance and management cost. However, overall, the Project could spend 70.59% of the allocated budget upto June 2023, which can be termed as efficient as the Project is still continuing and the remaining funds will be required to run the Project until it ends in June 2024.

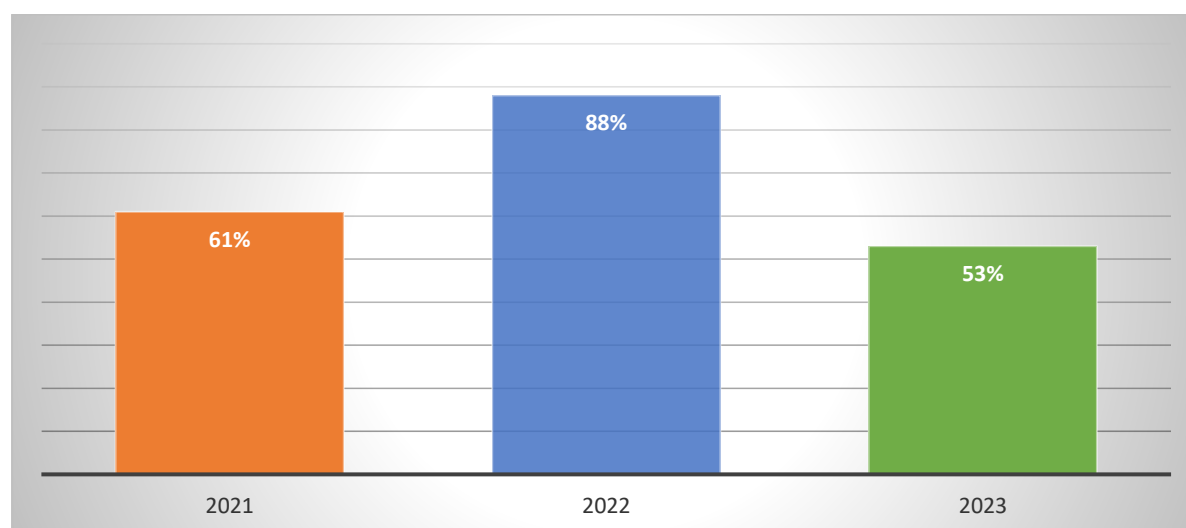
**Table 5 Year wise Budgetary allocation and the pattern of expenditure**

Output	Activity	2021		2022		2023		Total Budget	Total Expenditure	Expenditure Share to Budget (%)
		Budget	Expenditure	Budget	Expenditure	Budget	Expenditure (upto June)			
Output-1	Institutional approach for capacity building adopted	54,000.00	8,260.45	63,000.00	78,182.53	64,000.00	30,003.92	181,000.00	116,446.90	64.34

Output	Activity	2021		2022		2023		Total Budget	Total Expenditure	Expenditure Share to Budget (%)
		Budget	Expenditure	Budget	Expenditure	Budget	Expenditure (upto June)			
Output-2	Enabling environment for evidence-based policymaking strengthened	104,050.00	97,007.80	55,280.00	45,551.97	34,180.00	29,606.00	193,510.00	172,165.77	88.97
Output-3	External resource mobilization capacity strengthened	35,500.00	-	32,500.00	6,025.26	29,678.00	10,838.61	97,678.00	16,863.87	17.26
Output-5	Institutions and modality for South-South Triangular Cooperation strengthened	12,500.00	15,558.48	146,981.86	109,956.56	28,200.00	13,693.15	187,681.86	139,208.19	74.17
	Technical Assistance and Management Cost (Project Support Costs)	121,950.00	95,362.69	119,920.00	133,374.12	93,942.00	49,287.96	335,812.00	278,024.77	82.79
	<b>Sub Total (UNDP):</b>	<b>350,000.00</b>	<b>216,189.42</b>	<b>423,681.86</b>	<b>373,090.44</b>	<b>250,000.00</b>	<b>133,429.64</b>	<b>1,023,681.86</b>	<b>722,709.50</b>	<b>70.59</b>

Gap between the allocated budget and the expenditure incurred since the inception of the project was also minimal. Figure 3 shows that in 2022, when the Project's active life was started, 88% of the allocated budget was spent while in the initiation year (2021) it could spend only 61% of the total budget as the Project did not get permission from the ERD to start its activities until the TAPP was signed in 2022. Until June 2023, the Project could spend its 53% of the allocated budget, which is truly promising.

**Figure 3 Year-Wise Project Expenditure Share to Budget (in %)**

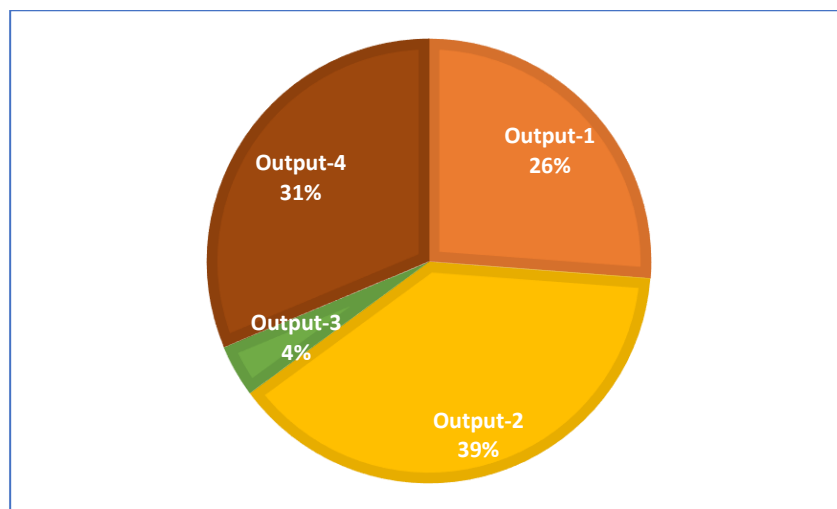


### 5.3.1.2 Value for money is achieved through effective procurement and contracting.

To examine the extent to which the K4DM Project could achieve 'value for money' through effective procurement and contracting, the study has analysed the Output wise yearly expenditure in order to compare it with the results/outputs achieved as indicated in the Results and Resource Framework (RRF).

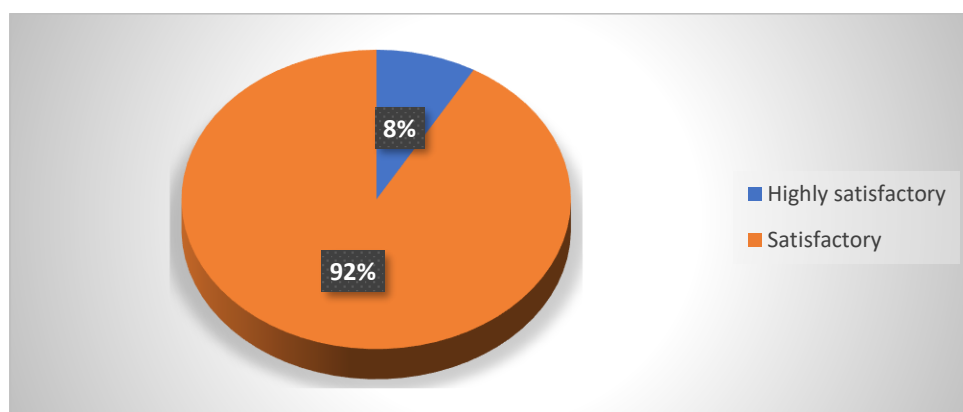
Figure 4 demonstrates that Output 2 aimed for creating an enabling environment for evidence-based policy making consumed the highest share (39%) of the Project expenditure, which has produced many tangible results which include: upgradation of the Foreign Aid Management System (FAMS) software, publication of National Human Development Report (NHDR) and enhancing information management system through taking steps for increasing the use of the information repository of the ERD called the ERDPEDIA. Output 4 consumed the second highest share (31%) of project expenditure producing a tangible product called the South South Knowledge Hub – a web based knowledge portal for sharing best practices of developing countries of the globe for learning lessons from each other. Although the Output 1 aiming for institutionalizing the capacity building initiatives consumed the third highest share of the expenditure (27%) but produced the highest value for money. With less expenditure it has produced a learning platform for the ERD officials, organized a good number of seminars, trainings and knowledge dissemination workshops.

**Figure 4 Output -Wise Expenditure Share**



Finally, the Project spent the least (4%) for the Output 3 meaning strengthening resource mobilization capacity and with this it only organized two workshops. Thus, overall, the Project could achieve the highest value for money spent. The stakeholder perception survey also endorses this fact as the good majority of the respondents (92%) termed the Project's efficiency in this regard was satisfactory meant for having minor shortcomings while some termed it as highly satisfactory (no shortcomings). Figure 5 presents the findings of the stakeholder perception survey.

**Figure 5 Value for Money Achieved: Perception of the Stakeholders**



### **5.3.2 Efficiency of the Project Implementation and Institutional Arrangements for Achieving the Project Objectives**

Institutional arrangements of the project appeared to be efficient. The Project spent the highest portion of its budget (82.79%) for technical assistance and management as it had to provide technical assistance to a number of initiatives which were capital intensive. It had sufficient workforce, and the office ambiance was also found to be good. The Project ran by 5 officials and the Project management had dual accountability to the UNDP and the ERD. In addition to this, development partners were also invited to attend both the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and Project Implementation Committee (PIC) meetings. Thus, accountability and transparency of the Project management could be ensured. However, despite all these positive sides, the Project suffered from fund shortage. The fund available to the Project was not enough to continue it for a longer period of time. The UNDP expected fund from the government but due to COVID -19 pandemic and the fund crunch caused by it, the Project couldn't earn priority from the government to receive fund.

### **5.3.3 Support of M&E System for Project Implementation**

Considering the size of the project, project established its own mechanism of monitoring and evaluation. Such as the Project prepared Annual Work Plans (AWPs), Project Implementation Plan (PIP), quarterly and monthly progress reports to update and regular follow-up of the activities of the Project as a tool for monitoring and evaluation. Despite having a provision of recruiting an M&E official for the Project, in practice, considering its budget, the Project recruited one official who was responsible for managing the Project and its M&E. From the UNDP side, the central M&E system where the quarterly and monthly performance reports of the Project were submitted, and from the government's end, the PSC and PIC meetings where the AWPs were approved, acted as the Project's monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

The chapter has assessed the efficiency of the Project across three broad parameters, which include: i) *budgeting and procurement procedures*; ii) *Project Implementation and Institutional Arrangements*; iii) *support of M&E System for Project Implementation*.

Budgeting and procurement procedures was assessed in terms of a) budget spent as planned and b) value for money attained. The findings of this evaluative study demonstrate that overall, upto June

2023, the Project could spend 70.59% of its allocated budget. Gap between the budgetary allocation and the expenditure incurred was noticed. Compared to other years, the gap was found bigger in the Project start year due to some valid reasons. Although the ProDoc was approved in March 2021, only 61% of the budget could be spent in that year since the Project was not allowed to start its activities until the TAPP was signed in December 2021. In 2022, when the Project reached its momentum there was no significant expenditure gap as 88% of the total budget was spent for the planned activities. On the other hand, upto June, 2023, half of the total budget was already spent. This trend of project expenditure demonstrates that the Project's performance on the front of the expenditure efficiency was satisfactory.

The Project also earned value for money. The Project earned many tangible achievements vis-a-vis the resources invested. Output 2 aimed for creating an enabling environment for evidence-based policy making consumed the highest share (39%) of the Project expenditure, which has produced many tangible results. Although the Output 1 aiming for institutionalizing the capacity building initiatives consumed the third highest share of the expenditure (27%) but produced the highest value for money. With less expenditure it has produced a learning platform for the ERD officials, organized a good number of seminars, trainings and knowledge dissemination workshops. The stakeholder perception survey conducted for this study also highly acclaimed the project's performance in achieving value for money terming this as satisfactory (meant for having minor shortcomings).

In terms of project implementation and institutional arrangements for achieving the project objectives, the Project was found to be efficient. The Project spent the highest portion of its budget (82.79%) for technical assistance and management as it had to provide technical assistance to a number of initiatives which were capital intensive. It had sufficient workforce and the mechanisms of accountability and transparency of the Project management were also available although budgetary constraints were there.

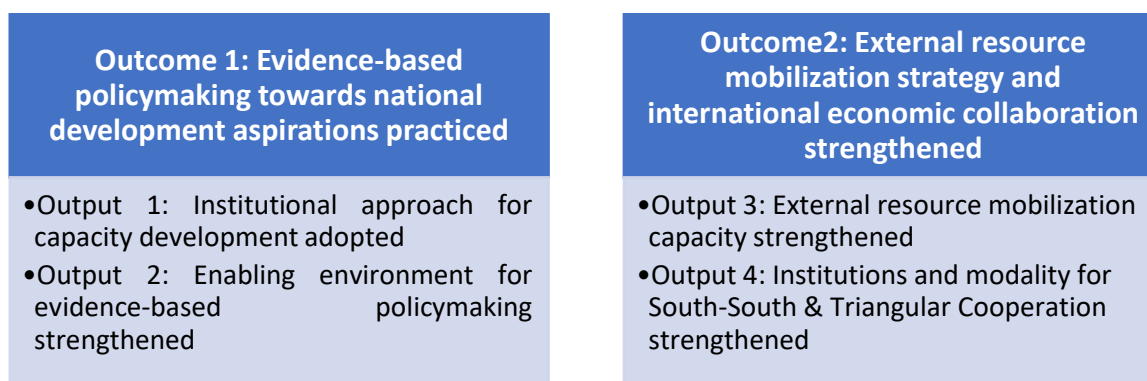
On the M&E front, the Project prepared Annual Work Plans (AWPs), Project Implementation Plan (PIP), quarterly and monthly progress reports to update and regular follow-up of the activities of the Project as a tool for monitoring and evaluation. It was also continuously monitored by both the central M&E of the UNDP and the PSC and PIC meetings led by the Government. Thus, on all accounts, the overall performance of the Project can be termed as efficient.



## 5.4 Effectiveness of The Project

The current chapter examines the extent to which the K4DM Project achieved its targeted outputs defined in the Result and Resource Framework (RRF) during its lifespan starting from **April 2022 to July 2023**. To achieve its goal of enabling the government officials in general and the ERD officials in particular, to leverage all possible sources of external resource mobilization for attaining sustainable LDC graduation, the Project had set two outcomes which were again translated into four specific outputs or components as follows:

**Figure 6 Outcome and Outputs of K4DM Phase-II Project**



In the subsequent sections, the current chapter assesses the effectiveness of the project in terms of achieving the targeted outputs under each outcome.

### 5.4.1 Project Achievements Against its Results and Resource Framework (RRF)

The subsequent sections examine the effectiveness of various Outputs of the Project in terms of their achievements and nonachievements across the targets set in the Results and Resource Framework (RRF). Some of the targeted activities of the project could be successful in producing visible results while some of the activities were initiated but visible results were not produced yet. On the other hand, for some activities no effort was undertaken. The current evaluation labels those activities as “**project achievements**” which i) could produce tangible outputs; and ii) did take initiatives and the execution process is underway. On the other hand, those activities have been termed as “**non-achievements**”, which could not produce any output or dropped from the Project activities at the implementation stage.

#### 5.4.1.1 Outcome Area 1: Evidence-based Policymaking Towards National Development Aspirations Practiced

As a strategic approach to addressing the upcoming challenges of LDC graduation and post covid scenario, the project has strategically set its desired outcome to practice evidence-based policy making through adopting an institutional approach to making the government officials equipped with fast changing skill sets and creating an enabling environment for promoting evidence-based policy making. The Project aimed to achieve the outcome through the following two specific outputs:

### **Output 1: Institutional approach for capacity development adopted**

Output 1 stressed importance of moving from ad hoc, piecemeal approach to capacity building initiatives to an institutional approach, which includes:

- i) the establishment of an e-learning platform for capacity development that allows the government officials and ERD staff to acquire new skill sets and exchange knowledge and share best practices;
- ii) a stock taking of the available training programmes offered by government and development partners to identify the appropriate training programmes that can enhance the capacity of ERD officials;
- iii) conduct capacity need assessment/ training need assessment (TNA) for the government officials and develop course materials and modules;
- iv) archiving the institutional memory;
- v) signing MoU with government training institutions and imparting training/workshops/exchange visits for capacity enhancement of government officials.

The following subsections assesses the Performance of Output in terms of achievements and non-achievements

#### **A. Achievements of Output 1**

Achievements of Output 1 has been discussed under two heads: i) tangible outputs produced and ii) implementation underway.

##### **i) Tangible Outputs Produced**

###### **a. Establishment of a Learning Platform for Capacity Development:**

The current evaluation reveals that the K4DM Phase II Project has been able to create a learning platform with the ERD. Interviews with the respondents of the study indicated that among others, capacity building initiative is the most visible achievement of the project. To be specific, the *Inter Wing Peer Learning (IWPL) sessions* organized by the Project produced immense benefit for the ERD officials in three ways: first, institutionalizing capacity development second, facilitating to fill up the knowledge gap of the ERD officials and third, providing support for newly posted officials.

- **Facilitates institutionalizing the capacity building process**

Unlike the conventional capacity building initiatives focusing on training on piecemeal basis without any broad objective and sustainable results, the capacity building initiative of the Project has institutionalized the process, created a demand for this within the ERD and has created a visible impact on the performance of the ERD officials.

Under the capacity building initiative of the project, an innovative learning platform, called the *Inter Wing Peer Learning (IWPL)* has been introduced which supports the ERD officials to learn from peers on different issues related to the functioning of the ERD. Despite being a project of UN Wing, the Project organized 18 Inter Wing Peer Learning sessions on different issues with participation of 800 ERD officials from all 10 wings of the ERD. The duration of each session was two hours, organized every week at a stretch for 18 weeks. Please see **Annex 11** for the titles of IWPL sessions.

The main objective of the IWPL session was to create a comprehensive learning and knowledge sharing environment for the ERD officials to work in a coordinated manner and it has practically been able to create an environment for mutual communication within ten wings of the ERD. Explaining how effective it was for the ERD officials, during FGD with the ERD officials, an official said,

*“There used to be a time, when, none of the ten wings of the ERD were aware of the activities and functions of each other. These wings used to work in a secluded manner. This has filled up a knowledge gap and created an appetite for knowledge and information among the officials of different wings of the ERD”.*

Along with that, these sessions would provide an insight of each wing’s method of operations, areas of work, challenges and new interventions regarding LDC graduation, which immensely benefitted the officials of all wings of the ERD. During an FGD with the ERD officials, an official elaborated this by saying,

*“The ERD has 10 wings, each of which deals with different development partners using different technical jargons, terms and procedures, most of which are unknown to others. For instance, I am posted to ADB Wing hence, I am familiar with the jargons/terms related to ADB. Through this training, now I have become familiar with the jargons related to other wings as well. If I get transferred to other wing now, I will be able to continue to perform”.*

IWPL has also introduced a good practice of in house learning and knowledge sharing as these trainings and sessions were conducted by the senior officials of the ERD having relevant expertise. After each training session, the participants were required to prepare a presentation on the topics discussed, which demonstrated an improvement of their level of understanding about the issues related to the ERD. Moreover, “changes in the level of confidence in dealing with day-to-day official activities are true performance measures of the participants of training. Good performers were posted to a more challenging desk”, informed the ERD officials during FGD. Another official added further by saying,

*“Prior to receiving training through IWPL sessions, officials used to have understanding about their own wing only but after attending the sessions of this training, officials have developed an understanding of the nature of functions of other wings of the ERD as well. Thus, it has helped the officials develop an understanding of the role of the ERD as a whole”.*

IWPL thus, has created an enabling environment for the ERD officials to accelerate the fulfilment of the mandate of ERD in a concerted way and has institutionalized the approach to capacity development.

- **Facilitated to fill up the gap of specialized knowledge required to work in ERD**

The mandate of the ERD is to mobilize external resources through bargaining and negotiations with the external development partners. To accomplish this, ERD officials need to be familiar with relevant national and international policies, acts, norms and standards. Issues like aid related calculation, definition and some specific terms of contracts also vary from bilateral to multilateral and commercial donors. An official explained it further by saying,

*“Since July 2023 replacing the long-practiced LIBOR (London Interbank Offer Rate) a new international calculation rate called SOFR (Secured Overnight Financing Rate) has emerged*

*which is new to everyone. Official who worked at ERD one year ago will find it difficult to work here now as LIBOR does not exist anymore. Capacity building initiative of the K4DM can be helpful for making the officials understand these intricate issues since ERD does not offer any such training”.*

During interview, another ERD high official commented,

*“Nature of job of the ERD is entirely different from other ministries. Even an officer with a vast field experience posted here becomes a probationary officer. Language used here in dealing with development partners are not known to others. With government budget it is not possible to capacitate the officials as the K4DM does”.*

During interview, another ERD official commented, *“During the last two years, whatever training we have received, all were from K4DM”.* Thus, the capacity building training initiative of the project has facilitated the ERD officials to fill up their capacity gaps.

- ***Offers immense benefit to the newly posted officials***

Compared to other ministries, nature of functions of the ERD is different. As a result, the newly posted officials to ERD suffer from a serious lack of the required expertise to deal with the delicate issues related to its day-to-day functions. The current evaluation reveals that the newly recruited officials are the highest beneficiaries of the capacity building initiative of the Project while half of its officials belongs to this category. Capacity building initiatives of the K4DM Phase II Project are like putting the newly posted officials on the right track. During interview, an official noted, *“When a train is placed on a rail, it becomes able to move towards the right direction but it must first be placed on the track. In this respect, the K4DM has been successful in putting the new officials at the ERD on right track”.*

#### **Box 4.1: Reflections from the newly posted officials of ERD who participated in the IWPL Sessions**

*“The K4DM Phase II Project worked as a catalyst for the newly posted officers of ERD. After having 15 years experience of working in the field, I was posted at the ERD and found the nature of work here was completely different from field administration. Like other newly posted officers, I knew nothing about the nature of functions of ERD. Though I started from ZERO but now I am confident in my workplace due to receiving this training. Whatever I have learnt from the IWPL sessions in only 3 months I wouldn’t have learnt it in next 2-3 years without it.” - An ERD official and participant of IWPL sessions.*

*“I am from fisheries background and posted to the ERD after working in the field for 15 years. Upon joining the ERD, I was posted to IFAD. I started reading about this wing on my own, but nothing made any sense to me. The K4DM was a blessing for me, which showed me light in darkness through its trainings and workshops” -An ERD Official and participant of IWPL sessions.*

*“Pre and post training behaviour of a newly recruited officer widely differs from each other. This is the impact of capacity building initiative of K4DM. A 3- day training at Savar taught so much to the new recruits, which*

#### **b. Series of Capacity Development Seminars and Workshops, knowledge dissemination Programmes Held**

Under the capacity building initiative, the Project arranged four national level Seminars, five workshops, four knowledge dissemination programmes, one experiential learning tour at Asian

Institute of Technology, Thailand and a number of trainings on various issues. Please see **Annex 12** for the details of these capacity building initiatives. The current study found the ERD officials very positive about their learning and experiences from these initiatives. Many acclaimed these events as the opportunity to increase their capacity to analyze critical economic issues and prepare themselves for encountering the challenges of LDC graduation.

**c. Training for the ERD Staff Organized**

While officials receive various trainings, staff at public offices hardly receive any. The K4DM Phase-II Project made an exceptional intervention in this regard. The project organized a 3 day training on “The Art of Smart Office Management and Record Keeping: Strategies for achieving Efficiency” for ERD staff at BRAC CDM, Savar where 52 staff from 10 different wings attended. Through this training, the participants learned how to optimize office workflow, streamline office procedures, including filing and e-filing, and reduce errors in achieving greater efficiency and productivity, which have benefited the staff members of the ERD and its overall functioning.

**ii) Initiatives Taken and the Process is Underway**

• ***An E-learning platform***

Using the ERD website, an e-learning platform compiling all the training modules, videos of presentations and knowledge products is underway. The project is working on uploading all the presentations made at the IWPL sessions and workshops on the website for ensuring its continuous use by the ERD officials in the days to come. The Project has also a plan to upload a few video tutorials of Foreign Aid Management System (FAMS) Software in the ERD website.

• ***Archiving the institutional memory***

The Project is going to archive the institutional memory through linking the FAMS software to ERDPEDIA and the ERD Website. The process is underway. The UN wing will have to work with the ICT wing to expedite the process of establishing the linkage.

**B. Non-Achievements of Output 1**

• ***A stock taking of the available training programmes could not be done as it was dropped from the project activity***

A stock taking of the available training programmes offered by government and development partners to identify the appropriate training programmes that would enhance the capacity of the ERD officials could not be accomplished as the UNDP decided to drop this activity since at the project implementation stage it was found that the UNDP Research Team already did it.

• ***Training Need Assessment (TNA) was not done since it was dropped from the project activity***

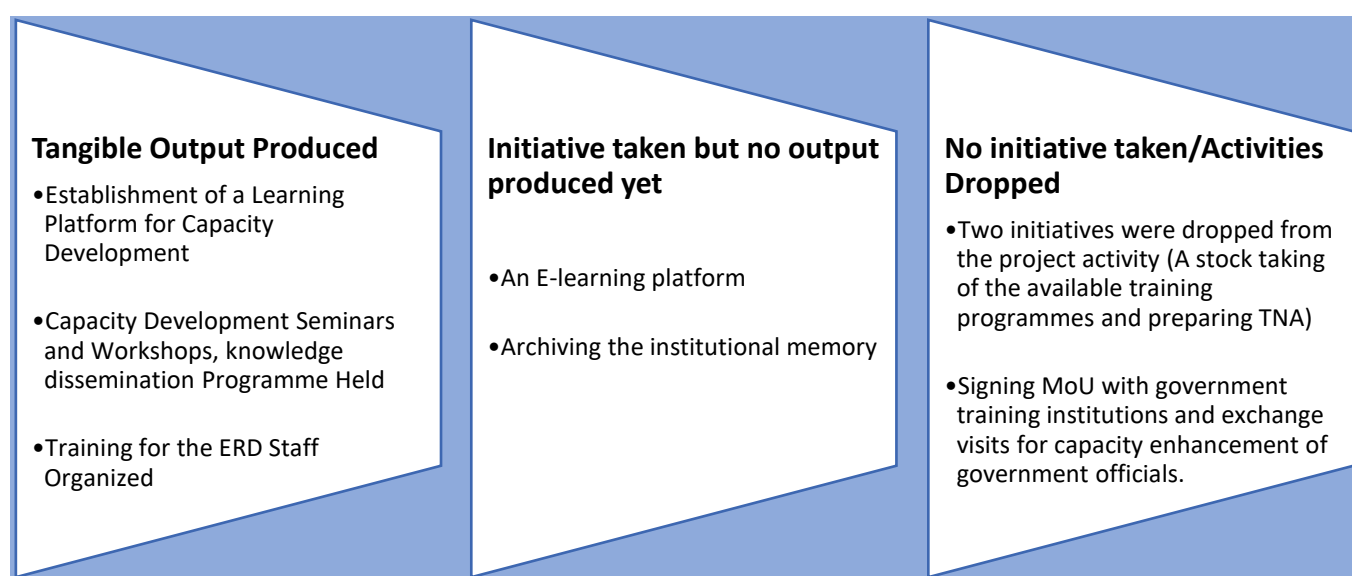
Although the Project already prepared a draft Training Need Assessment (TNA), this could not be finalized as the activity was dropped in the 3<sup>rd</sup> PIC meeting with the excuse that the government already had it. Initial decision was that the Project will prepare a general TNA focusing on the needs of different ministries which will be implemented tailor made.

• ***Signing MoU with government training institutions and exchange visits for capacity enhancement of government officials.***

No MOU has yet been signed with government training institutions. An exposure visit was planned to be organized for the ERD officials with a view to learn challenges, opportunities and way forward of LDC graduation from a recently graduated country. But it could not be organized due to the government restrictions imposed on foreign tour by the government officials considering the global and national economic situation.

Thus, out of five planned activities of Output 1, the Project could partially achieve one by creating a physical learning platform while creation of an e-learning platform is underway along with another activity i.e., archiving the institutional memory. Two activities were dropped from the project activities although the Project took some initiative to do them, and one planned activity could not be achieved yet. Figure 7 presents a summary of the performance of Output 1.

**Figure 7 Summary of Performance of Output 1**



Degree of achievement of the targets set for Output 1 in the RRF of the Project provides a clearer picture of the performance of Output 1. Table 6 shows that the Project achievements were well ahead of the RRF targets with regard to the number of formal training and follow up courses conducted and the number of officials developed a good understanding of ERD related issues. Thus, performance of output 1 against the RRF targets appeared to be good.

**Table 6 RRF Targets of Output 1 and Project Achievements**

Targets Set in the RRF	Project Achievements (up to June 2023)
To what extent government (ERD) policymaking is evidence-based through institutionalization of capacity development <sup>3</sup>	Mostly evidence based (70% policies). ERD Aid Flow Book reveals that most of its the policies are evidence based. K4DM has facilitated an enabling environment for

<sup>3</sup> Score 0: “Not evidence-based” – government policy documents formulated by ERD are not evidence-based (without using data i.e.data analysis, data analytics, datasets) at all. Score 1: “Somewhat evidence-based” - 10-20% of government policy documents formulated by ERD are evidence-based (using data i.e.data analysis, data analytics, datasets). Score 2: “Moderately evidence-based” - 30-50% of government policy documents formulated by ERD are evidence-based (using data i.e.data analysis, data analytics, datasets). Score 3: “Mostly evidence-based” - More than 70% of government policy documents formulated by ERD are evidence-based (using data i.e.data analysis, data analytics, datasets) and practiced towards national development aspirations.

Targets Set in the RRF	Project Achievements (up to June 2023)
	evidence-based policy making through different capacity enhancement initiatives
No. of formal training courses delivered for capacity development	24 against the RRF target of 5
Number of follow-up courses provided for capacity development after formal training courses	2 against the RRF target of 5. Almost all capacity building initiatives including trainings imparted had the provision of follow up assessment of the performance of the participants
Number of government officials with good understanding of ERD related Issues.	1,214 (Male:784, Female:430) against the target of 100
Number of early career government officials with good understanding of gender equality and equity through training received. <sup>4</sup>	Participant selection in all trainings ensured that half of the participants were female. Moreover, young officials were encouraged to participate in the trainings, seminar/workshops arranged by the Project. Thus, it can be said that understanding of the young officials who received training had a good understanding about gender equality and equity although no segregated data was available in this regard.

Source: Atlas Data Quarterly Progress Reports up to June 2023

### **Output2: Enabling Environment for Evidence-Based Policymaking Strengthened**

The ERD is mainly involved with the formulation of debt management policy, which needs various technical data and information. Along with this, in recent times, the ERD gets involved in formulating the policies and strategies related to LDC graduation which also needs updated data and evidence. Output 2 was about the creation of an enabling environment for evidence-based policy making so that the decision makers have reasonable access to data and information and skills to use them in decision making. This requires:

- i) enhancing data transformation system of the Foreign Budget and Accounts (FABA) and ICT wings of the ERD so that data analytics can be applied to government records including aid development budgets,
- ii) enhance information management system by upscaling the uses of ERDPEDIA;
- iii) publish bi-annual Foreign Aid Analytics highlighting trends, gaps and utilization of development assistance in Bangladesh;
- iv) develop and operationalize a Policy Expert Pool (PEP) with experts and organizations,
- v) National Human Development Report (NHDR) to be published in every alternate year.

#### **A. Achievements of Output 2**

##### **i) Visible achievements**

##### **a. Enhancing Data Transformation System of FABA and ICT Wings through Upgrading Foreign Aid Management System (FAMS) Software:**

The k4DM Phase II Project has provided technical assistance to support the digitized management of foreign aid being done by the FABA and ICT Wings of the ERD through upgrading its Foreign Aid Management System (FAMS) software. Upgradation of FAMS software is one of the significant visible

<sup>4</sup> Level of understanding: Based on the score that a participant will obtain in a short test after conducting a training course; 69 and below="Poor/Inadequate understanding" and 70 and above=good understanding

achievements of the Project, which facilitates the collection, storage, management and analysis of data relevant to the flow and utilization of all types of external resources (in the form of loans, grants and aids) that Bangladesh has received since liberation to date. The upgraded version of FAMS software will also act as a unified virtual platform of information management of all foreign aided projects of the government of Bangladesh.

Initially, in 2017, the ERD developed the FAMS software to automate the borrowing plan and agreements of ERD and to monitor the ongoing foreign aided project and continued until 2019. Due to the outbreak of COVID -19, it faced a setback for two years since the new staff joined the ERD couldn't be trained that time to run the software and data entry couldn't be done regularly. Consequently, the software became nonoperational. In 2022, the software was revived through the initiative of K4DM Phase II Project. The Project provided technical support to updating the software through providing inputs and imparting trainings on its usage to as many as 500 ERD officials at different levels.

FAMS software will facilitate the ERD to perform all its functions. Information about around 360 foreign funded projects of the government will be uploaded in the software. Information related to the amount of loan/grant received and disbursed will also be available in the software. Project Directors (PDs) of different development projects of other ministries will be able to monitor the status of their project through this software when it will be connected to the national server.

**b. Publication of National Human Development Report (NHDR)**

Even though the publication of the National Human Development Report (NHDR) was a deliverable of the Phase I of the K4DM project, the credit to its successful completion and publication goes to the Phase II. The project published one NHDR on the eve of celebrating the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence in 2021. After that the Project did not advance further since the ERD did not show interest to proceed with this anymore due to the procedural complexities involved in it. Finally, the ERD decided to drop it from the Project activities.

**c. Enhance Information Management System by Upscaling the ERDPEDIA**

With a view to enhance information management system, the K4DM Phase II Project had a plan to upscale the ERDPEDIA, developed in its first phase. The ERDPEDIA is a digitized information repository of all the contracts and treaties signed between the ERD and the development partners since independence of Bangladesh. Project's upscaling plan of the ERDPEDIA included making its access open to all the officials of the Government instead of keeping its access limited to the ERD officials only. But this could not be accomplished due to the security concerns and confidentialities of the documents of the ERD.

However, the Project facilitated the ERDPEDIA to be kept up and running through: *first*, providing support in updating the documentations regarding loan/aid agreements of the ERD in it and through its regular follow up; *second*, giving a unique user ID and Password to each of the ERD officials to access it; *third*, imparting training to the ERD officials on its use; and *fourth*, managing the issuance of an official order so that everyone use it. During the evaluation it was found that more than 3000 documents have been uploaded in the ERDPEDIA .

**ii) Initiatives Undertaken and the Implementation Process is Underway**



**a. Revision of ERD Handbook**

As per the decision of the second PIC meeting, the K4DM phase-II Project has taken initiative to revise the ERD handbook, which is underway. The initiative has been highly acclaimed by the ERD officials during FGD. The ERD Handbook, prepared first in 2008 provides operational guidelines for the functioning of the ERD. It is a bedrock document which guides the ERD officials in general and the newly joined officials in particular to perform their functions. The Handbook was not updated since its last revision done in 2013. In recent years, the role and functions of the ERD as an institution have changed manifold. For instance, a new Wing called the “Development Effectiveness (DE)”, was founded at the ERD in 2018 after Bangladesh was declared eligible for LDC graduation. In the old version of the Handbook there was no reference to the DE wing, therefore, the new officials posted in the DE wing were rendered clueless. During FGD with the ERD officials, an official of DE wing informed,

*“When I was posted to this Wing, I was looking for the information related to this Wing but no information was available regarding this Wing in the ERD Handbook (the older version). The ERD handbook must be updated every 5 years religiously to embrace all the changes in the activities and roles of the ERD”.*

**b. Publishing Policy Briefs**

The Project has signed an MoU with Bangladesh Institute of Governance and Management (BIGM). Leveraging this partnership, the Project has a plan to publish a few policy briefs. In a joint move with BIGM, 30 policy briefs have been picked up to work on. During the project life the project targets to prepare 10-15 policy briefs.

**B. Non Achievements of Output 2**

**a. Publish bi-annual Foreign Aid Analytics highlighting trends, gaps and utilization of development assistance in Bangladesh**

This activity was dropped from the Project activity. The Project had a plan to support the ERD Aid Flow Book to publish bi-annual Foreign Aid analytics but the ERD leadership discouraged to do it since the ERD considered that it has the technical capacity to do this. Instead, the ERD leadership was keen to have technical support from the Project for the revision of the ERD Handbook.

**b. Develop and operationalize a Policy Expert Pool (PEP) with experts and organizations**

With a view to make evidence-based policies a Policy Expert Pool (PEP) was planned to be formed. Accordingly, a draft list of the policy experts and subject matter experts on different issues related to LDC graduation were developed and their roles were defined by the Project which was not validated by the ERD. Rather, the ERD senior management decided not to go ahead with the PEP as they thought that it would not add any value to the ERD. Instead, an in-house group of experts within the ERD has been created to enhance the capacity of the ERD officials.

Thus, Output 2 could achieve its 3 targets out of five and two were left unachieved. As part of information management and evidence generation, it took the additional initiatives of ERD handbook revision and publication of policy briefs which are underway. Figure 8 summarizes the overall performance of output 2.

**Figure 8 Summary of the Performance of Output 2**



able 7 shows that as per the RRF target Output 2 could publish 1 NHDR and its other achievements were also very close to the targets. The slight shortfalls in achieving the targets of number of officials having a good understanding of data analytics and number of data analytical outputs generated were caused by the time taken for upgradation of FAMS, which the project has already completed. During the current evaluative study, it was informed that training on using FAMS software was continuing and the number of trained officials on data analytics has increased further. As mentioned before, the Project has also undertaken initiative for the publication of policy briefs. Thus, the performance of output 2 seemed to be good.

**Table 7 RRF Targets of Output 2 and Project Achievements**

Targets Set in the RRF	Project Achievements up to June 2023
Number of government officials who have a good understanding of data analytics and evidence-based policymaking <sup>5</sup>	Against the RRF target of 140, 120 ERD officials have been imparted training on using FAMS and data analytics in decision making and have attained a good understanding in this regard.
Number of data analytical outputs generated by FABA/ICT wings using FAMS	No data analytical output has been generated yet as FAMS upgradation took time. However, with the upgraded FAMS software, the ERD can generate 18 reports as data analytical outputs since it has total 20 reporting formats.
Number of government records stored in ERDPEDIA	3251 government records have been stored in ERDPEDIA against the target of 3,300. Uploading records in fact, depends on the agreements signed by the Government.
Number of policy briefs published	No policy brief published
Number of NHDR published by ERD	1 NHDR has been published

Source: Atlas Data upto June 2023

<sup>5</sup> Level of understanding: Based on the score that a participant will obtain in a short test after conducting a training course; 69 and below="Poor/Inadequate understanding" and 70 and above=good understanding

### **5.4.1.2 Outcome Area 2: External Resource Mobilization Strategy and International Economic Collaboration Strengthened**

In a bid to encounter the upcoming challenges related to LDC graduation and the economic fallout caused from COVID-19 pandemic the Project targeted to strengthen external resource mobilization strategy and international economic collaborations as it's another outcome area, which were to be achieved by the following outputs:

#### **Output 3: External resource mobilization capacity strengthened**

The planned activities under Output 3 focusing on strengthening external resource mobilization capacity were as follows:

- i) forming a multidisciplinary and multi-agency expert team to develop a comprehensive and forward-looking External Resource Mobilization Strategy to provide a framework to mobilize resources from different sources efficiently by the ERD with a provision of regular need-based review;
- ii) conducting studies on strengthening the capacity of the officers of economic wing of ERD in different missions, assessing the need and feasibility of opening economic wing positions in other missions abroad, implication of accepting concessional and non-concessional assistance from DPs and Debt Sustainability.
- iii) analyzing the interest rates of different DPs for accessing low-cost assistance seeking strategy considering the changes like phasing out of LIBOR and economic need and political nexus in post-covid context;
- iv) taking effective measures to showcase Bangladesh's development achievement and potential for attracting investors, tourists and other development partners during Bangladesh Development Forum meetings.

#### **A. Achievements of Output 3**

##### **i) Visible Achievements of Output 3**

##### **a. Analyzing the interest rates of different DPs for accessing low-cost assistance seeking strategy considering the changes like phasing out of LIBOR**

The Project organized two workshops aligning with this activity where the officials gathered hands on experience in external borrowing particularly in the context of upcoming challenges of LDC Graduation. The first workshop titled, "Various Floating Rates of Loans: Options and Calculation" was held on 03 October 2022, with a participation of 70 ERD ERD officials. The participants could develop a good understanding about the options of external borrowing from bilateral, multilateral and commercial sources and the patterns of interest rates of different development partners, transition of LIBOR to SOFR.

The second workshop titled, "Implication of Increasing the Cost of Borrowing and Way Forward for Bangladesh" was held on 20th December 2022 with a participation of 50 officials from all the wings of ERD and 15 officials from the Planning Commission. The Workshop discussed the increased cost of

borrowing, role of different actors and factors to be considered in the changed context of declining Official Development Assistance (ODA), LDC Graduation and LIBOR transition.

## **B. Non-Achievements of Output 3**

### **a. A Strategic Framework for External Resource Mobilization could not be developed**

The Project could not develop a Strategic Framework for External Resource Mobilization as planned since initially the ERD management suggested to prepare a plan or a study on this instead of a strategy referring to some procedural issues involved in it.

Later, the 4<sup>th</sup> PSC meeting (held in October 2023 when the evaluation was going on) came to a decision to shift the project initiative of preparing external resource mobilization strategy to conduct a study on a revised topic titled, “Development financing: Future Challenges, Policy Implications and Way Forward” taking the INFF documents under consideration. The study will focus on innovative sources and approaches towards attaining SDGs.

### **b. Conducting studies on strengthening the capacity of the officers of economic wing of ERD in different missions**

With a view to accelerate international economic cooperation and partnerships for development the Project planned for conducting a few in depth studies, which could not be done due to a lack of consent from the ERD. The ERD leadership was in favour of organizing hands-on training instead of research. “Studies will not be effective for capacity enhancement. Training would be more beneficial for this”, opined a high official of the ERD during interview.

However, through a constant advocacy of the Project team, in recent times, there has been a shift in the mindset of the ERD officials towards research. As per the decision of the 4<sup>th</sup> PSC meeting, held in September 2023, the Project is currently planning to conduct 3 studies as follows:

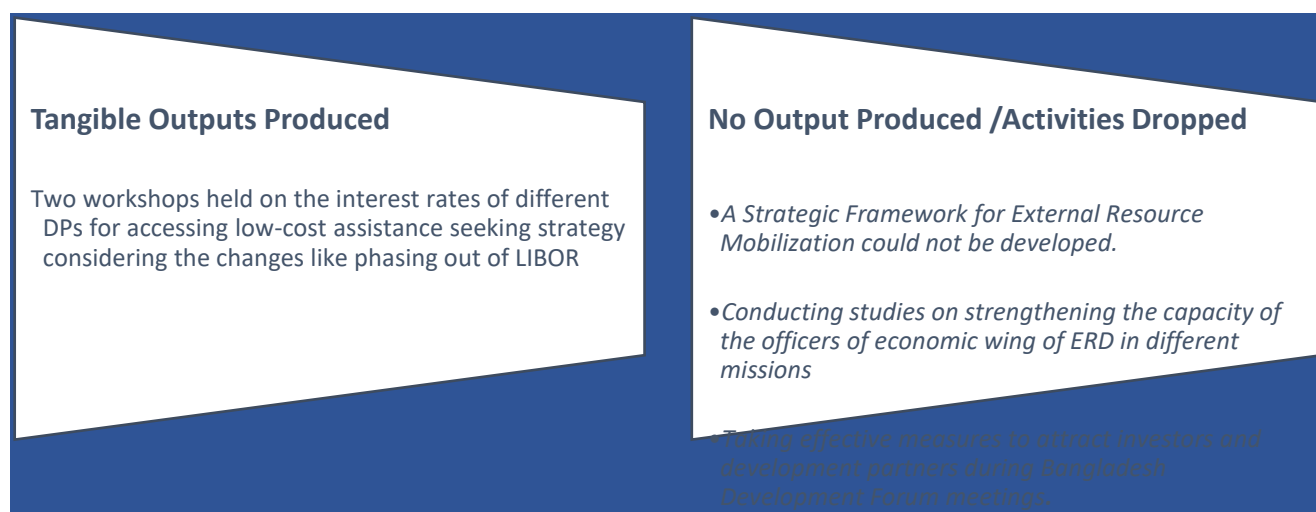
- i) a study on “Strengthening the Institutional Capacity of Economic Missions Abroad to Accelerate International Collaboration and Partnerships for National Development”
- ii) a study on “Trade Finance Risk Management”
- iii) a comprehensive study on “The Implications of the General Intellectual Property Rights (except the Pharmaceutical sector)-Patent, Trademark, Industrial Design and Copyrights in the Post Graduation Era”.

### **c. Taking effective measures to attract investors and development partners during Bangladesh Development Forum meetings.**

The Project could not do this since due to the economic fallout caused from post Covid-19 scenario Government decided not to conduct any Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) meeting.

Thus, out of the 4 planned activities of Output 3, the Project worked on only one in a very limited manner leaving the remaining 3 unachieved. Figure 9 summarized the performance of Output 3.

**Figure 9 Summary of the Performance of Output 3**



Performance of Output 3 against the RRF targets presented in Table 8 shows that the Project could not produce any visible achievement on this front. Two out of five RRF targets under output 3 could not be achieved due to a change of priority of the ERD while the Project cannot be directly attributed to the achievement of two other targets (amount of resource mobilization and proportion of external resources in ADP). Thus, overall performance of the Output 3 was very poor. Table 8 RRF Targets of Output 3 and Project Achievements

Targets Set in the RRF	Project Achievements up to June 2023
Amount of external resources mobilized by ERD	US\$10.25 billion has been mobilized in 2022 while in 2021 it was US\$ 10.00 billion. Information about 2023 is not available in the Atlas data. K4DM can be attributed indirectly to this increase through its contribution to developing technical, analytical capacity and negotiation skill of the ERD officials.
Proportion of external resources in annual development budget of the Government of Bangladesh	Achieved the RRF target (33%) set for 2023-24. K4DM contributed to this increase through capacity building.
To what extent External Resource Mobilization Strategy developed and adopted by ERD <sup>6</sup>	No Strategy was developed due to the change of priority of the ERD
Number of Resource Mobilization plans developed by the wings of ERD	No plan is prepared due to a change of priority of the ERD. Instead of having 9 plans for 9 wings as set in the RRF target as the total output of the Project, one consolidated plan on resource mobilization focusing on development financing is under consideration of the Project.
Number of funding commitments secured from development partners through international aid forum supported by the project	1 against the target of 3. The project obtained commitment from the Embassy of Switzerland to get USD \$300,000.

Source: Atlas Data Upto June 2023

<sup>6</sup> Score 0: No National Strategy available; Score 1: Institutional setup-A multidisciplinary and multiagency expert team established. Score 2: Draft strategy developed; Score 3: Strategy submitted to ERD for its endorsement

## ***Output 4: Institutions and modality for South-South & Triangular Cooperation (SS&TrC) Strengthened***

Output 4 focuses on strengthening institutions and modality for South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SS&TrC) in a bid to explore alternative sources of funding through:

- i) creating a permanent South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SS&TrC) Knowledge Centre at ERD ;
- ii) undertaking South-South and Triangular Cooperation Mapping Study to identify the potential areas, countries and cooperation
- iii) strengthening the existing SS&TrC Cell in ERD
- iv) creating a South-South and Triangular Cooperation Pool Fund for showcasing Bangladesh experiences to other countries
- v) strengthening Bangladesh Young Professionals Network and connecting them with similar international networks and organizing periodic convention, conference or event regarding South- South &Triangular Cooperation at home or abroad

### **A. Achievements of Output 4**

#### **i) Visible Achievements**

##### ***a. Creation of a permanent South South and Triangular Cooperation (SS&TrC) Knowledge Centre at ERD***

Instead of creating a knowledge centre the K4DM Phase II Project has created a web-based knowledge portal known as the “South-South Knowledge Hub” in June 2022. This is another notable achievement of the Project. UNDP Korea provided the seed fund to the Project for creating this online platform for South South cooperation through which best practices of the least developed countries and various knowledge products could be shared. To date, more than 50 best practices have been shared at the South-South Knowledge Hub.

In addition to this, four best practices were shared with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and got published as a special edition of the best practices on LDC Graduation under the title of “South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Least Developed Countries: From the Istanbul Programme of Action to Achieving Sustainable and Resilient Development”.

#### **ii) Initiatives Taken and Implementation is Underway**

##### **a. Strengthening the existing SS&TrC Cell at ERD**

The Project took the initiative of strengthening the existing SS&TrC cell at ERD. It sent a request to the Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA) for deploying permanent manpower for managing the SS&TrC Cell but it has not yet been approved.

### **B. Non-Achievements of Output 4**

##### ***a. Creation of South-South and Triangular Cooperation Pool Fund***

The Project had a plan for creating a SS&TrC Pool Fund for showcasing Bangladesh experiences to other countries. It took the initiative of exploring the opportunities and scope for creating a SS&TrC pool fund to contribute to the less advanced countries. The Project provided technical support to 27 line ministries for exploring best practices but finally, the initiative did not see the light due to fund shortage. Since the Project did not receive the committed fund from UNDP, it was not possible for it to spare additional fund towards this initiative.

**b. Strengthening Bangladeshi Young Professionals Network to get them involved in South South and Triangular Cooperation (SS&TrC) Forums and Organize Events on SS&TrC at Home and Abroad**

The Project could not manage to materialize this initiative due to the priority change of the government. During the post covid time SS&TrC was not a priority issue of the government. Moreover, there is a disagreement among the ERD leadership about the mandate of the UN wing to deal with SS&TrC as they consider it more suitable to the mandate of Development Effectiveness Wing. As a result, the Project could not make any headway with this initiative.

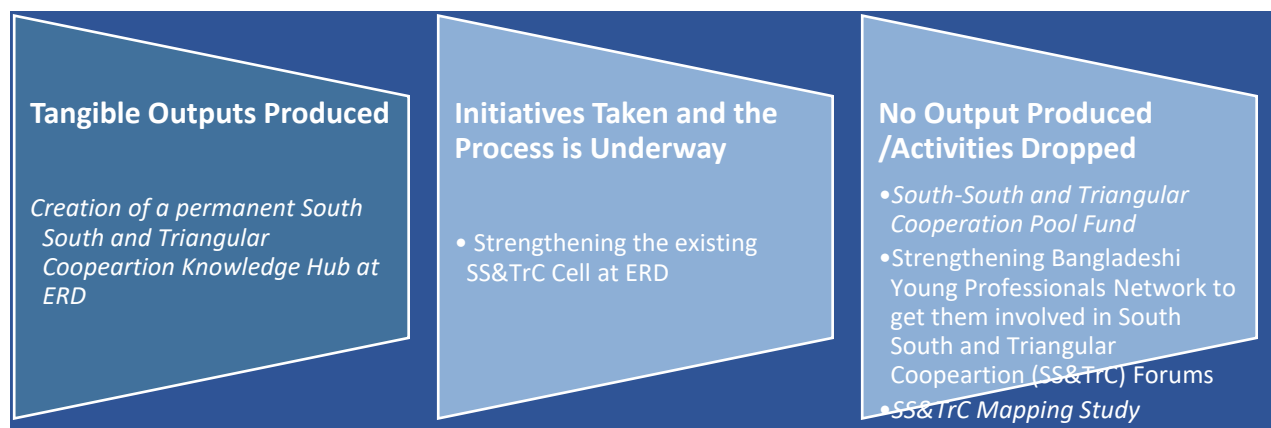
However, the Project organized a national level conference on SS&TrC on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022. As a follow up to that it has a plan to organize a regional level conference in February 2024 on (SS&TrC) engaging the countries whose learning can be useful for Bangladesh to become an LDC graduated country, eg., Nepal, Bhutan, Cambodia, LaoPDR and Sri Lanka.

**c. SS&TrC Mapping Study**

The Project did a mapping study on South-South and Triangular Cooperation to identify the potential areas, countries and cooperation but ERD did not find it necessary since government already has this kind of study.

Thus, out of the 5 planned activities under the Output 4 the Project could achieve only one while 3 were left unachieved and one activity is underway. The following figure presents the summary of performance of the Output 4.

**Figure 10 Summary of the Performance of Output 4**



However, achievements of Output 4 against the RRF targets as presented in Table 9 appears to be good. Out of 3 targets the Project could achieve two. The one which couldn't be achieved was involving Bangladeshi youth in international SS&TrC Forum. The reason behind this was that the ERD did not consider it as its priority amid post-covid challenging situation.

**Table 9 RRF Targets of Output 4 and Project Achievements**

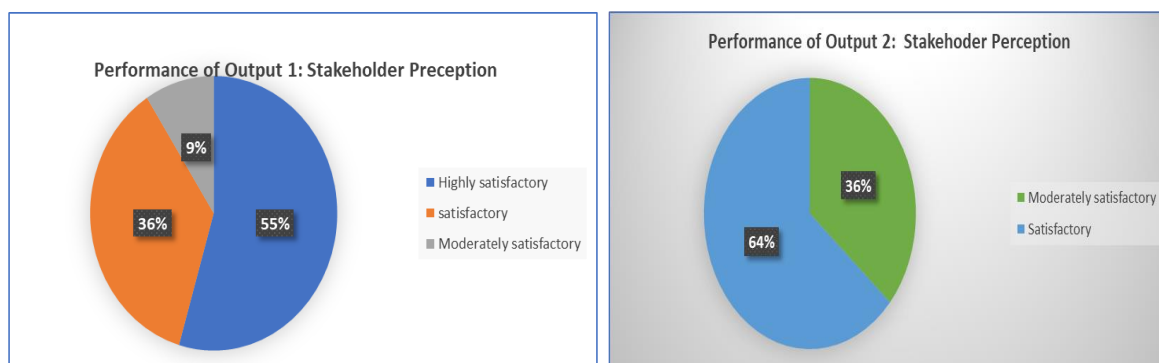
Targets/Indicators Set in the RRF	Project Achievements upto June 2023
Number of partnerships established by ERD for the promotion of SS&TrC	5 partnerships were established meeting the RRF target. They include: i)APC (Presidential Agency of Cooperation, Columbia), ii)Seoul Policy centre, iii)ABC Brazil, iv)UN Office of South South Cooperation (UNOSSC), v)Bureau of Partnership and Policy, UNDP Headquarter.
Number of best practices of national development disseminated	4 best practices were sent to LDC-V Conference Istanbul Plan of Action, DoHA, and more than 50 best practices were shared at the South-South Knowledge Hub, against the RRF target of 11 upto 2023.
Number of Bangladeshi youth members involved in international SS&TrC forums	0 against the RRF target of 120.

Source: Atlas Data upto June 2023

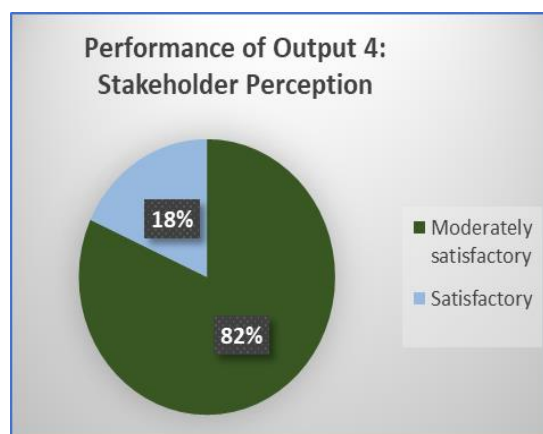
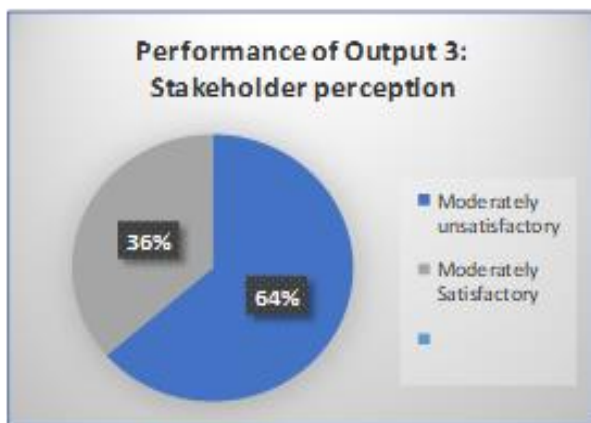
### 5.1.3 Output wise Performance of the K4DM Phase II Project: Survey Findings

The current evaluation attempted to assess the output wise performance of the Project through conducting a stakeholder perception survey. The findings of the survey as presented in Figure 11 demonstrate that out of 4 intended project outputs, performance of Output 1 was the highest since the majority of the stakeholders surveyed (55%) opined that performance of this output was “highly satisfactory” (meaning no shortcomings) while 36% of the respondents labeled its performance as “satisfactory” (meaning having minor shortcomings). On the other hand, performance of the Output 3 has been labelled as the lowest since 64% of the respondents termed its performance as “moderately satisfactory” (meant for having moderate shortcomings). The survey found the performance of Output 2 as “satisfactory” as the majority of the respondents (64%) termed it so. Finally, majority of the respondents (82%) termed the performance of output 4 as moderately satisfactory. Thus, the survey revealed that the overall performance of Output 1 and 2 was better than the Output 3 and 4.

**Figure 11 Output wise Performance of the K4DM Phase II Project: Stakeholder Perception**







### 5.4.2 Changes Driven by Project-Supported Interventions

Even though the K4DM Phase II Project was small in terms of its fund, its influence on the overall functioning of the ERD was found to be significant. Albeit, for being a knowledge-based project, the changes initiated by it could be felt more than it was seen. The current study found that there have been some positive changes in the capacity and mindset of the ERD officials due to the project interventions, which are as follows:

#### i) Positive improvement in the capacity of the officials

The project played an impactful role in providing cutting edge trainings to the officials on topics related to the core functions of the ERD. To be specific, FGDs with the ERD officials revealed that Inter Wing Peer Learning (IWPL) sessions have brought about a positive change in their capacity to understand the functions of the ERD, which are very different from other ministries of the government. During FGD, the officials also expressed their sheer satisfaction about the training/workshop arranged by the project which have now made them more confident in negotiation than before and the overall quality of their work has been improved.

#### ii) Participatory culture in decision making

Conventionally, decision making was concentrated at the top level of the ERD while the lower level officials of the ERD remained uninformed of the process. However, through the IWPL sessions, workshops and trainings, the Project has been able to introduce a “participatory culture” in the decision making. An official during interview noted, “The peer learning sessions have generated 3C outcomes - communication, coordination, cooperation among the ERD officials”. In addition to this, various trainings and workshops also created a scope for mutual learning and interaction among the officials at different levels of different wings which has created a culture of participatory decision making.

#### iii) Demand driven IWPL sessions have inculcated proactiveness among the officials towards their self development

The trainings and workshops were need based and demand driven to the extent that not only were the ERD senior officials and experts but also the officials at different levels used to decide the topics to be covered in the workshops. Self-assessment of the officials of their own capacity gaps and their realization of the need for certain skills and knowledge in order to contribute more meaningfully in their roles made them proactive.

**iv) Awareness building about the upcoming challenges in the aftermath of LDC Graduation**

The aftermath of the LDC graduation will drastically change the development funding scenario for Bangladesh. Both international and national context will witness a major paradigm shift in development financing. Thus, in the coming days, resource mobilization will become a growing concern for all ministries, and especially for the ERD whose principal objective is to collect foreign funds and loans for the government.

It is through the K4DM project interventions, specifically through its training and knowledge generation and dissemination workshops, officials from the higher echelon to the lowest, have now become aware of the upcoming challenge. The workshop on Bond Market organized by the Project can be cited as an example of this. “Before this workshop held, the bond market used to be a grey area for the officials. Through attending the workshop, the officials are now interested in exploring the bond market as a potential source of resources in the upcoming days”, informed an official during interview.

**v) Changes in the mindset**

One of the notable changes that the project could bring out is in the changes of the mindset of the ERD officials towards learning new things. The officials have become proactive to improve their capacity to deal with the issues related to the functioning of ERD. The Project has been able to create “an appetite for new knowledge” among the officials.

### **5.4.3 Factors Influencing the Achievement or Non-Achievement of the Objective**

The study found that some of the Project Outputs could produce tangible results while some were dropped or couldn't be achieved. This section identifies the factors that influenced the achievements and nonachievements of the Project objective.

#### **5.4.3.1 Factors Influencing the Achievements**

Within a very short time span and a limited budget, the Project could achieve a lot. Factors that contributed to the project achievements are as follows:

**i) *Dynamic and Efficient Project Leadership***

Dynamic and efficient Project leadership had been one of the driving factors that has contributed to achieving the intended outputs of the project. “Initially, it was very difficult to kick off the project. Every member of the project team gave their best to get the project rolling and create a momentum. It took time to kick off, but once it did, the project could implement its activities without much interruptions”, noted a Project official during interview. It is true that the ERD leadership extended all out support to the project, but it was the project leadership which did constant advocacy, follow up, continuously organized programs, trainings and workshops and took various initiatives to materialize its intended objectives within a very short period of time.

**ii) *Strong relationship between the ERD and UNDP***

In the first phase of the K4DM Project, there were some unresolved issues between the ERD senior management and the UNDP which were resolved in the second phase of the Project and eventually, a strong bonding was established between the two entities. Both the UNDP and ERD played a very

positive role in making the project initiatives successful. This led to the creation of a supportive and congenial working environment for the Project Team, which ultimately contributed to the achievements of the project.

**iii) ERD Ownership of the Project and Change in the Mindset of the ERD Officials**

The factor that contributed the most to the project achievements is the change in the mindset of the ERD officials towards the Project. Initially, this kind of strategic knowledge-based project was taken very lightly by the ERD officials but the interventions of the K4DM Phase II Project has changed the mindset of the ERD officials. The ERD officials could realize that this project was the only opportunity to develop their capacity and considered the Project as their own. As a result, the ERD officials proactively extended their all-out support in making the training programs effective, upgrading the FAMS software, revising the ERD Handbook--all these demonstrate how these Project interventions were owned by the ERD.

**iv) Project Designed its Interventions based on the Capacity Need Assessment Done by ERD**

While designing the ProDoc stakeholder consultations were held for being informed about the capacity gaps and needs of the ERD. This was another important contributing factor towards the achievements of the Project. As the key stakeholder of the Project, the ERD was given the opportunity to assess its own needs and the Project designed its interventions accordingly.

#### **5.4.3.2 Factors Influencing the Non-Achievements**

However, a good number of targeted activities under various outputs could not be achieved or dropped from the Project. In terms of non-achievement, **Output 3** aiming for strengthening resource mobilization was in a leading position. Out of its 4 planned activities, the Project worked on only one in a very limited manner leaving the remaining 3 unachieved. Out of five planned activities of **Output 1** two activities were dropped from the project activities and **Output 2** could achieve 3 out of its five planned activities while two were left unachieved. Out of the 5 planned activities under **Output 4** the Project could achieve one while one activity is underway and 3 were left unachieved. This subsection identifies the reasons for nonachievements of the Project objectives as follows:

**i) Delay in Getting the TAPP Signed Causing a Huge Time Constraints for the Project**

Due to the delay in signing the TAPP the project could not start its activities in due time. As per the ProDoc, the project was supposed to start from January 2021, but the ProDoc was signed in March 2021 and the TAPP was signed in December 2021. The Project ultimately started from April 2022. Delay in TAPP approval and consequently not having National Project Director (NPD) nomination by the ERD Secretary caused serious setbacks for the Project's initiatives. This caused a huge time constraint for the Project to complete its activities. Due to the initial delay in starting the Project, as many as 18 peer learning sessions had to be organized within a time span of 3-4 months. Revision of ERD Handbook was not completed during the evaluation. In addition to this, many other planned activities could not be implemented.

**ii) Budgetary Constraints**

Fund shortage was another significant challenge that the project faced. The initial budget of the project was 3.15 million USD out of which the UNDP had committed for 1 million USD and the

remaining amount was left unfunded. It was much later that the project received small funding (USD \$ 0.300,000 million) from the Embassy of Switzerland and from UNDP Korea (USD 28,000).

Though the UNDP could disburse its promised amount, the unfunded amount could not be managed while the Project activities were designed in line with the planned budget of USD \$ 3 million. Due to a shortage of funds, one kind of uncertainty gripped the Project and some of the project activities had to be postponed, some were delayed, which hampered the overall goal achievement of the project. “The Project could not produce any data analytical output, which was one of the planned initiatives under the Output 3. This happened because of the slow pace of the upgradation of FAMS software, occurred due mainly to a shortage of fund ”, informed an official during interview.

**iii) Frequent Change of ERD Leadership**

Frequent change of leadership was another reason for the nonachievements of the Project. Within a span of only a year, the National Project Director (NPD) of the project changed thrice and the senior ERD Leadership (the honorable Secretary) changed twice. This resulted in a frequent change of priority in project activities while the Project was in implementation. The same project activities which the previous leadership considered to be important was discarded by the new leadership. For instance, the Project was supposed to conduct few studies for knowledge/evidence generation which would assist in policy advocacy and intervention. However, so far, none of those studies could be done due mainly to the priority change of the ERD leadership. The First PIC meeting decided to conduct studies, which were negated by the decision of the 3<sup>rd</sup> PIC meeting and again, the ERD took a U-turn to conduct three studies in the 4<sup>th</sup> PIC meeting. Such changes in the project priority with the change of ERD leadership left a negative impact on the achievement of the Project.

**iv) COVID-19 Pandemic**

Covid -19 pandemic was another challenge for the project. When the project was initiated in the year 2021, the world as well as Bangladesh was still recovering from COVID, therefore the Project progress was incredibly slow-paced. COVID was also an obstacle towards the timely initiation of the project causing delay in signing the TAPP and achieving the targets of many initiatives. A lot of funds got redirected to vaccinations and covid essentials and consequently, some initiatives of the Project could not draw attention from the government. Among others the initiatives under SS&TrC suffered a lot due to COVID. Following comment of a Project Partner during interview reflects the vulnerability of the Project to COVID:

“The partnership with the Seoul office and the K4DM faced a major blow due to COVID. There was an intention to visit the partner officers which wasn’t possible back then. A lot of targets were envisioned but did not come to fruition because of COVID”.

**v) ProDoc was too ambitious**

Objectives laid out in the ProDoc were not practically feasible to attain by a three-year project. It ignored many practicalities related to the project implementation. Moreover, a long list of activities was planned while a big portion of the budget was unfunded. Thus, compared to the funds and time available, the targeted project activities were too ambitious.

### **5.4.3.3 Initiatives Undertaken to Mitigate the Challenges**

To overcome the above-mentioned challenges, the Project team constantly tried to maintain a friendly relationship and understanding between the ERD senior management and the Project team. To bring about the change in the system, a lot of advocacies were done to earn ERD acceptance and ownership of the project.

### **5.4.4 Possible Alternative Strategies for Ensuring Effective Implementation**

Given the context of budgetary constraints, the project could make its activities more effective through collaborating with other similar projects of the government. Since the K4DM Phase II Project is a small one, it could join hands with broader initiatives and broader projects with similar mandates and objectives.

“Capacity building trainings could be more effective if the duration was longer than it was”, opined the ERD officials during FGD. A seven- day short course or training could have been arranged for better results. To assess the performance of the trainees use of different evaluation tools e.g., kahoot, survey monkey would have been more effective.

### **5.4.5 Impact of the project in capacity development of officials, accelerate knowledge and resource mobilization**

Despite being a three-year project as per the ProDoc, active life of the K4DM Phase II Project was shortened to one year and a half due to the pandemic and bureaucratic delays. Therefore, the time to discuss the impact of the project hasn't arrived yet. Moreover, as the project is a strategic one, achievement of this kind of project requires time to be visible. Moreover, the project is still ongoing and many of its initiatives are still underway. The FAMS software has been developed but its usage hasn't started yet. Hence, it will require some time to observe the impact of this software in the systemization of data on aid management. In terms of capacity development, the project is successful in creating cooperative, integrated and interactive mindset among the ERD officials due to its IWPL sessions. Overall, a proactive learning attitude has been developed among the officials which will generate a positive impact on the overall performance of the ERD in the days to come.

The chapter has attempted to assess the effectiveness of the Project from various dimensions and perspectives. I) achievement and non-achievement of project outputs across the specific project activities and the RRF targets; and ii) stakeholder perception survey. On all accounts, broadly it can be said that the Project performance was satisfactory.

Among the four intended outputs of the Project, Outputs 1, 2 and 4 progressed very well in terms of both producing tangible outputs and in undertaking various initiatives to achieve the project outputs. Amongst all, the achievement of the Project Output 1 aiming for institutionalizing capacity building initiatives was the highest as it could create a lot of impact (though intangible) of the ERD officials while Output 2 aiming for creating an enabling environment for evidence-based policy making could also achieve a lot. On the other hand, performance of output 3 aiming for strengthening external resource mobilization was not as it was expected. The findings of the stakeholder perception survey also endorsed this fact. More than a half of the respondents (55%) labelled the performance of output

1 as “highly satisfactory” while a good majority of them (64%) considered the performance of Output 3 as “moderately unsatisfactory”.

However, a good number of targeted activities under various outputs could not be achieved or dropped from the Project. The chapter tried to dig out the factors that contributed to the achievements and non-achievements of the desired Outputs of the Project. The findings of the study reveal that *efficient project leadership, strong relationship between the ERD and the UNDP, ERD ownership of the Project and the change in the mindset of the officials, designing the project based on the capacity need assessment of the ERD* contributed to the achievements of the Project Outputs. On the other hand, non-achievements of the Project outputs were caused mainly due to the *delay in getting the TAPP signed, budgetary constraints, frequent change of ERD leadership, Covid-19 pandemic, too ambitious ProDoc*. More importantly, many of the project initiatives were dropped at the implementation stage due to the priority change of the ERD with the change of its leadership, which seriously affected the Project performance.

The Project could be brought about many positive changes at ERD which include: i) capacity improvement of the ERD officials ii) inculcating a participatory culture in decision making iii) change in the mindset towards learning new things and improving capacity iv) awareness building about the upcoming challenges of LDC graduation.

From gender perspective also, the Project gave its full effort to ensure gender balance in all its initiatives wherever possible, specifically in all its training and workshops at least 40 percent of the participants were found to be women.

## **5.5 Sustainability of the Project**

Sustainability of the outputs and outcomes of the Project has been assessed from institutional, financial and policy perspectives for making an objective assessment whether the positive changes enabled by the K4DM Phase II Project initiatives could be sustained even after the Project terminates.

### **5.5.1 Capacity of Project-Supported Interventions to Continue to Deliver Benefits for an Extended Period of Time after Completion.**

The K4DM Phase II Project interventions have immense potentialities to remain sustainable even after the Project terminates. The reasons for this are manifold, which are as follows:

**First**, the Project has gained ownership of the ERD and the ERD now realizes the importance of having a Project like this, which would facilitate improving the capacity of its officials to perform its day-to-day functions effectively and also for preparing them to deal with the upcoming new challenges of LDC graduation. This realization of ERD has been developed because the Project interventions have been designed according to the needs of ERD. For instance, upgradation of FAMS software has been done according to need of the FABA Wing. Capacity building initiatives have also been designed according to the needs of the ERD. Revision of ERD Handbook also engaged a team of UN Wing officials, including one member of the project team.

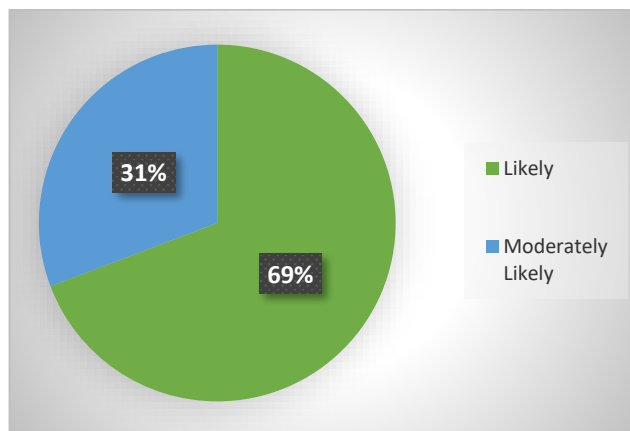
**Second**, the Project is unique in its interventions as it focuses on i) institutionalizing the capacity building initiatives through creating physical and virtual (in progress) learning platform rather than conducting isolated and ad hoc basis trainings and ii) creating an enabling environment for evidence-based policy making through updating FAMS software and taking initiatives for digital archive and record keeping through upscaling ERDPEDIA, revising ERD handbook in order for making data and information accessible to the officials instead of generating knowledge products only. Thus, the project interventions have the highest potentialities to be sustainable in their own rights.

**Third**, the project intends to handover all its deliverables to the ERD as soon as it terminates. Hence, even after termination, the project outputs themselves have the potential to remain as relevant for ERD. Specific interventions of the project that would continue to deliver benefits after the project terminates are as follows:

- Output 1 of the Project aiming at institutionalizing the capacity building initiatives has immense possibility of creating a long-term impact on the ERD capacity. The project has initiated a shift from an ad hoc approach to capacity building towards an institutional approach, which will make the initiative sustainable. The innovative learning platform called the Inter Wing Peer Learning (IWPL) sessions initiated by the Project is worth mentioning here. IWPL will act as a sustainable tool for developing the organizational capacity of the ERD since it has successfully been able to create an appetite among the ERD officials for improving their capacity and knowledge about the issues related to the functions of ERD. The ERD will be interested to continue this good practice even after the project ends.
- The FAMS software is a sustainable product of this Project. It will bring a long-term benefit for the government and the ERD in particular. The second PIC meeting of the Project agreed that upgradation of FAMS software has the potential to create a tangible and lasting impact for ensuring the effectiveness of development financing and external borrowing of the country. The meeting also assured of providing continuous support to further development and upgradation of FAMS software to achieve a sustainable result.
- South-South Knowledge Hub developed in partnership with UNDP Seoul Policy Centre, will function as a sustainable platform for strengthening SS&TrC for the national network and international partners to be able to access and share their innovative solutions, policy recommendations and best practices across the UN system, development partners, among the Southern countries, private sectors, CSOs and other relevant agencies. The Knowledge Hub will enable the government in strengthening international economic collaboration through enhancing knowledge on replicable practices with regard to external resource mobilization.
- Revision and updating of the ERD handbook is another remarkable project supported intervention which will have a sustainable impact on the ERD officials. The revised Handbook of the ERD will contain the updated information about the functioning of different wings of the ERD. This handbook will be a guidance for all the newly joined officers of the ERD.

Findings of the Stakeholder perception survey also revealed a positive opinion about the sustainability of the Project interventions after the Project ends. Figure 12 shows that majority of the respondents (69%) opined that it was likely that the Project supported interventions will deliver benefits even after the Project terminates.

**Figure 12 Potentiality of the Project supported Interventions after the Project Terminates: Stakeholder Perception**



### **5.5.2 Potential New Areas of Work/Innovative Measures for Sustaining the Results**

It is important to ensure a continuation of the project activities from the ERD's end. To make the impact of FAMS software more sustainable, it is essential to streamline it into the government system. As proposed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> PSC meeting, the FAMS software should incorporate all the functions of AMS (ADP Management System) of the Planning Division of the Planning Commission and should be integrated with the Integrated Budget and Accounts Software (IBAS) of the Ministry of Finance and other systems used by different ministries and divisions to ensure a one-stop solution to all the external resources data requirements of the Government. If this can be done, the Project will continue to deliver its benefits even after the Project ends. In the context of LDC graduation, it is crucial for Bangladesh to keep the record of development assistance and disbursement accurately.

Capacity building initiative could be designed in a holistic manner. The initiative may extend its focus beyond the ERD so that the officials working in different ministries and divisions dealing with development projects can benefit from the capacity building initiatives of the Project.

The Project may think of collaborating with similar other Projects of ERD and other ministries of the Government, which will create its impact far reaching and sustainable.

### **5.5.3 Possible Measures for Strengthening the Exit Strategies and Sustainability of the Project**

For exit strategies, the project should have an organized plan for its departure. Output wise, the Project may consider having specific activities for the ministries having relevance with the objectives of the Project. There should be plans for internalizing the project deliverables into the ERD system so that it continues to deliver its benefits even after the termination of the Project.

With a view to make the FAMS Software sustainable, training on using FAMS software should be finished well ahead of the termination of the project and its user manuals should be ready. The project may also consider handing it over to the ERD 2-3 months before the Project terminates so that the ERD officials can become familiar with using the software and in case of troubles using it they can take the Project's help. Pool of trainers can be created for imparting training on FAMS to the future officials



of the ERD. Software maintenance plan should also be there. Government should allocate funds for trouble shooting and maintenance of the software.

Completion and publication of all the documents might be another exit strategy to make the Project sustainable. This includes the publication of the revised ERD handbook and various research reports planned. In addition to this, completion of the e-training module and uploading it in the ERD website should also be done to make it accessible to all.

#### **5.5.4 Project's role in influencing the wider policy at the national and international level**

The K4DM phase II has played an instrumental role in establishing the SDG 17 emphasizing on the importance of mobilizing financial resources, knowledge sharing and cooperation through its capacity building initiatives and partnerships with national and international organizations. SS&TrC knowledge hub will provide the government invaluable inputs for policy making through its knowledge sharing and lessons learning strategies.

The Project's support for the publication of NHDR will contribute to future policy making. The NHDR has equally targeted all citizens with special focus on inequality in terms of gender, wealth, geographical locations, empowerment of youth, and inclusion of people left behind due to their age, gender, ethnicity, physical and mental ability. Analyzing the five emerging issues that are critical for informing and influencing the future human development trajectory of Bangladesh, the report will help the government to realize the importance of citizen centric policy making for addressing the emerging challenges in future.

The above discussion entails that the K4DM Phase II Project has immense potentialities to be sustainable since the ERD has already owned the Project. The Projects' focus on institutionalization of the capacity building initiative and creation of an enabling environment will keep its many initiatives sustainable in their own rights. The interventions having the potentialities of being sustainable include: the learning platform created under capacity building initiative, FAMS software, revision of ERD Handbook and the South-South Knowledge Hub. The Project will be able to influence the national policies through its SS&TrC knowledge hub and the NHDR publication.

#### **5.6 Gender Equality and Human Rights: The Cross Cutting Issues**

The current evaluation has employed the *gender and human rights-based approach*. The study has assessed the extent to which the design, implementation, and results of the project have adopted a gender equality perspective and a rights-based approach. In addition to this, the evaluation methodology, including data collection and analysis methods, were also human rights and gender-sensitive to the greatest extent possible, with data and findings being disaggregated by Gender.

##### **5.6.1 Gender Equality**

Due to the nature of the project and the non-requirement of any direct field involvement or intervention from the project, there has not been a scope to contribute directly to gender equality based activity.

However, the K4DM project has been avid about maintaining gender balance in all its interventions and did policy advocacy to ensure equal participation of female and male officials specifically in the trainings, workshops and peer learning sessions facilitated by the Project so that upskilling and career advancement for female government officials could be ensured. “Selection of participation for any training or workshop is done by the administration wing of the ERD. The project could ensure that the wing nominates both male and female officers equally for each of the workshops and trainings” informed a Project official during interview. Currently, the ERD has also adopted it as a practice to select at least 40 percent of female participants for different trainings and workshops. This has been possible due to a strong advocacy of the Project Manager and support of the ERD Secretary, both of whom are the females. Concrete output achieved in ensuring gender balance in capacity building training were as follows:

- A total of 380 female government officials (42%) out of total 900 participants successfully participated in different trainings organized by the Project.
- A total of 120 female officers (40%) out of 300 participants from ERD, Planning Commission and IMED actively participated in high level seminars.
- A total of 49 female officers (35%) out of 140 participants from ERD participated in knowledge dissemination programmes on different issues.

In addition to this, the project consciously promoted the use of gender-neutral language in all its reports and official documents. The current evaluative study also tried to ensure female participation while selecting its respondents as 31% of the respondents of the study were females.

### **5.6.2 Human Rights-Based Approach followed in Project Designing and Implementation**

Due to the nature of the Project there has not been a scope to contribute directly to human rights based activity. However, the project ensured to have separate chapters on marginalized people in its publication- National Human Development Report (NHDR). The NHDR targeted all citizens with special focus on inequality in terms of gender, wealth, geographical location, and the people left behind. This will essentially contribute to the future development trajectory of Bangladesh through providing inputs to developing citizen centric policy.

### **5.7 Risk Analysis of the Project**

There has been a gap between the intended objectives of the Project and its achievements. Adequate resources and time are the key prerequisites for effective implementation of a project and the K4DM Phase II Project suffered from the shortages of both. The Project was not provided with the amount of resources that it had anticipated at the stage of project designing. In addition to this, due to the shortened life span from 3 years to 1.5 years, the Project had to drop or curtail many of its activities.

Frequent change of the ERD leadership accompanied by the change of the project priorities and directions caused serious risk for the Project. Project activities saw significant shifts in its priorities from its design stage to those at the implementation stage. This happened because the new management did not consider the previous priorities to be relevant and offered new directions and guidance to the project causing negative impact on the achievement of the Project.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

### 6.1 Summary of the Findings of the Study

- Objectives of the K4DM Phase II Project were found to be relevant with the national and international priorities and also with the UNDP priorities.
- The findings of the evaluation of the K4DM Project reveals that the Project could efficiently spend its allocated budget. On average, upto June 2023, the Project could spend 70.59% of its allocated budget. The Project could also earn the value for money. The findings of the study show that the highest expenditure (39%) was incurred for Output 2 (creating enabling environment for evidence-based policy making), which produced some tangible output including the upgradation of the FAMS software, publication of the NHDR and worked for increasing the use of the ERDPEDIA. More importantly, with low expenditure (26%) the Output 1 of the Project produced immense result through its Inter Wing Peer learning Sessions and other training and workshops. Majority of the respondents of the stakeholder perception survey also termed the value for money achieved by the Project was satisfactory (meant for having minor shortcomings).
- The Project could achieve many of its targeted outputs within a very short span of time. Excepting the Output 3 other Outputs of the Project could produce many tangible achievements. Output 1 aiming for institutionalizing the capacity building initiatives introduced an innovative horizontal, peer learning platform, which could create an extensive impact on the ERD officials through facilitating institutionalization of the initiative. Output 2 has accomplished an incredible task of upgrading the FAMS software to facilitate evidence-based decision making in the field of aid management and external borrowing. In addition to this, under this Output, Revision of ERD Handbook and publication of NHDR were other initiative that would contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for evidence-based policy making. Another tangible achievement of the Project under Output 4 was the creation of a web-based portal known as the South-South Knowledge Hub- where the best practices of developing countries are shared for learning lessons from others and avenues for tapping new source of resources can be identified. However, achievement of Output 3 of the Project was the least since it couldn't achieve any of its activities other than holding two workshops while in terms of intangible outputs performance of the Output 1 was the highest. Thus, overall effectiveness of the Project could be termed as satisfactory.
- Alongside these achievements the Project could not achieve many of its targeted activities and some of the planned activities were also dropped at the stage of implementation due to many reasons.
- The study has identified some issues that worked towards the meaningful accomplishment of the Project objectives. They include: i) Project objectives were timely; ii) ERD ownership at all Levels created a congenial environment for project implementation; iii) horizontal learning mechanism was found to be an effective means of capacity development, iv) use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) making the Project attractive among the ERD officials in general and the young officials in particular; v) dedicated and efficient Project leadership.

- The study has also identified some factors responsible for the non-achievement of some initiatives of the Project which include: i) ProDoc was too ambitious in terms of the planned activities vs time and resources available; ii) Lack of a congenial relationship between the ERD and the UNDP at the initial days of project initiation iii) late approval of TAPP caused delay in Project initiation iv) Frequent Priority Changes in Project Outputs with the Change of ERD leadership caused uncertainty in implementation v) lack of the required level of understanding of the ERD officials about some Project activity hampered project implementation.
- The key challenges that the Project had to encounter at the stage of implementation include: budgetary constraints and v) time constraints.
- The K4DM Phase II Project has immense potentialities to be sustainable because: i) the Project has attained the ERD ownership; ii) the Projects' focus on institutionalization of the capacity building initiative and creation of an enabling environment will keep its many initiatives sustainable in their own rights. iii) some of the interventions have the potentialities of being sustainable, which include: the learning platform created under the capacity building initiative, upgradation of FAMS software, revision of ERD Handbook and the South-South Knowledge Hub. The Project will be able to influence the national policies through its SS&TrC knowledge hub and the NHDR publication.

## 6.2 Key Recommendations

**Considering the progress made thus far, what could be the next level departure point of the project to address the challenges on the way to LDC Graduation:** Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that the current Project, by virtue of its own merit, should be continued in a new form (be it as a stand-alone Project with a new name or as an extended phase) since the country will encounter new forms of development challenges due to LDC graduation, scheduled for 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2026. Given this, there will be an acute need to revisit and redesign the project in its new form. With this consideration, the current study puts forward its recommendations under two headings: i) *Recommendations within the Project Scope*; and ii) *Recommendations beyond the Project Scope*.

### 6.2.1 Recommendations within the Project Scope

- i) ***Project should be redesigned in alignment with the national priorities set for dealing with the challenges on the way to LDC graduation:*** To attain a sustainable graduation with momentum Government has developed a National Committee on LDC Graduation (NCG) in 2021, which has formed seven thematic subcommittees to deal with the likely areas to be impacted by the graduation due to a loss of international support measures (ISMs) including preferential market access, and trade agreement, WTO issues, internal resource mobilization. At the next level, the Project should undertake a strategic move to align itself with the areas identified by the NCG.

- ii) **Resource mobilization should be the key focus of the next Phase of the Project:** Out of the two development challenges related to LDC Graduation specified as the focus of the K4DM Phase II Project, some progress could be attained about the first one aiming for improving capacity of the ERD to undertake evidence-based policy making but no headway could be achieved with regard to the second issue aiming for strengthening external resource mobilization.

In the aftermath of the LDC graduation resource mobilization will become the prime concern for all ministries, and especially for the ERD, principal objective of which is to mobilize foreign funds and loans for the Government. LDC graduation will also drastically change the development funding scenario for Bangladesh. Both international and national context will witness a major paradigm shift in terms of donor-recipient relations. Therefore, a new approach must be adopted by the Project for mobilizing resources through identifying potential funding sources and building networks with development partners.

- iii) **Capacity building initiative should be redesigned in a holistic manner:** Improving the negotiation skills and developing capacity of the government officials to understand the intricacies of the emerging issues, officials of other ministries including the ERD will be critical for smooth transition. Capacity building initiative should be redesigned in a holistic manner. Along with the officials of the ERD, officials of other ministries particularly the strategically important ministries in the journey towards LDC graduation including the Ministries of Commerce, Foreign Affairs, Planning, industries, Environment should also be given the opportunity to attend the training/workshops to be organized by the Project. In addition to this, capacity building initiative should also include the private sector to prepare them for the future development paradigm of the country.

- iv) **Training Curriculum should be redesigned along the line of the changed financing strategies in the aftermath of LDC Graduation:** Since the frequency and amount of ODA will decrease after the LDC graduation, Bangladesh will need to investigate other potential funding options. The country may need to rely upon loans from development banks. Therefore, commercial financing strategies may be required to be adopted for a smooth transition from ODA to the bank loan procedure. With a view to making the ERD officials informed and prepared for this shift of financing strategies, training curriculum should be redesigned along this line.

- v) **Emphasis should be given on the Knowledge products/ Research/Studies:** The Project could not focus on the research and studies as much as it focused on the capacity development. In order to comprehend the future scenario of development transition and to identify the appropriate policy actions adequate focus should be given on research. A wide range of research and publications have to be carried out in alignment with the national priority areas identified for sustainable graduation, which includes: continuation of preferential market access and TRIPS waiver, enhancing private market competitiveness, export diversification, boosting foreign direct investment, and sustainable financing. Empirical studies on these areas will identify the real problems and the right ways to address them, which will facilitate countering the negative impacts of LDC graduation on various sectors and tapping the full potentials of elevated status. In addition to this, the country cases of those states who have

recently undergone LDC graduation can be studied to gain insights on the preparations, learnings and challenges of those countries.

- vi) ***A Systematic approach to the South South and Triangular Cooperation (SS&TrC) to be adopted:*** The Project couldn't implement many of the planned activities under SS&TrC due mainly to a lack of a clear understanding of the ERD officials about the issue. The future form of the Project may consider adopting a more systematic approach to the SS&TrC component clarifying its objectives and targets further and distinguishing it from other similar projects being implemented by the UNDP and ERD.

### 6.2.2 Recommendations Beyond the Project Scope

- vii) ***Project Targets should not be set with unfunded portion of Budget:*** The current study found the shortage of funds as one of the prime challenges of Project implementation. Given this, this evaluative study recommends that projects should not set any target with unfunded portion.
- viii) ***Fastening the TAPP approval process:*** Bureaucratic delay in TAPP approval created crippling constraints for project implementation. Although officially 180 days are fixed for the completion of the process of signing TAPP but the TAPP of the K4DM Phase II Project took nine months to get approved. Government should consider taking steps to fasten the TAPP approval process following the best practice of other countries. For instance, Vietnam and Cambodia have introduced a new policy that project preparation and approval have to be accomplished within a specific period of time. Once the deadline is missed, the project is dropped. All stakeholders sit together where all the queries, papers/documents are reviewed and resolved in a single meeting before signing the project.
- ix) ***Projects should be allowed to be implemented as per the ProDoc instead of frequently changing the Project interventions at the implementation stage:*** Frequent change of ERD Leadership and the consequent changes of priority of the ERD regarding the Project interventions was one of the key constraints for smooth implementation of the Project. In some cases, the Project invested its effort, resources, and time for an initiative, but it was not allowed to proceed further since it was not the priority of the ERD leadership. Thus, the entire effort turned into a wastage of time and resources. There needs to bring about a systemic change in this practice to ensure smooth implementation. A system should be in place that allows the Projects to be implemented as per the ProDoc inhibiting any change in the interventions at the stage of implementation. For that to execute, the process of designing and approval of ProDoc should be made more rational so that it does not set ambitious and inappropriate objectives and targets compared to the time and resources available and reflects preferences of all the stakeholders.
- x) ***Mid-level officials to be selected as the NPD to mitigate the effects of frequent change of leadership on Project implementation:*** The study found that the K4DM Phase II Project being a three-year Project, had three NPDs. Such a frequent change in leadership brought new perspectives, new understandings, and new priorities in the Project causing delays and

uncertainties in implementation. The current provision of appointing the NPDs from the Additional Secretary level intensifies this problem since soon after they are appointed the NPDs, they get promoted to the Secretaries and transferred elsewhere. Appointing NPDs from the Joint Secretary level would mitigate this challenge of project implementation, as it will take time for them to be promoted to the Secretaries.

- xi) **Institutional Reform is critical for smooth implementation:** Finally, and most importantly, the study suggests an institutional reform with a focus on bringing about the fundamental change in the bureaucratic system that causes delays in TAPP approval and changes in the project priorities/interventions at the implementation stage, frequent transfer of officials creating constraints for smooth implementation. “No good initiative will be able to produce the expected results unless these reforms are undertaken”, opined the development partners during interview expressing their interest in providing funds for institutional reforms.

## Chapter 7: Lessons Learned

The current chapter assesses the lessons that have been learned from the implementation experiences of the K4DM Project Phase II which will provide useful feedback for the next phase of the Project itself or for other similar kind of projects.

### 7.1 What Worked and What Did Not

Implementation of all the Project Outputs and activities could not achieve the same results. Some of the Outputs of the Project could produce significant achievements while some couldn't. This section identifies the factors that contributed to the achievements and also the issues that caused nonaccomplishment of the Project.

#### 7.1.1 What worked towards the meaningful accomplishment of the Project

- i) ***Project Objectives were Timely:*** K4DM Phase II Project was undertaken at a time when Bangladesh was seriously considering finding out the ways to deal with the challenges posed by Post Covid economic fallout on the way to LDC graduation. The Project could effectively choose its scope to deal with two national development challenges related to LDC graduation and set its objectives accordingly. Such alignment of the Project with the national priority helped it to attract the Government easily for its initiation.
- ii) ***ERD Ownership at All Levels created a Congenial Environment for Project Implementation:*** The senior management of ERD had a positive attitude towards the Project as they could realize that this was the only learning platform through which they can equip themselves with the capacity required to work at the ERD. The Project also focused on bringing the whole ERD team together through training, workshops, and peer learning initiatives and developed inter wing communication and networking. Thus, on the one hand, the Project could buy in the support of the senior management of the ERD and on the other, it could bring the junior officials on board through its capacity building initiatives. This led to the development of strong ownership of the Project by the ERD officials at all levels, which greatly helped creating a supportive environment for Project Implementation.
- iii) ***Horizontal Learning was Found to be an Effective Means of Capacity Development:*** One of the best practices of this project was the Inter-Wing Peer Learning (IWPL) initiatives, which could create a platform for the ERD officials to learn together and have a common understanding of each other's work. This helped the ERD officials to have a holistic idea about the functions and activities of the ERD and to engage in a concerted effort to achieve the mandate of the ERD. This kind of horizontal learning can be a sustainable tool for developing institutional capacity using the comprehensive approach to knowledge sharing.
- iv) ***Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), which Made the Project Attractive Among the ERD officials in General and the Young Officials in Particular:*** In response to the demand of the contemporary world, the project has extensively applied ICT wherever



possible, which increased its acceptance among the ERD officials. To create an enabling environment for evidence-based policy making, the project has provided technical support to the upgradation of the FAMS software for ensuring access to data and information by the ERD officials and for increasing the usage of the ERDPEDIA, all ERD officials were provided with unique ID and password. For capacity building, creation of an e-learning platform was underway when the study was being carried out. Creation of a web-based South-South Knowledge Hub for exploring the potential sources of resources and partnerships can be cited as another example of ICT application in the Project initiatives. Alongside gaining acceptance among the ERD officials, these initiatives of will also create a long-lasting impact on the capacity development of the institution.

- v) ***Dedicated and Efficient Project Leadership:*** Amid various uncertainties, the Project could proceed towards implementing its activities due to its competent and efficient leadership and a dedicated team. Through constant advocacy, regular follow up, the Project was able to gain support of the ERD officials for its various initiatives, which ultimately produced a congenial working environment for Project implementation.

### 7.1.2 What Did not Work

Factors that affected the project implementation were as follows:

***i) ProDoc was too Ambitious:*** Given the time and funds available, the activities of the Project listed in the ProDoc were too ambitious to be implemented. While designing the ProDoc realistic approach was not followed. There were a few actions that were initially assumed to be doable but later turned out to be quite challenging. Number of activities of Output 3 and 4 could not be accomplished for this reason.

***ii) Late approval of TAPP:*** Unusual delays in TAPP approval caused many complexities in the initiation of the Project. Although the ProDoc was signed in March 2021, TAPP was signed in December 2021. During this nine month delay in the TAPP approval, the Project could not get clearance from the ERD to initiate its activities. Even in its initial days, the Project had no NPD and DPD until the approval of TAPP. Thus, it didn't have anyone from ERD to lead, which was one of the reasons why initially the Project could not implement its activities as planned.

***iii) Frequent Priority Changes in Project Outputs with the Change of ERD Leadership Caused Uncertainty in Implementation:*** During its Project life the National Project Director (NPD) was changed thrice and the Secretary of the ERD was changed twice. With such frequent change of leadership, Project priorities also faced changes. ERD leadership frequently changed their priorities and influenced the Project to accommodate the change. As a result of which, the Project couldn't implement many of its initiatives and some initiatives were even dropped. Performance of Output 3 aiming for strengthening external resource mobilization strategy was severely affected due to this. The project had a plan for conducting a mapping of the potential sources of external resources, which couldn't be done due to the change of priority of the ERD leadership. Under the same Output, the Project had a plan to prepare an external resource mobilization strategy but at the implementation stage, the ERD preferred to conduct a study

on this issue instead of preparing a strategy. This was a huge change in output and this sort of change in activities caused uncertainties and delay in implementation. In addition to this, a number of planned studies under various Outputs could not be conducted and the planned Policy Expert Pool (PEP) could not be formed due to the same reason.

***iv) Lack of a Congenial Relationship between the ERD and the UNDP at the Initial Days of Project Initiation Caused Delays in Project Initiation:*** The initial starting of the K4DM Phase II Project was little difficult. Just after its inception the project had to suffer a lot of uncertainties and delays in initiating its activities. The reasons for this were many. In its initial days, the project had to suffer from the consequences of the lack of a congenial relationship between the leaderships of ERD and the UNDP. Initially, several activities and initiatives of the Project could not achieve the ERD ownership. Given this, the implementation of the Project proceeded very differently as it had to focus on improving the relationship between the ERD and the UNDP to get buy in of the ERD senior management.

***v) Lack of a clear understanding of the ERD officials about some Project Activity (SS&TrC) hampered project implementation:*** Officials appeared to have a lack of understanding and ownership about Output 4 aiming for strengthening the SS&TrC. As an issue, SS&TrC has many different aspects and dimensions. Some of its aspects are being dealt with by the Development Effectiveness (DE) Wing of the ERD, which caused some confusions among the ERD leadership about continuing it as a Project activity being implemented by the UN Wing. ERD officials also have a confusion about this issue as another project of UNDP called the Aspire to Innovate (a2i) has a component dealing with SS&TrC but its focus is different from that of the K4DM Project. Under the SS&TrC component, a2i focuses on sharing the best practices of innovation as a development solution while the K4DM Project considers it as a platform for external resource mobilization. Despite the fact that the K4DM Phase II Project maintained working relationship with these projects to avoid duplications but it appeared that the ERD leadership had a lack of clear understanding about the objective and focus of K4DM in this particular area, which caused nonachievement of a number of planned interventions under this initiative.

### **7.1.3 What other results that the project could produce?**

To have greater impact on the government, the Project could include the officials of other ministries of the government in its capacity building initiative.

## **7.2 Constraints and Challenges for Achieving the Project Objectives**

- i) Budgetary Constraints:** Shortage of funds was one of the prime challenges of the Project. A big chunk of the Project budget was unfunded and during evaluation also, situation remained almost the same. Many important initiatives didn't see the light due to a shortage of funds. Project initiatives of Output 4 including the creation of South South Pool Fund, organizing an experiential visit to the recently graduated countries can be cited as some specific examples which couldn't be attained due to a shortage of funds. There had been an uncertainty of funding due to the change in the international context. The Covid-19 Pandemic, the Ukrain

War- all had an impact on the shortage of project funds. Moreover, since the K4DM Phase II Project was a knowledge based strategic project, the outcome of which was mostly intangible. Hence, it was a challenge to convince donors for additional funds required to implement its activities.

- ii) **Time Constraints:** Due to the hiccups of the initial months of the Project initiation, the Project did not get its full life. Although the Project started on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2021 but its active life was started from April 2022 and the Project gained momentum in 2023 but it is now approaching to its closure scheduled for June 2024 after having extension. Thus, its real active life was shortened from 3 years to around 2 years. Accomplishing its desired goals within such a short time will be a challenge for the Project.

### **7.3 Measures to Address the Challenges**

To overcome the above-mentioned challenges, the Project team has gone beyond their way to create a friendly environment and understanding between the ERD senior management and the project team. To bring the systemic change, a lot of advocacies, follow ups and rapport building were done to create acceptance and ownership of the project at the ERD. In addition to this, the Project could manage a small fund from the Embassy of Switzerland, which would help achieve some of its objectives.