UNITED NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Midterm project Evaluation

Slovak Transformation Fund

(2021-2024)

FINAL REPORT

MARCH 2024

Report Author:

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Evaluation information		
Evaluation type (project/ outcome/thematic/country programme, etc.)	Project evaluation	
Final/midterm review/ other	Midterm review	
Period under evaluation	**Start**	**End**
	10 November 2021	31 December 2024
Countries of the evaluation intervention	Europe and Central Asia	
Commissioner of the evaluation	UNDP	
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Evaluation dates	**Start**	**Completion**
	18 September 2023	31 March 2024

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ALC	Agirre Lehendakaria Center
CEF	City Experiment Fund
CDO	Chief Digital Office
CO	Country Office
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
EQ	Evaluation Questions
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
FG	Focus group
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IRH	Istanbul Regional Hub
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
KII	Key informant interview
MTE	Midterm Evaluation
MYWP	Multi-Year Work Plan
M4EG	Mayors for Economic Growth
PRODOC	Project Document
POPP	Program and Operations Policies and Procedures
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
STF	Slovak Transformation Fund
TOC	Theory of change
TOR	Terms of Reference
TGFF	Transformative Governance and Finance Facility
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title:	Slovak Transformation Fund
Project number (Atlas ID):	00138836
Implementing Partner:	UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub's (IRH) Innovation team (Direct Implementation Modality)
Start date:	10 November 2021
Planned closing date:	31 December 2024
If revised, proposed op. closing date:	-
PAC meeting date:	19 October 2021
Countries:	Europe and Central Asia region including pilots in Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo[1], Montenegro and North Macedonia
Contributing Outcome:	SP Outcome 1: Structural transformation accelerated, particularly green, inclusive and digital transitions Indicative Output with gender marker: 1.7.2 Innovation capabilities built, and approaches adopted to expand policy options at global, regional, national and sub-national levels (SP Output E.2) / GEN 2
Midterm Review completion date:	31 March 2024
Other execution partners:	Startup Grind, ImpactAIM, Behavioural Insights team, UNDP Chief Digital Office, UNDP Crowdfunding Academy, Agirre Lehendakaria Center (ALC), Chora Design, Dark Matter Lab

Project Financing	*At signature*	*At project mid-term*
[1] UNDP contribution:	-	-
[2] Slovak Ministry of Finance:	USD 2,970,000[2]	USD 2,970,000
[3] Government:	-	-
PROJECT TOTAL COST [1+2+3]:	USD 2,970,000	USD 2,970,000

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[1] References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).
[2] In addition to the Contribution amount, the Donor paid a coordination levy in the amount of USD 29,700.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

i.   The Slovak Transformation Fund (STF) project aims to address the unprecedented challenges faced by governments and societies in the Europe and Central Asia region, particularly in urban areas, aggravated by factors like the COVID-19 pandemic. Spearheaded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, the project focuses on deploying innovative policy and financing solutions to foster transformative impact in the region.

ii. Implemented between November 2021 and December 2024 with a total budget of almost USD 3 million, the project consists of two main components: the BOOST Impact Acceleration Programme and the City Experiment Fund (CEF), supplemented by cross-cutting workstreams. The STF overarching goal is to facilitate system transformation through systemic approaches, co-creation processes, strengthening local ecosystems, and leveraging innovative financing. This overall objective will be achieved through four specific objectives:

- Accelerate development of innovative solutions in selected locations (i.e., city) or problem areas (i.e., COVID-19 recovery) to strengthen relevant innovation ecosystems and increase the role of women in that process.

- Design, implement and dynamically manage portfolios of interventions in 5 cities from the second cohort of the CEF and two cities from the third cohort (to be selected in Phase III of the project).

- Build capabilities for facilitating processes of portfolio design and management in the context of urban transformation, at the UNDP Country Office (CO) and city level.

- Identify, explore and test out innovative financial mechanisms that leverage diverse resources.

Methodology

iii. The evaluation was initiated halfway through its implementation period with the aim of providing insights for the remaining project duration and informing future phases or similar initiatives in the region. Structured around four standard evaluation criteria - relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability - the evaluation delved into specific factors and processes influencing performance. The criteria also addressed cross-cutting issues like ownership and gender equality, with project coherence being scrutinized under relevance and potential impact under sustainability.

iv. The evaluation employed a results-focused approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate project achievements against expected results. In addition to the Results Framework's indicators and targets,

a Theory of Change reconstructed during the evaluation was used as a reference point for assessing objectives and outcomes. Special attention was given to identifying implementation challenges and risks to ensure the project's sustainability.

v.   Guided by the ethical principles and professional standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group, the evaluation methodology involved desk reviews, analysis of secondary information, surveys, interviews with key stakeholders, and focus groups. This multi-faceted approach ensured a thorough triangulation of the information to generate credible evidence on the project's performance and impact, facilitating informed decision-making and learning for future initiatives.

Conclusions

Relevance and internal coherence

vi.   The STF project showcased its alignment with UNDP strategies and its successful response to beneficiary needs, with a particular focus on COs. Overall, stakeholders acknowledge the project's distinctive value and its significant impact, especially in promoting innovation and fostering comprehensive transformation within urban systems. Cities, as pivotal hubs of innovation, productivity, and opportunities, serve as melting pots for diverse individuals and cultures.

vii.   Consistent with its inherent nature, the project design did not include a comprehensive Theory of Change and the logical framework primarily centers around quantifying the volume of activities executed and products delivered. The project operated on the premise that, although system change can be guided by identifying emerging opportunities and establishing new positive feedback loops, the timing and specifics of the change are ultimately beyond the project's control.

viii.   Stakeholders highly valued the project's flexibility, enabling strategic seed funding in diverse areas. However, aligning the project's dynamic management with UNDP's policies and procedures posed a significant challenge, marked by difficulties arising from the complexities inherent in UNDP procurement and budgeting processes. In addressing these challenges, UNDP has devised a Policy on Portfolios aimed at enhancing flexibility and enabling dynamic management. The insights garnered from the CEF initiative have been instrumental in shaping this policy. However, despite these recent organizational adjustments, UNDP is still in the process of fully internalizing concepts associated with system change and integrating them seamlessly into its daily operations.

ix.   While the design lacked intentional efforts to forge strong linkages between BOOST and CEF, there were observable complementarities in certain cities and COs that were well-regarded by all stakeholders. Consequently, there were recommendations to enhance internal coherence between BOOST and CEF,

focusing on improving project aspects such as innovative financing, cross-cooperation, and learning opportunities.

Efficiency of implementation arrangement

x. Implemented under the leadership of the Innovation Team within the Istanbul Regional Hub (IRH), the project employs two distinct strategies: BOOST operates with a streamlined structure, whereas CEF is managed by five UNDP CO teams coordinated by the STF Project Manager. Both components involve the engagement of service providers. Opinions on the cost-effectiveness of organizational arrangements varied among stakeholders, with for example 56% perceiving the CEF arrangements as efficient overall, in contrast to 42% among CO respondents.

xi. The engagement of COs was not only a necessary starting point for piloting the CEF methodology, but it also enabled developing capacity across the organization. Notably, COs were identified as a primary target group and direct beneficiaries of CEF's initiatives. These COs, in turn, bear the responsibility of enhancing the capacities of diverse city partners through experiential learning. Nevertheless, stakeholders raised concerns about clarity in the governance structure of CEF portfolios, challenges associated with approval processes, time management, and the impact of staff turnover on regional oversight.

xii. The project leveraged UNDP's expertise to foster partnerships and encourage collaboration, successfully tackling systemic issues. Synergies were harnessed with other initiatives at both national and regional levels, tapping into diverse sources of expertise and finance.

To what extent has the STF contributed to empower female entrepreneurs in harnessing technology and business approaches to address gender inequalities and foster opportunities for women and girls?

xiii. The BOOST programme, designed to drive transformational change and systemic impact, particularly for women entrepreneurs and innovators, successfully created an environment fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing. The programme garnered a widespread response from the entire region. In general, participants provided positive feedback for the 12-week online acceleration programme, with more than 86% of organizations giving it the highest satisfaction score. However, there were mixed opinions regarding the time commitment, as some participants expressed concerns about the demanding nature of the programme.

xiv. BOOST made a substantial contribution by augmenting the capacities of participating women-led organizations and providing valuable resources and opportunities for some of them. There was evidence that this contributed to enhanced organizational growth, improved products, and strengthened alignment with the SDGs. However, for sustained impact, it is crucial to discern emerging trends across programme cohorts, necessitating stronger connections among participants and active follow-ups on implemented initiatives. The launch of the BOOST Alumni Network in January 2024, and the development of a global UNDP-led Impact Venture Acceleration Platform is an

indication that the STF is listening and responding to stakeholders expressed need for post-acceleration support and widespread engagement. Despite these efforts, stakeholders expressed the need for further enhancements to ensure widespread engagement.

To what extent has the STF supported cities to address complex urban challenges using the systems portfolio approach and induce urban transformation?

xv.   Acknowledging cities as pivotal hubs of innovation, CEF focused on designing, implementing, and managing city intervention portfolios. There was evidence of its contribution to enhance the capacities of key stakeholders, encompassing both COs and city partners, and to foster urban development. The utilization of systems thinking and the portfolio approach played a pivotal role, encouraging a strategic perspective and empowering local actors.

xvi.   Stakeholders conveyed overall satisfaction with several aspects of the programme. Overall satisfaction was demonstrated for example by the positive likelihood of recommending CEF to other cities. Nevertheless, with some room for improvement. For example, CO satisfaction varied in areas such as facilitator quality, clarity of materials, and the usefulness of applied frameworks and tools.

xvii.   Stakeholders largely agreed on the CEF's potential for achieving long-term impact. For example, COs expressed a positive outlook on the program's potential to catalyze transformation, with high ratings for delivering knowledge and initiating dialogues, and creating opportunities for co-learning. Nevertheless, COs also acknowledged areas for improvement, particularly in addressing learning needs and enhancing activities related to innovative financing mechanisms. Overall, it was suggested that further efforts would be needed to operationalize these aspects.

xviii. Several concrete changes and innovations were identified in participating cities, showcasing the impact of CEF on urban development. However, a significant number of stakeholders expressed disappointment in the perceived absence of tangible results. In relation to the positive outlook on the program's potential to catalyze urban transformation, as mentioned above, this suggests a recognition of the uniqueness of the concept but also a desire for more demonstrable impact at city/population level.

xix.   In general, there was a consensus that the current project duration allows for the identification of city challenges and the initiation of activities/experiments. However, it is deemed insufficient for assessing long-term transformations and instilling broader capabilities in the city system. Stakeholders proposed nuanced adjustments to specific CEF phases and an overall extension to address the complexities of urban transformation and ensure sustained progress.

xx.   The MTE did not find strong evidence of gender considerations being integrated into CEF. There was limited evidence of intentional efforts to identify gender inequalities and mainstream gender into most of the pilot initiatives. However, most stakeholders acknowledged that the planning and design of cities can disproportionately impact women. Designing cities that cater to the needs of women brings broader social, economic, and environmental benefits, fostering

safer, healthier, and more inclusive spaces not only for women but for entire households and communities. This integration is integral to achieving the SDGs.

To what extent has the STF contributed to develop new capabilities, innovations, partnerships, and practices that will contribute to the achievement and sustainability of the project's desired outcome and impact?

xxi.   The project proactively nurtured communication and socialization skills to foster partnerships, secure funding, engage stakeholders, and increase visibility within the cohort. Although the CEF received overall positive feedback for its impact and potential, stakeholders emphasized specific areas for improvement to bolster sustainability. For instance, while COs successfully accessed additional funding from traditional sources, the project was in its early stages of exploring innovative financing mechanisms.

xxii.   While there is evidence of the project contributing to a profound mindset transformation in key stakeholders, including COs and urban partners, the ultimate impact will depend directly on the quality and quantity of collaboration opportunities generated. Despite project efforts, the project management logic lacked the necessary systematization to operate at scale. According to an interviewee, COs and city teams are neglecting long-term scalability and sustainability in their designs. The absence of an innovative financing component from the outset leads to the creation of small-scale experiments that align with the initially available funding with limited outlook for scaling them. At the time of the evaluation, the innovative financing component was being prioritized for the remaining half of the project (a list of funding opportunities was developed per each CEF portfolio, focusing on innovative and transformative finance).

xxiii.   Concrete synergies between BOOST and CEF were observed, with examples like using the BOOST methodology to learn about and connect with entrepreneurship ecosystem players in Kosovo and in this way bring up the capability of future CEF partners, or ongoing knowledge transfer attempts about innovation challenges to CEF in Montenegro and North Macedonia. The recently launched BOOST Alumni Network and the global UNDP-led Impact Venture Accelerator Platform, which BOOST is a key partner of, has also pawed the way for new partnerships and collaboration in the region and beyond, including knowledge exchange and co-creation of post-acceleration activities with UNDP colleagues, external business support entities and BOOST alumni. Collaborative efforts led to partnerships extending beyond short-term objectives, involving external partners and scaling methodologies. Despite positive sentiments, stakeholders emphasized the need for a clearer strategy to actively pursue and enhance partnerships, leveraging gained knowledge and experiences. Calls for more support included suggestions such as organizing regular BOOST networking events, and allocating additional technical support to strengthen partnerships between municipalities and CSOs.

xxiv.   Regarding scalability of CEF pilot initiatives at the national level, opinions were diverse. Some believed there would be interest from national governments, seeing it as the way forward especially in highly centralized countries. On the

contrary, others argued that this approach could be a mistake, as engaging in policy dialogue might exhaust all resources in a relatively small-sized project and divert attention from the core objective of experimentation. It was suggested that COs should rather focus on establishing connections between CEF and other projects addressing multi-level governance.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Strengthen the integration of BOOST and CEF

xxv.   Intentionally link BOOST and CEF thematically and geographically. This linkage aims to target the same ecosystems, allowing one component's products to leverage the other through connections, partnerships, and enhanced visibility. For instance, integrating the BOOST program into city experimentation could attract more partners and ideas for urban innovation and transformation. Additionally, through BOOST, CEF pilots could connect with other UNDP Impact Venture Accelerators, potentially spotlighting a pipeline of innovations previously unseen by various investors and stakeholders.

Recommendation #2: Implement BOOST as a modular programme

xxvi.   Recognizing the diverse needs of organizations, it is recommended to develop a modular programme within BOOST. This approach would allow for tailored support and training, acknowledging that not all organizations benefit from the same resources and training methods. For this, it would be crucial to strengthen the verification process for needs and opportunities before participant selection. To address the challenge of predicting everyone's knowledge, implementing a questionnaire at the beginning could be useful. Furthermore, structuring the curriculum in sprints or modules with milestones and offering shorter, targeted sessions in specific areas of interest could enhance the overall learning experience. Explore opportunities for former graduates to act as mentors, sharing their experiences and growth journeys.

Recommendation #3: Formalize BOOST Alumni Network

xxvii.   There is a call for more coaching, mentoring sessions, and peer-to-peer learning discussions. Continued efforts should be directed towards identifying and connecting participants with experts and networks that can assist them in taking their innovations to the next level. During the remaining implementation period, formalizing and strengthening the BOOST Alumni Network, with regular networking events, thematic groups, and an online platform, would be effective for sustaining a supportive community though: (i) continuous identification of new opportunities for learning and funding (including the creation of an online repository of resources such as webinars and e-learning courses); (ii) additional technical and personal mentorship support post programme implementation; (iii) matching and connecting current and former participants with each other and with UNDP networks.

Recommendation #4: Strengthen technical support for COs

xxviii. To strengthen the project sustainability during the remaining implementation period, it would be necessary to equip COs to take initiatives forward without external assistance and enhance their relationships with local on-the-ground partners. This support could involve on-and-off technical support for COs. During the remaining implementation time, the project should consider developing such a plan and explore viable funding and implementing mechanisms.

Recommendation #5: Develop a portfolio financing framework

xxix. To facilitate the long-term scalability and sustainability of the initiatives and go beyond the design of small-scale experiments, it would be necessary to develop a portfolio financing framework as an integral part of the methodology piloted by CEF. This would allow to explore funding options early enough, including loans and profitability considerations.

Recommendation #6: Enhance learning from urban portfolios

xxx. To capture learning from the dynamic management of urban portfolios, it is suggested to establish a monitoring portfolio tool, embedding the developed learning questions on the portfolio activities, and create task forces for each area of the portfolio or methodology, during the remaining implementation period. This would allow to go beyond micro reflexive learning in engagement within the city portfolio to synthesizing higher-level insights and recommendations.

Recommendation #7: Scale up the initiatives

xxxi. Use the interest generated by successful experiments to transition from localized to scalable initiatives. This would involve developing not an urban portfolio for a specific city, but an urban portfolio for the CO from which multiple cities can benefit. Another opportunity is focusing on cross-cutting strategic innovation topics that emerge from multiple city portfolios. Consider adopting a cohort-based approach, including (i) extending the participation to other COs interested in addressing urban transformation challenges on common issues and (ii) engaging mayors for local leadership and ownership.

Recommendation #8: Mainstream gender equality

xxxii. Integrate gender equality as an integral part of the portfolio methodology from the beginning. This would involve integrating gender considerations into the life-cycle of portfolios aiming to create city structures that enable equal participation and opportunities for all gender groups (considering solutions such as conducting women's local needs analysis, producing a gender-responsive city action plan and pledge, establishing a task force for gender-responsive planning, appointing a champion, adopting mechanisms for gender-responsive procurement and project financing, advocating for policy reform, and ensuring diverse voices are heard in project shaping).

Lessons learned

xxxiii.   **Flexibility and dynamic management:** Despite some challenges to align the implementation with existing UNDP policies and procedures, the project's flexibility in seed funding and its dynamic management approach were highly valued by stakeholders. This adaptability not only met immediate project needs but also led the way for organizational changes, demonstrating the value of responsive and agile project management in achieving impactful results.

xxxiv.   **Integration and coherence:** Even without deliberate efforts to strengthen connections between its components, the project demonstrated synergies that stakeholders greatly valued, underscoring the potential benefits of more intentionally forged linkages. These observed complementarities not only underscored the benefits of integrated approaches but also highlighted the potential for enhancing project outcomes through the establishment of stronger, more intentional linkages.

xxxv.   **Long-term transformations:** The project significantly contributed to enhancing the capacities of participating women-led organizations, providing valuable resources and opportunities. Similarly, the project's approach to urban transformation was generally well-received. However, achieving tangible impact at local level and wider engagement were identified as areas needing further enhancement as key elements for ownership and sustainability.

xxxvi.   **Gender mainstreaming:** Not conducting a comprehensive gender analysis during the project design, led to insufficient efforts by CEF to identify and respond to specific women's needs. Gender considerations (including intersectionality) should be an integral part of any urban transformation efforts to effectively address the diverse needs of all stakeholders and enhance the project's inclusivity and impact.

1. INTRODUCTION

1. This document presents the main results of the Midterm Evaluation (MTE) of the project "Slovak Transformation Fund" (STF). The STF is implemented under a financing agreement signed in November 2021 between the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

2. The project has a budget of almost USD 3 million and is implemented by UNDP, under the leadership of the Innovation Team within the Istanbul Regional Hub (IRH). The STF is planned to be implemented between November 2021 and December 2024 (38 months) and it covers 18 countries and territories in Europe and Central Asia (ECA)[3] with specific focus on five countries (Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia) though pilots in five cities.

3. The MTE was commissioned by UNDP to assess the performance of the project (in terms of efficiency, coherence, relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability) as well as to document lessons learnt (including weaknesses and strengths in the design and implementation modalities), and to produce recommendations that will prompt adjustments that can accelerate the transformative impact of the STF. The results of the evaluation were shared with the Project Board, relevant UNDP COs and national stakeholders. See the Terms of Reference (TOR) that provided overall guidance to the MTE in Annex 1.

4. In line with the Independent Evaluation Office's (IEO) guidelines,[4] the MTE report is organized around the following sections:

   - Section 1 (this section).

   - Section 2 provides a description of the background, context, and the project response.

   - Section 3 sets out the evaluation scope and primary objectives.

   - Section 4 summarizes the adopted evaluation approach and methods.

   - Section 5 describes the procedures used to analyze the data collected to answer the evaluation questions.

   - Section 6 presents the findings based on the analysis of the data and evidence gathered by the evaluation.

   - Section 7 summarizes the main evaluation conclusions highlighting the strengths, weaknesses, and outcomes of the project.

   - Section 8 provides practical, actionable, and feasible recommendations addressing the sustainability of the project and providing specific advice for future similar projects.

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[3] Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

[4] For further details, visit: https://erc.undp.org/methods-center/guidelines

2.   PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1. Background and context

5.   Governments and societies in the ECA region face unprecedented challenges, including a highly volatile context, balancing between health and development gains, and a high level of uncertainty, while growth stagnated. These challenges are connected, and the effects are often felt in urban areas – which house the largest population or suffer from a systemic underinvestment. In cities, this is resulting in a decline in vibrancy and depressed economic opportunity. Studies also show that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound and disproportional impact on women and girls.

6.   This context required a break from business as usual in development and there is an increasing demand from governments from the region for long term solutions towards building back better. It was therefore crucial for UNDP to be able to (i) provide timely and cutting-edge policy advisory services and products; (ii) tap into energy, underutilized resources and ideas present in the ecosystems; and (iii) leverage innovative finance.

7.   Against this background, UNDP together with the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic established a partnership in 2015 to advance transformative impact on the countries and cities in the region by developing and implementing innovation in policy and financing across critical problem spaces.

8.   The STF project followed two phases of its predecessor, the Transformative Governance and Finance Facility (TGFF), that helped to advance transformative impact on countries (and cities) in the region by developing and implementing innovation in policy and financing across critical problem spaces.[5]

9.   The TGFF provided support to UNDP Country Offices (COs) to embed innovative methods in the design and delivery of programs, as well as to tap into innovative financing mechanisms. The first phase focused on small scale experimentation, including strengthened capabilities and expanded network of partners. The second phase focused on urban experimentation, including system transformation, enhanced use of data for policymaking, development of Ministry of Data, as an initiative aiming to create data-driven tools and supporting innovative solutions.

2.2. Project goal and strategy

10.   The STF project's overall objective is to provide a capability for system transformation by deploying systemic approaches, engaging in co-creation processes, strengthening local ecosystems, and leveraging innovative sources of financing. It consolidates the TGFF approach and focus, by implementing two

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[5] The first phase of the TGFF was implemented in 2015-2017 and the second phase in 2018-2020.

key components (complemented by several cross-cutting workstreams, including learning, finance and data innovation and governance):

- **BOOST Impact Acceleration Programme** with focus on accelerating the development of solutions and organizations that address selected challenges.

- **City Experiment Fund (CEF)** with focus on system transformation acceleration to induce urban transformation and explore innovative financing mechanisms.

11. The project implementation is structured into three main phases (see Figure 1), with a comprehensive description of the main activities and milestones for each phase detailed in the Project Document (PRODOC).[6]

Figure 1 – Project's main implementation phases

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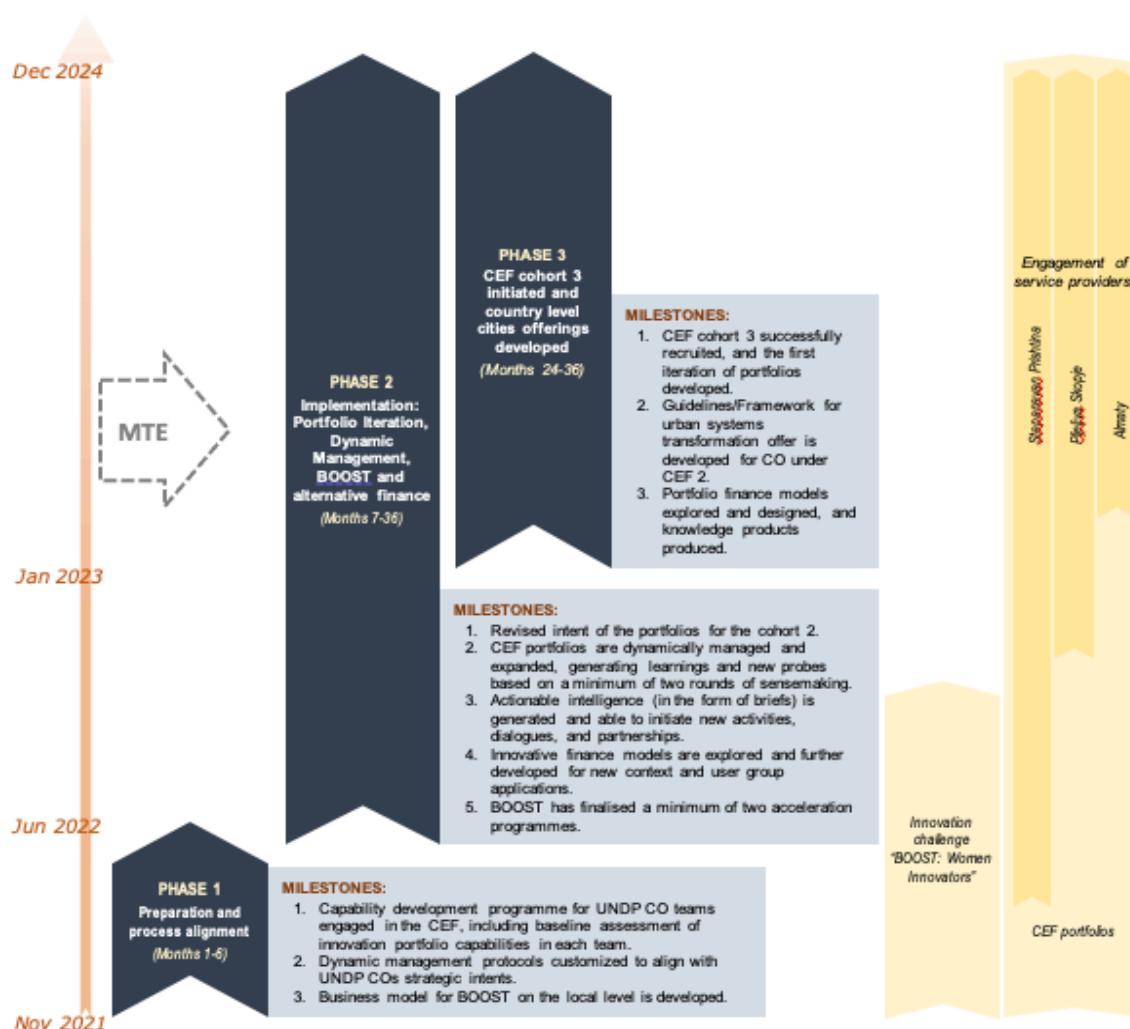
[6] The PRODOC was initially signed in October 2021 and amended twice; first in December 2022 to reflect a new innovation challenge to be launched on the BOOST accelerator programme and then in August 2023 to remove the previously added activity under BOOST and add five sub-activities under the CEF.

2.3. Results Framework

12. The project's Results Framework is organized around two main outputs (one for each of the key components mentioned above) and nine broad activities. It also details how to measure the achievements against six indicators, including baselines, targets, and data sources.

Table 1 – Results Framework

Output 1: Innovative stakeholders are identified and supported in the acceleration of their growth and solution design through BOOST acceleration programme		
Activities:		
1.1 Design and delivery of BOOST: Impact Accelerator 1.2 Expand partnerships and explore different business models to ensure sustainability of BOOST 1.3. Communication and visibility		
Indicators:	*Baseline*	*Target (final)*
1.1 Number of challenges completed under BOOST Impact Accelerator	*1*	*2*
1.2 Increased number of new partners identified in the challenges	*1*	*2*
1.3 Number of advocacy and outreach initiatives conducted (social media materials, videos, and other content) promoting the challenges and mainstreaming BOOST approach	*0*	- *2 challenge design/launch branding* - *12 blogs* - *6 videos* - *Final report design* - *30 SM posts (18 per challenge)*
Output 2: Accelerated urban system transformation is enabled through the deployment of portfolio approach at the city level & leverage of innovative financial models		
Activities:		
2.1. Making sense/collaborative workshops to generate insights from 5 portfolios in CEF (3 times in 12 months) and generation of insights to channel investments 2.2. Dynamic Management/Iteration of portfolios: designing new initiatives and deployment of social listening tools 2.3. Slovak Portfolio Fund: Supporting at least 15 projects in 5 cities 2.4 Support in the development of capability to apply portfolio approach/system thinking at the country level & generation of offers 2.5 Scoping, designing and prototyping financial models for system transformation 2.6. At least 2-3 innovative finance mechanisms are supported		
Indicators:	*Baseline*	*Target (final)*
2.1 Number of sense-making briefs produced	*0*	*28*
2.2 At least 15 projects/options in 5 cities are developed and activated	*0*	*15*
2.3 Number of alternative financing models developed	*3*	*2*

13. Nonetheless, the set of indicators primarily centers around quantifying the volume of activities executed and products delivered, which falls short of offering a comprehensive overview of the progress made towards the intended outcomes and impact. Although the set targets are generally achievable, both the targets and baselines lack the necessary granularity and practical utility. For instance, there is a lack of clarity regarding the specific types of new partners to

be identified in the challenges (indicator 1.2), and there is also no explanation about the three alternative financing models that were developed before the project's inception (indicator 2.3). There are inaccuracies apparent in indicator 2.3, where the baseline exceeds the intended target.

14. It is important to highlight that the STF project's design was grounded in the principles of system change, operating on the premise that, although we can guide the process by identifying emerging opportunities for change and establishing new (positive) feedback loops, the ultimate timing and nature of the change are beyond the project's control. This presents a notable misalignment with UNDP's internal procedures and daily operations, particularly in the realms of monitoring and evaluation. For example, the updated UNDP Evaluation Guidelines (2021),[7] calls for the early review of a proposed project, programme or intervention in order to ascertain whether its objectives are adequately defined and its results verifiable. It provides a checklist which to guide the evaluability assessment that includes questions such as: (i) does the subject of the evaluation have a clearly defined theory of change?; (ii) is there a well-defined results framework for the initiative?; (iii) are goals, outcome statements, outputs, inputs and activities clearly defined?; and (iv) are indicators SMART?[8]

15. At the same time, it should be noted that the current Strategic Plan of UNDP 2022-2025 (adopted before the project) adopts the 'portfolio approach' as one of important elements in overall improvement of UNDP operations and a way of delivering impact. "UNDP will look beyond sectoral challenges for opportunities for transformative change. It will continue to deliver projects, but will increasingly plan, align, and manage them as portfolios… A portfolio approach means understanding issues from a systems perspective, leveraging linkages across interventions to achieve broader goals. This requires a different risk appetite, prepared to explore innovative options." In line with the Strategic Plan, at the time of evaluation (December 2023), UNDP has adopted a dedicated policy that the key principles and requirements for the design, approval, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation of UNDP portfolios (grounded in systems thinking). In this sense, the STF acted 'ahead of the curve' and the experiences developed through five CEF CO portfolios went into informing the portfolio policy development.[9]

2.4. Theory of change

16. According to the PRODOC, the overall objective will be achieved through four specific objectives:

(1) Accelerate development of innovative solutions in selected locations (i.e., city) or problem areas (i.e., COVID-19 recovery) to strengthen relevant innovation ecosystems and increase the role of women in that process.
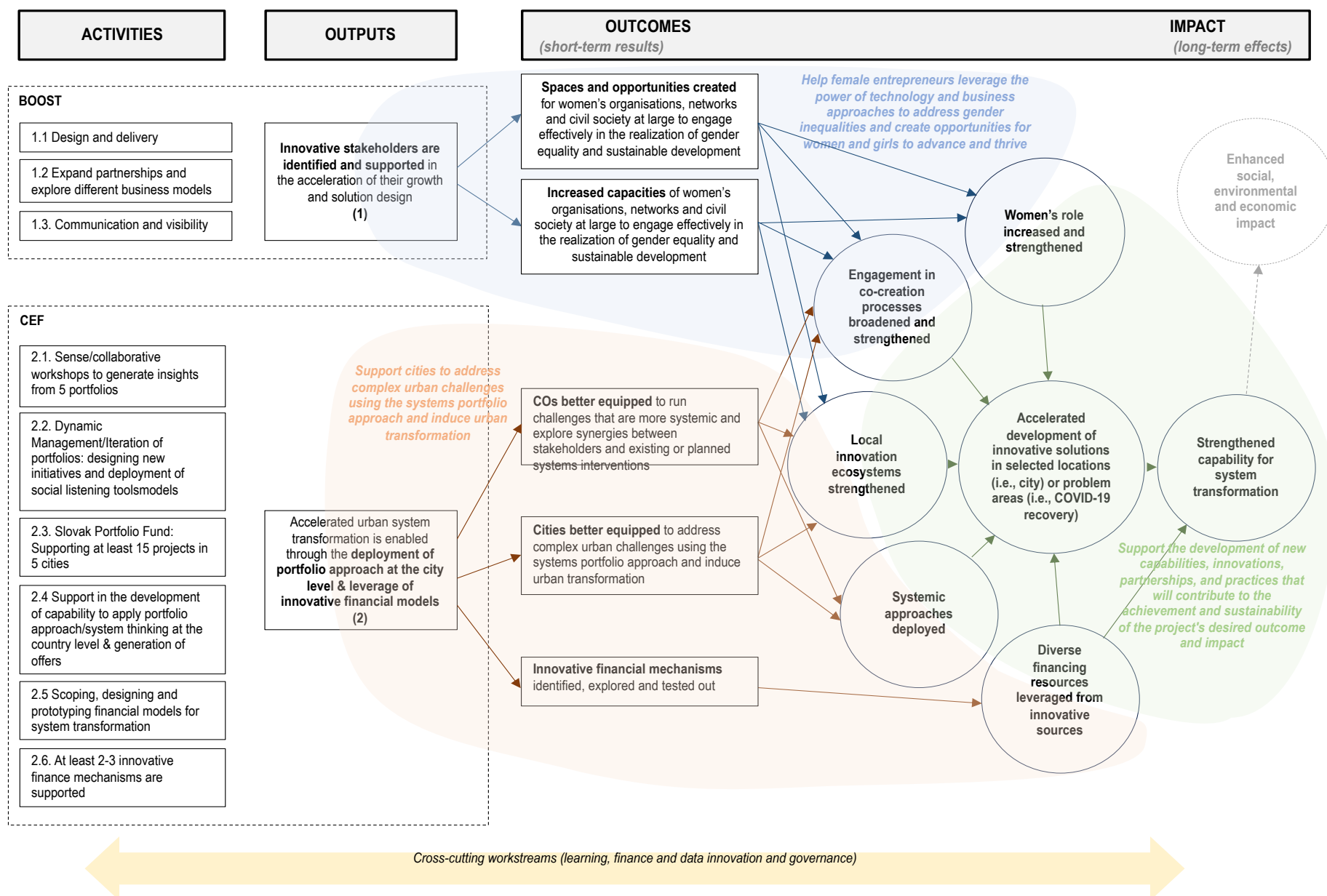
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[7] Available at: https://erc.undp.org/pdf/UNDP_Evaluation_Guidelines.pdf
[8] Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Relevant and Time-bound.
[9] The Strategic Plan is available at: https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-07/UNDP%20Strategic%20Plan%202022-2025.pdf

(2) Design, implement and dynamically manage portfolios of interventions in 5 cities from the second cohort of the CEF and two cities from the third cohort (to be selected in Phase III of the project).

(3) Build capabilities for facilitating processes of portfolio design and management in the context of urban transformation, at the CO and city level.

(4) Identify, explore and test out innovative financial mechanisms that leverage diverse resources.

17. The PRODOC did not include an explicit comprehensive Theory of change (TOC) and the four specific objectives are not particularly insightful or useful. In fact, they are not even reflected in the Results Framework that is organized around two outputs as described above (see Table 1). The PRODOC identified though some strategies and causal assumptions to underpin the impact pathway by which the outputs will lead to outcomes and primary impacts. On this basis, the MTE has reconstructed the TOC of the project to (i) provide a simple model to clarify what was intended to be achieved (and what has started to happen on the ground) and (ii) help focusing on the main impact pathway.

18. The graph below is an attempt to reconstruct the TOC depicted in the PRODOC as understood by the evaluator. It does not aim at reflecting the whole complexity but to provide an overview of the intervention pathways and the causal relationships leading towards the project's goal (refer to Figure 2).

19. Instead of being centered on the specific objectives outlined in the PRODOC, the reconstructed TOC is developed around the three more precise and focused areas of interest thoughtfully identified within the TOR for the MTE:

- Help female entrepreneurs leverage the power of technology and business approaches to address gender inequalities and create opportunities for women and girls to advance and thrive.

- Support cities to address complex urban challenges using the portfolio approach and induce urban transformation.

- Support the development of new capabilities, innovations, partnerships, and practices that will contribute to the achievement and sustainability of the project's desired outcome and impact.

20. The overarching goal is to enhance the capacity for transformative system change at various scales (i.e, niche, local, national, regional and global). The project operates on the premise that enhancing a system's ability to innovate is contingent on several key factors: (i) the development of functional capabilities, (ii) the expansion of engagement, (iii) the reinforcement of coordination and networking, and (iv) the mobilization of diverse financial resources. These are the focal points of the project's efforts across different tiers.

21. It can be argued that improving the capacity for innovation will ultimately yield significant social, environmental, and economic benefits. However, it is important to note that this assumption should be subject to validation through future research, which falls outside the scope of the current project.

Figure 2 – Reconstructed Theory of Change

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES *(short-term results)*	IMPACT *(long-term effects)*

BOOST

1.1 Design and delivery

1.2 Expand partnerships and explore different business models

1.3. Communication and visibility

Innovative stakeholders are identified and supported in the acceleration of their growth and solution design **(1)**

Spaces and opportunities created for women's organisations, networks and civil society at large to engage effectively in the realization of gender equality and sustainable development

Increased capacities of women's organisations, networks and civil society at large to engage effectively in the realization of gender equality and sustainable development

Help female entrepreneurs leverage the power of technology and business approaches to address gender inequalities and create opportunities for women and girls to advance and thrive

Women's role increased and strengthened

Engagement in co-creation processes broadened and strengthened

Enhanced social, environmental and economic impact

CEF

2.1. Sense/collaborative workshops to generate insights from 5 portfolios

2.2. Dynamic Management/Iteration of portfolios: designing new initiatives and deployment of social listening toolsmodels

2.3. Slovak Portfolio Fund: Supporting at least 15 projects in 5 cities

2.4 Support in the development of capability to apply portfolio approach/system thinking at the country level & generation of offers

2.5 Scoping, designing and prototyping financial models for system transformation

2.6. At least 2-3 innovative finance mechanisms are supported

Support cities to address complex urban challenges using the systems portfolio approach and induce urban transformation

Accelerated urban system transformation is enabled through the **deployment of portfolio approach at the city level & leverage of innovative financial models (2)**

COs better equipped to run challenges that are more systemic and explore synergies between stakeholders and existing or planned systems interventions

Cities better equipped to address complex urban challenges using the systems portfolio approach and induce urban transformation

Innovative financial mechanisms identified, explored and tested out

Local innovation ecosystems strengthened

Systemic approaches deployed

Accelerated development of innovative solutions in selected locations (i.e., city) or problem areas (i.e., COVID-19 recovery)

Diverse financing resources leveraged from innovative sources

Strengthened capability for system transformation

Support the development of new capabilities, innovations, partnerships, and practices that will contribute to the achievement and sustainability of the project's desired outcome and impact

Cross-cutting workstreams (learning, finance and data innovation and governance)

21

22. As previously noted, the above graph offers a simplified representation of the intervention, failing to capture its intricate complexity. For instance, it exclusively employs unidirectional lines to depict relationships, neglecting the presence of feedback loops and learning processes. To maintain graph simplicity, arrows are incorporated solely to depict the strongest and most apparent cause-and-effect relationships.

23. Furthermore, the flat visualization fails to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of project implementation and its diverse impacts, spanning across global, regional, national, and local levels. The rationale behind the overall TOC is to align the different levels and tiers, as it posits that the primary function of the regional mechanism lies in bolstering local initiatives, with the expectation that they will, in turn, enhance the broader national and regional adoption.

24. This holds especially true for the CEF, which accounts for most of the project's expenses, with nearly 85% of the total costs directly allocated to the outputs (see Table 7). For instance, the 2022 progress report emphasized how the activities provided an opportunity for CO teams, such as those in Kosovo and Armenia, to interact with one another and mutually benefit from their shared experiences. The project also incorporated several cross-cutting workstreams, encompassing areas like learning, finance, data innovation, and governance, which played a pivotal role in establishing connections across various levels and tiers.

25. Specifically, the CEF has provided a space for UNDP to explore its value proposition for cities and municipalities to induce urban systems transformation. The BOOST programme benefits from the partnerships forged and nurtured during the previous acceleration programmes in 2020 and 2021 with emphasis on creating scalable solutions and methods suitable for both national and regional/global programmes as well as identifying ways of engaging new types of funding and knowledge partners including corporates to ensure sustainability.

26. To address this complexity, the MTE has developed an additional graphical representation designed to encompass additional multifaceted layers of complexity within the intervention. Specifically, the expected effects that extend beyond specific impacts among targeted groups in various locations (cities, community organizations, and women entrepreneurs or groups) such as broader and sustained national and regional adoption (shown in Figure 3).

27. The TOC at regional level shows that the main pathway to improving system capacity to innovate [6] is through enhancing understanding about where and how the new business models, portfolio approach and system thinking work in different contexts [2] complemented by positive results [3] from piloting the CEF in five countries and new business models through BOOST [1]. An important assumption is that the project has the capability to engage in learning and synthesizing in each country [a], thereby contributing to informed and improved practices, thus enhancing the probability of positive outcomes [b]. The accrual of positive results fosters recognition and motivation.

28. Another assumption is that COs, as well as local, national, and regional partners, will embrace and employ portfolio approaches and system thinking [4] if the understanding and positive results are effectively communicated in a persuasive and targeted manner [c]. This, in turn, results in the proliferation of the portfolio

approach and system thinking in countries where these partners operate, extending beyond the original five, and in a broader adoption within these initial five countries [5]. The entire process is driven by reinforcing feedback loops; for example, an improved comprehension of how the BOOST and CEF function leads to enhanced practices, which, in turn, yield better results, ultimately resulting in wider adoption, thereby promoting an improved understanding and so forth.

Figure 3 – Reconstructed Theory of Change at regional level
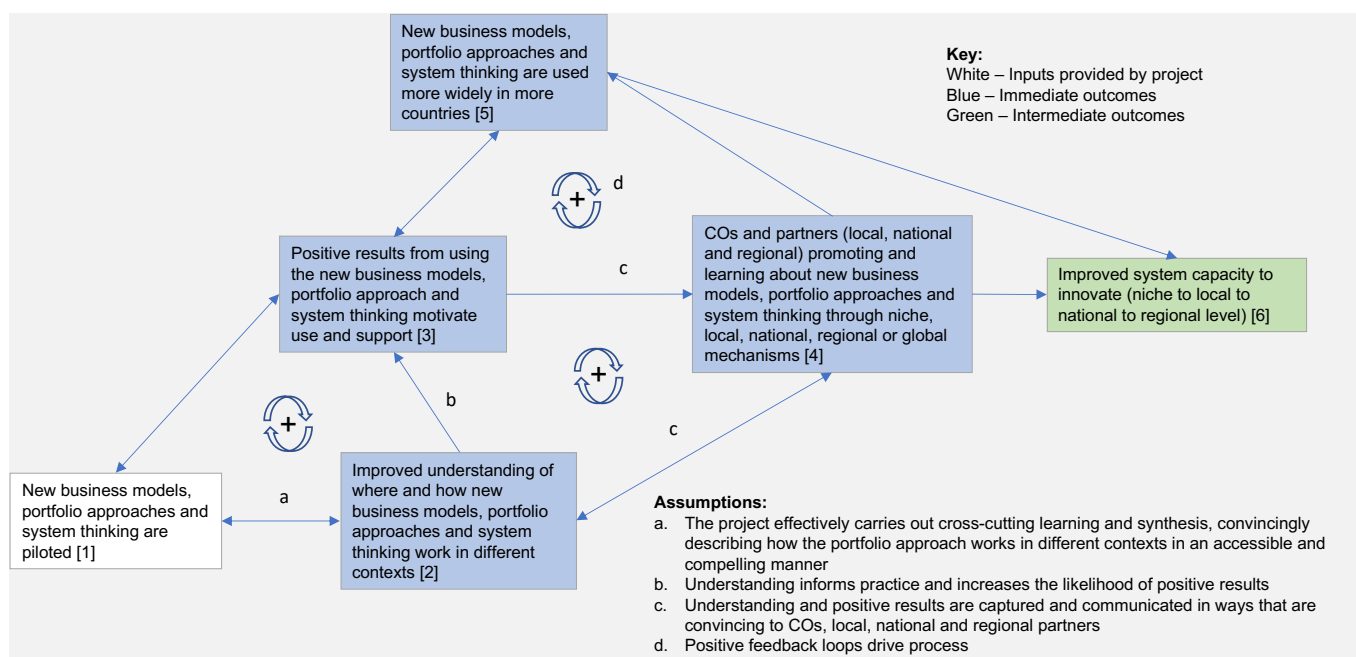
3.   EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

3.1. Evaluation scope

29.   The MTE was initiated approximately halfway through the implementation period. The aim was to inform the remaining implementation time (less than a year) and the design and implementation of a potential future phase or other similar projects in the region. It went beyond the assessment of "what" the project performance was through a deeper analysis of "why" the performance was as it was providing the basis for the recommendations and lessons useful.

3.2. Evaluation criteria

30.   The MTE was structured around four standard evaluation criteria, namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The project coherence was addressed under relevance, and the potential impact under sustainability. Each criterion delved into specific factors, processes affecting performance, and cross-cutting issues, where applicable, including aspects of ownership and gender equality. For further information regarding the key evaluation criteria, please refer to the table below and the evaluation matrix (see Annex 2).

Table 2 – MTE criteria

Criteria	Focus areas/issues
Relevance and Coherence	The MTE will assess the internal coherence of the project, the plausibility of the assumed causal paths towards impact and the relevance of the strategy to address the identified gaps. It will also analyze the alignment of the project design and Results Framework with UNDP's policies and strategies as well as with donors, partners, and global strategic priorities. The evaluation will assess to what extent other initiatives that addressed similar needs were considered either at design or during implementation.
Effectiveness	The MTE will explain the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its programmed outputs and meeting expected quality standards. It will report evidence of attribution, contribution or credible association between UNDP's intervention and the project outcomes. The assessments will include a review of the Logframe indicators against progress made towards the midterm-project targets but also to other proxis to gather any evidence of contribution to the intermediate results as per the reconstructed TOC.
Efficiency	The MTE will assess the management arrangements and work planning as well as the level of finance (and possible co-financing / leveraged resources). The evaluation will report on the rate of spend and financial reporting standards as well as the cost-effectiveness[10] and timeliness[11] of project execution. It will describe any adaptive management action carried out as well as any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximize results. It will also consider whether the project is being implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternative interventions or approaches. The quality and usefulness of the project implementation tracking system and project reporting will also be analyzed (whether the system was operational and facilitated the timely tracking of results and progress towards project milestones and targets throughout implementation.
Sustainability and Impact	The MTE will assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the endurance of benefits at the outcome level, including factors already embedded in the project design and contextual circumstances or conditions that have evolved during implementation. It will ascertain that the project put in place measures to mitigate risks to sustainability and validate whether the risks identified in the PRODOC were the most important and up to date (financial, socio-economic, institutional, and environmental). It will identify the realized and likelihood of impact.[12] Given the level and time of completion of the planned activities, the evaluation will focus on performance at the output and outcome levels, but observations about likelihood of impact will be provided.

3.3. Evaluation questions

31. The MTE findings were used to assess the effectiveness of the STF in the three areas identified in the TOR (see the reconstructed TOC in Figure 2) by responding to the following key Evaluation Questions (EQs):

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[10] Focusing on the translation of inputs into outputs, cost-effectiveness is the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its results at the lowest possible cost.

[11] Timeliness refers to whether planned activities were delivered according to expected timeframes as well as whether events were sequenced efficiently.

[12] Based on the articulation of longer-term effects as defined in the TOC, the evaluation will assess the likelihood of the intended, positive impacts becoming a reality. It will also consider the extent to which the project played a catalytic role or promoted longer-term scaling up and/or replication as well as the likelihood that the intervention led, or contributed, to unintended negative effects.

- (EQ1) To what extent has the STF contributed to empower female entrepreneurs in harnessing technology and business approaches to address gender inequalities and foster opportunities for women and girls?

- (EQ2) To what extent has the STF supported cities to address complex urban challenges using the portfolio approach and induce urban transformation?

- (EQ3) To what extent has the STF contributed to develop new capabilities, innovations, partnerships, and practices that will contribute to the achievement and sustainability of the project's desired outcome and impact?

4. EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODS

4.1. Approach and data sources

32. The MTE was underpinned by a results-focused approach and both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods to determine the project achievements against the expected results (outputs, outcomes, and impacts). In addition to the Results Framework's indicators and targets, the reconstructed TOC (see Section 2.4) was also used as the main reference to assess the achievement of the objectives and outcomes. Particular attention was given to identifying implementation challenges and risks to achieve the expected objectives and sustainability.

33. The work throughout the MTE was guided by and aligned with the UN Evaluation Group's (UNEG) ethical principles and professional standards.[13] This involved truthful and open communication with the project team, UNDP and relevant stakeholders concerning aspects of the evaluation, such as findings, procedures, limitations, or changes that may have occurred. Confidentiality was assured throughout the process.

34. The MTE methodology involved:

- Desk review of secondary information, including project documentation such as the PRODOC, services providers' reports, beneficiaries' reports, financial reports, work plans and other relevant written records.

- Analyzing additional quasi-primary data, such as the results of the surveys conducted by the project with BOOST's direct beneficiaries.

- Online survey involving COs, IRH, cities and service providers that participate in CEF's activities (targeting approximately 50 people).

- 16 one-to-one key informant interviews (KIIs) with COs, IRH, service providers, beneficiaries, donor institution, etc.

- Seven focus groups (FGs) with CO's Focal Points (1) and both CEF (2) and BOOST (4) beneficiaries.

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[13] For more information, see UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluators' available at: https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/summary/UNEG_Ethical_Guidelines_for_Evaluation_ 2020.pdf

Table 3 – Data collection tools and sources

PROJECT AREAS	TOOLS	SOURCES
SFT	KIIs (7)	Project team UNDP IRH Donor
BOOST	Project surveys	Participants in the activities
	KIIs (3)	Project team Service providers
	FG (1)	Grantees
	FG (1)	Participants in the activities that pitched but did not receive a grant
CEF	KIIs (6)	City of Almaty UNDP COs (introduction meetings with the Resident Representatives)
	Survey (1)	UNDP COs Service providers Urban partners/beneficiaries
	FG (1)	UNDP COs
	FGs (4)	Urban partners/beneficiaries involved in implementing the different portfolios in the cities of Skopje, Pljevlja, Stepanavan and Prishtina

35.   The MTE methods for data collection and analysis integrated gender considerations, ensured that data collected was disaggregated by sex and other relevant categories, and employed a diverse range of data sources to ensure inclusion of diverse stakeholders. Most of the participants in the KIIs, surveys and FGs were women and specific gender-related sub-questions were included in the evaluation matrix that provided guidance throughout the evaluation process, including in the elaboration of specific data gathering tools and analysis of information. The evaluation matrix also served as a useful tool for summarizing and visually presenting the evaluation design and methodology for discussions with stakeholders.

4.2. Desk review

36.   During the inception phase spanning from September to November 2023, the evaluator acquired comprehensive knowledge about the project. This entailed a desk review of pertinent documents, as detailed in Annex 3, and engaging in several meetings[14] and email exchanges with both the UNDP project and evaluation teams. Through these interactions, the evaluator not only grasped the project's contextual intricacies but also gauged the implementation status. The result of these efforts was reflected in the formulation of the evaluation approach and methodology outlined in the inception report.

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[14] Online meetings were held on September 18 and November 16, with the participation of Louise Skärvall (UNDP), Ievgen Kylymnyk (UNDP), Rayza Oblitas (UNDP), Merve Yalsiz (UNDP) and Raul Guerrero (Evaluator). The Evaluator also attended the Project Board meeting held on October 10.

4.3. Sample and sampling frame

37. The MTE gathered (i) primary information through an online survey and qualitative interviews as well as (ii) quasi-primary information through the analysis of the results of the surveys conducted by the project with BOOST's direct beneficiaries. In view of the scope, timeline, and remote nature of the MTE, it was not possible to reach all stakeholders. Therefore, the evaluation adopted a mix of purposive and convenience sampling strategies.

38. The list of key informants was finalized with the help of the project team (both IRH and COs), considering their level of involvement/participation in project design, implementation and benefits received, also depending on their availability. Convenience sampling, including the purposive selection of key informants (on the basis of their knowledge or experience), was seen as the most valid and useful approach as it ensured that the MTE captured insights from those with the most relevant and critical information.[15] Furthermore, it would have been challenging to employ more complex sampling methods (e.g. random sampling) as the number of potential key informants was limited in the context of the project.

Quasi-primary information

39. To understand the perspectives of the BOOST's target clientele/agents of change, the MTE analyzed the surveys and assessments conducted by the project among the participants in the activities.

Table 4 – BOOST surveys and assessments

Year	Survey
2022	Boost needs assessment survey responses
2022	Boost session Insights 2022 acceleration programme
2022	Boost graduation survey responses
2022	Boost: Impact evaluation of Koc BOOST Impact Acceleration Programme
2022	Boost: Women Innovators Programme Report 2022
2023	Boost alumni survey
2023	Alumni survey report

40. While these surveys did not strictly qualify as primary data, their results provided a valuable snapshot of the project's impact and the perceptions of the beneficiaries or audience at a specific point in time. The alignment of the survey questions with the evaluation focus was crucial as the questions posed in the surveys mirror some of the key areas of interest for the MTE and they targeted the same audience (BOOST participants or direct beneficiaries). This allowed for a direct comparison and analysis of the outcomes against the evaluation criteria.

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[15] When the goal is to gather in-depth, qualitative information, convenience sampling of key informants allows for a more tailored and targeted approach. This is particularly useful to seek nuanced perspectives and detailed contextual information.

Moreover, the proximity of the data collection to the evaluation period enhanced its reliability and applicability to the current analysis. The short time elapsed since the surveys were conducted minimized the risk of significant changes in the project context or the characteristics of the target population. The fact that no further activities were undertaken post-survey ensures the validity of the responses and that the information gathered remained a direct reflection of the project's outcomes.

Online survey

41. The MTE conducted a survey among key participants involved in the activities carried out under the CEF component, specifically targeting the five COs, IRH, service providers and urban partners/beneficiaries responsible for executing the different portfolios. The survey was sent to approximately 50 individuals, half of them were beneficiaries or urban partners (see the full list of recipients in Annex 4).

42. The self-administered survey will be available online in English through KoboToolbox.[16] Crafted in accordance with the evaluation matrix outlined in Annex 2, the survey was designed for efficient completion within approximately 20-25 minutes, encompassing 30 questions. Specific questions on effectiveness, overall satisfaction and replicability were answered only by COs and beneficiaries (refer to Annex 5 for the draft questionnaire).

Key informant interviews (KIIs)

43. The survey was complemented with 16 semi-structured interviews carried out remotely with key informants, including the project team and representatives of IRH and COs (including introductory meetings with the five UNDP Resident Representatives), donor (Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic), service providers and Almaty Development Center (unlike the approach taken for other cities, a KII was conducted with a CEF beneficiary as a FG appeared inappropriate given the early stage of implementation). See Annex 6 for the list of interviews.

44. The KIIs allowed gathering relevant information on the project's governance and implementation mechanisms, progress towards results, financing commitments and cooperation with other stakeholders. The interviews also allowed to unearth the main constraints faced during implementation and ideas to improve future projects and strengthen sustainability.

45. The approximate one-hour duration interviews were structured around core content-related questions. Although guiding questions were employed to maintain consistency, the aim of the qualitative interviews was to capture participants' narratives of their experience, rather than gathering responses to predetermined survey-like questions.[17] See the evaluation matrix in Annex 2 for details on the focus areas, issues and questions that guided the interviews.

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[16] https://www.kobotoolbox.org

[17] The questions were used allowing sufficient flexibility to react to different perspectives, depths of knowledge and views amongst stakeholders. They were customized 'on the fly' as necessary by, for example, adding probes and prompts (taking care on the way they were formulated to avoid 'leading' participants such that they feel a particular answer is required). The insights obtained from initial interviews, supplemented by secondary information analysis was also used to shape subsequent interviews (measures were taken to ensure that any modifications during interviews did not compromise data analysis).

Focus groups (FGs)

46. The information was further triangulated in seven FGs with a total of over 30 participants, including (see Annex 7 for the list of participants):

   - One FG with BOOST grantees.

   - One FG with BOOST participants in the activities that pitched their project ideas but did not receive a grant.

   - One FG with the five UNDP COs engaged in piloting CEF (Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia).

   - Four FGs with different stakeholders engaged in implementing the CEF portfolios in Skopje, Pljevlja, Stepanavan and Prishtina (as mentioned above, a KII was conducted with a CEF beneficiary in Almaty).

47. The aim was to encourage recall and stimulate opinion elaboration though interactive discussions, providing a setting closer to everyday life compared to individual interviews (amplification, qualification, amendment, or contradiction of stated views). The sub-questions listed in the Evaluation Matrix were used to facilitate data production through participant interaction, guiding the order of questioning and the use of open-ended questions, prompts, and probes.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

5.1. Analysis procedures

48. The evaluation findings and judgements were based on sound evidence and analysis, induction and deduction inferences are almost always present. The analysis leading to evaluative judgements was clearly spelled out and most data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques like triangulations, validations, interpretations, and abstractions.

49. As described above, evidence from documents and interviews was validated and triangulated through different sources to identify similarities, contradictions, and patterns. Stakeholder's opinions and statements were logically interpreted, while analyzing data, keeping in view the specific perspectives of various respondents.

50. The MTE was guided by the principles of equity, justice, gender equality and respect for diversity. To the extent time, resources and available information allowed, cross-cutting issues were considered, analysed and assessed throughout the evaluation. In particular, the MTE considered whether gender aspects were mainstreamed in the design and during implementation.

5.2. Limitations

51. As mentioned above, the design of the STF project was firmly rooted in the principles of system change (see Section 2.2). This presented a significant challenge for the MTE, which must align with the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines and methods.[18]

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[18] For further details, visit: https://erc.undp.org/methods-center

52. The MTE methodology was envisaged to capture emerging change and minimize potential bias ensuring that information was triangulated by leveraging and validating inputs and data from different sources. Nevertheless, several constraints need to be acknowledged and considered as they could limit the generalizability of findings and conclusions.

53. For example, the lack of solid outcome and impact indicators somewhat limited a more robust contribution analysis (see Section 2.3). In addition, only a limited number of remote interviews were possible. These likely reduced the opportunities for collecting evidence of impact at local level. It is important to note that the aim was not to achieve a statistically representative sample but rather to capture the perspectives of a substantial number of stakeholders.

54. As the approach involves convenience sampling, the respondents may not necessarily constitute a comprehensive representation of the entire community of potential participants, users, beneficiaries, etc. Participants in the interviews were self-selected which may introduce a positive bias due to their interest and engagement in the project. No specific actions were deemed necessary to unearth the views of marginalized or potentially disadvantaged groups.

6. FINDINGS

6.1. Relevance and coherence

Alignment with UNDP policies and strategies

55. The important role UNDP should play in crisis prevention and resilience-building through wealth generation and distribution among societies is broadly recognized and often related to its work with the private sector and innovative approaches. In 2021, UNDP was for example encouraged to address COVID-19's socioeconomic impacts at country level through a human security lens.[19] Grounded in principles of gender equality and human rights, the UNDP Administrator also underscored the necessity for a holistic, whole-of-system approach to effectively navigate the multifaceted nature of concurrent crises.

56. Acknowledging the intricate nature of the challenges outlined in Section 2.1, the PRODOC emphasized UNDP's commitment to spearheading a comprehensive, resilience-focused socioeconomic response by addressing extreme poverty, inequality, and climate change through a strategic focus on governance, social protection, green economy, and digital disruption.

57. In this framework, the project is closely aligned with UNDP's Strategic Plan 2022-2025, which prioritizes aiding governments and communities in recovering from COVID-19 and advancing towards a more resilient future.[20] It does so by employing integrated development solutions driven by country priorities, with a specific aim at bringing about transformative change. The project places particular emphasis on the intersection between the Strategic Plan's enablers for maximizing development impact:

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[19] Executive Board of the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, Report of the first regular session 2021, 1 to 4 February 2021, New York.
[20] For further details, visit: https://strategicplan.undp.org/

- Digitalization: supporting countries to build inclusive, ethical, and sustainable digital societies.

- Strategic innovation: empowering governments and communities to enhance the performance of entire systems, making them adaptive and resilient.

- Development financing: partnering with governments and the private sector to align public and private capital flows with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and mobilize finance at scale.

Alignment with beneficiary needs

58. Thus far, the project has successfully reached all countries within the ECA region under the BOOST initiative, with a particular emphasis on five selected cities or countries as part of the CEF program. As depicted in the reconstructed TOC (see Section 2.4), there was a specific emphasis on promoting women's empowerment (mainly BOOST) and advancing gender equality but also on specific thematic topics of particular interest for the targeted cities (CEF). The table below provides insights into the primary beneficiaries of these activities and the key implementing partners involved.

59. As a direct result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the scope of the BOOST acceleration programme was adjusted to put extra emphasis on women innovators from Ukraine trying to set up and/or scale businesses outside of Ukraine.

Table 5 – Project´s coverage and main stakeholders

	Output 1: BOOST	Output 2: CEF
Geographical coverage	All ECA countries[21] and countries in Europe where Ukrainian refugees were based	- Almaty (Kazakhstan) - Pljeljva (Montenegro) - Prishtina (Kosovo) - Skopje (North Macedonia) - Stepanavan (Armenia)
Topics / Innovation areas	- Women and digital access and use - Women in the digital economy & STEM - Women in data	- Air Quality - Future-proof Work - Liveable City - Circularity & Biowaste - Urban Vibrancy
Target clientele / Agents of change	Women owned/led: - Startups - SMEs - Academic Institutions - CSOs	- Municipalities - Local NGOs - UNDP COs - Citizens - Academic institutions - Private sector
Implementing partners	- Startup Grind - ImpactAIM - Behavioural Insights Team - UNDP Chief Digital Office - UNDP Crowdfunding Academy	- Agirre Lehendakaria Center (ALC) - Chora Design - Dark Matter Lab

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[21] Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

60. The project aimed at being embedded and complementing existing initiatives at the country level, incorporating additional partnerships identified and established by COs (CEF) and collaborating with entities focusing on women empowerment (BOOST). In this framework, the project aligned effectively with the priorities and needs of the target audiences.

61. For instance, BOOST addressed the development challenges faced by women innovators and entrepreneurs in the ECA region looking to develop and scale high-impact products and solutions. Key issues included (i) the disparity in access to training and mentoring (e.g., women are four times less likely than men to possess advanced ICT skills) and (ii) the restricted availability of capital for scaling women-led or women-founded startups (only 2% of investment capital is allocated to women-led tech companies/startups in Europe). The results of the survey carried out at the end of the BOOST programme showed that the graduated organizations found it very relevant with 82% giving the maximum score (the average stood at 4.75 out of 5, and no respondent rated it lower than 3).

62. As per the BOOST-Tadamon Alumni Survey (2023),[22] UNDP continued to be a pillar of support for the surveyed organizations. The survey revealed needs related to additional funding (92%), establishing new external partnerships (86%), networking (78%), mentorship (57%), refining business models (57%) and increased visibility (41%). In general, the BOOST curricula modules and optional support topics deemed most relevant by the graduated organizations were mentorship and networking (86%), impact (82%), business acceleration and entrepreneurship (68%), tech and digital transformation (36%), crowdfunding (41%), behavioral insights (59%), BOOST Talks (23%), and pitch deck (4%).

63. Regarding CEF, over 88% of the respondents to the survey considered it was very responsive (53%) or responsive to the needs of the target cities (34%). In particular, eight out of 10 beneficiary urban partners (CSOs and government institutions believe that CEF is responsive, just one respondent from a government institution disagrees.

64. Similarly, over 81% of the respondents believed that the CEF's approach was comprehensive and complete, implementing activities that cover the essential topics and skills needed for inducing urban systems transformation. Less than 16% thought it was incomplete or very incomplete. However, opinions vary among stakeholders. While, 67% of the CO representatives held a positive opinion about CEF's approach and activities, 25% of the survey respondents considered the activities incomplete, reflecting the stage of project implementation (approximately midway as stated above).

65. Stakeholder feedback on the adequacy of the CEF's coverage of various areas and topics revealed diverse perspectives. Key points included:

- Portfolio financing: : stakeholders emphasized the need for a transformative approach to financing impact rather than just activities (see also Sections 2.3 and 2.4). Suggestions included allocating bigger funds to support portfolios and expanding the network of support.

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[22] For further details on Tadamon, visit: https://tadamon.community

- Sustainability focus: stakeholders expressed the importance of a greater focus on financing mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of portfolios. These involved considerations of governance, embedding portfolios in existing city structures, and exploring long-term sustainability aspects.

- Guidance on dynamic management: some stakeholders (mostly UNDP staff) believed there was a need for more guidance on engaging in dynamic management and learning mechanisms beyond traditional Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL). They emphasized the importance of an engagement model for stakeholders beyond UNDP.

- Capacity building: suggestions included more emphasis on reskilling, upskilling, and fundraising. Further training sessions on the portfolio approach for COs were also recommended (e.g., beyond the core teams).

- Cross-UN cooperation: stakeholders highlighted the importance of stronger cross-UN and internal UNDP cooperation, connecting various processes.

- Hybrid learning formats: concerns were raised about the difficulty faced by local counterparts in online formats. Recommendations included hybrid formats, localization, and language considerations for more effective learning.

- Strategic fundraising support: some stakeholders proposed that the CEF would benefit from stronger and more strategic support in securing additional funds for the portfolios or specific initiatives, especially in the realm of innovative financing. Strengthening these efforts was seen as crucial for enhancing the portfolio's financial stability and achieving goals effectively.

- Diverse project activities: stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the adequacy of areas and topics covered in the projects they dealt with, emphasizing the sustainability of options.

Internal coherence and plausibility

66. The MTE of the TGFF II highlighted the need to strengthen coherence between country and regional level results, as well as strengthen coherence in the focus of the project. In this sense, the responses of most stakeholders during the KIIs indicated that (i) the project design was clear and coherent and (ii) the activities were consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of planned objectives. Nevertheless, many also considered that the cohesion and internal coherence among the various elements within the project (CEF, BOOST and innovative finance) could be strengthened. Although implemented as one, the STF comprises two separate outputs with very few concrete synergies between BOOST and CEF identified to date (see Section 2.4). At time of evaluation, the Project team was in discussions on embedding BOOST innovation challenges in several CEF portfolios, given the portfolio stages.

67. In the FGs, BOOST participants affirmed that they had engaged in comparable programmes both prior to and following their involvement in BOOST. However, BOOST stood out for its regional focus and exclusive emphasis on women-led organizations. It also distinguished itself by integrating business strategies into CSOs and emphasizing impactful approaches for businesses. Stakeholder

opinions regarding the uniqueness of the support provided by the CEF revealed a range of perspectives. Positive responses highlighted the uniqueness of the (innovative) funding for exploration and experimentation. Stakeholders acknowledged UNDP as a reliable partner that recognizes the needs of municipalities, indicating that the CEF's uniqueness may lie in the credibility and understanding demonstrated by UNDP.

68. Some stakeholders expressed a lack of awareness of similar support available in the region, suggesting that the CEF may provide a unique form of assistance not widely known or replicated by other entities (at least in certain aspects). Although some acknowledged the existence of similar support in the region, they mostly refer to rather recent initiatives (e.g. EIT Climate KIC and Deep Demonstrations).[23] In general, it was believed that initiatives targeting strategic innovation often operate separately from municipalities and it was suggested that the CEF offered a more accessible and tailored form of support for COs and municipalities.

69. According to stakeholders, the main added value and plausibility of the CEF is related to the following aspects:

- Innovation and systems thinking: the CEF is recognized for its innovative approach and systems thinking, providing a dynamic management framework that allows for strategic support, leverage point identification, and tackling complex urban challenges from a systemic perspective.

- Cross-pollination and connectivity: stakeholders appreciate the CEF for connecting disparate elements in the urban system, fostering cross-pollination, and creating a platform for emergent solutions that may not have connected otherwise.

- Experiments in public sector innovation: the CEF is acknowledged for opening doors to creating and implementing experiments in public sector innovation within cities, allowing for adaptive experimentation and tailored support.

- Cohort learning: by funding multiple cities simultaneously, the CEF creates a cohort that facilitates mutual learning, knowledge exchange, and the sharing of experiences among participating cities.

- Portfolio approach and systems thinking methodologies: the incorporation of systems thinking and the portfolio approach in designing interventions with beneficiaries is seen as essential for sustainability, ownership, stakeholder engagement, and transformative partnerships.

- Agility and feedback consideration: stakeholders value the CEF's agility in considering feedback, allowing successful pilots to take shape and form

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[23] The first cohort of the EIT Climate-Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) started in September 2023. The EIT Climate-KIC working to accelerate the transition to a zero-carbon, climate-resilient society. EIT Climate-KIC's response to the climate emergency has been to focus our efforts on systems innovation, to generate options and pathways for radical transformations in whole countries, cities, regions, industries and value chains. Deep Demonstrations are large-scale projects implemented across different positions in systems of learning through which the 'systems innovation as a service' model is offered to Europe's most ambitious challenge owners. For further details, visit: https://www.climate-kic.org

while exposing colleagues and partners to various systems thinking methodologies.

- Inclusiveness: the main value of the CEF is noted as its inclusiveness, providing an opportunity for different generations and communities to be involved in the program.

- Tailored support and adaptive experimentation: the CEF offers tailored support for cities to identify and tackle complex challenges through adaptive experimentation, providing valuable intelligence on strategic investment areas.

- Efficiency, innovation, adaptability: the CEF is recognized for its efficiency, innovation, and adaptability, offering an alternative approach to working with cities on development challenges.

- Holistic system transformation: stakeholders highlight the CEF's focus on system transformation rather than single-point interventions, contributing to a more integrated approach to urban transformation.

- Methodology and expert support: the CEF's methodology and excellent expert support are seen as crucial components of its added value.

- Learning through testing: the CEF is appreciated for creating a space for learning through testing new interventions without the requirement for immediate success.

- Inclusive community engagement: stakeholders emphasize the value of co-design and co-creation with citizens and communities, fostering inclusivity in the decision-making process.

- Capacity building: the CEF contributes to the development and creation of ideas while extending the capacity of municipalities and enhancing the knowledge and skills of employees.

- New opportunities and perspectives: the CEF is acknowledged for opening up new opportunities in a new field for cities, allowing them to learn new approaches and tools needed for understanding the local context from a different perspective.

- Agility and leverage of opportunities: the CEF is recognized for being agile and adept at leveraging momentum and opportunities in the urban transformation space.

6.2. Effectiveness

Spaces and opportunities created for women organizations

70. As part of Output 1, the innovation challenge "BOOST: Women Innovators" was conceptualized, and prepared (including recruitment and marketing materials) during December 2021. It finally involved two tracks in ECA and Türkiye. The ECA track was announced on UNDP's website in February 2022 with a deadline of March 1, 2022, which was later extended to March 15, to accommodate the

overwhelming interest expressed in the call.[24] A total of 223 applications from the 18 ECA countries were received (and nine from outside the region). The number of applications per country ranged from one (Turkmenistan) to 30 (Kyrgyzstan), including startups (34%), non-profits (26%), social enterprises (14%), SMEs (11%), academic institutions (5%) and others (8%).

71. Applications underwent screening against eligibility criteria, resulting in the advancement of 120 applicants to the long-listing phase. The long list was notably diverse, encompassing a wide array of organization types (all mentioned above). Only one country, Turkmenistan, was not represented in this stage. The proposals came from 17 countries, with varying representation - from one organization in Estonia, Montenegro, Slovakia, and Tajikistan to seven organizations from Ukraine. Ultimately, a total of 45 woman-led organizations were selected.

72. The 12-week acceleration programme was conducted fully online from May through July 2022 and consisted of a learning and capability development journey comprising five modules, including one elective, as well as boosters (e.g. Sensemaking, Boost talks, Mentorship and Peer-to-Peer learning):

- Impact Measurement and Management (implemented with support from UNDP's impact venture accelerator ImpactAIM)

- Business Development / Entrepreneurship (wide-ranging set of sessions delivered by Startup Grind)[25]

- Tech and Digital Transformation (originally designed by Digital Impact Alliance and made available by the UNDP Chief Digital Office, CDO)

- Behavioural Insights (implemented by the Behavioural Insights Team)

- Crowdfunding (designed and delivered as an optional module by UNDP's Crowdfunding Academy, part of the IRH Innovation team)

73. Through the five core modules and multiple boosters, the project provided 65+ hours of training sessions and workshops (by 20 facilitators and trainers), two Boost Talks and 100+ mentoring hours (by 20+ mentors). Through the full programme, the BOOST team (i) developed a replicable fit for purpose impact acceleration curricula for both for-profits and non-for-profits; (ii) created a supportive environment and business network for women innovators; and (iii) nurtured entrepreneurship mindsets to scale impact in the region.[26]

74. A total of 32 participants from 15 countries successfully completed the 12-week programme[27] and qualified to pitch their innovations. The Graduation Event took place online on the 26th of July 2022 and 26 organizations presented their pitches in front of the Evaluation Board. Based on the scoring of their final

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[24] The call was further announced as a challenge on the BOOST Website and communicated widely in social media and through targeted emailing. Together with partner networks, the campaign reached over 6 million people on social media and received 15 media hits across the region.

[25] KWORKS implemented this module under Track 2.

[26] BOOST contributed to UNDP's immediate support to Ukraine by reallocating funds to the BOOST impact acceleration programme to unlock additional support to organizations in Ukraine and Moldova. The reallocation of funds empowered female refugees in times of crisis and opened new avenues for innovation, entrepreneurship, and partnership creation.

[27] Another nine Turkish organizations graduated under Track 2.

pitches and the geographical impact, eight graduates were selected to receive USD 10,000 in grants each. They include startups (3), non-profits (2), social enterprises (2) and SMEs (1) from Albania (1),[28] Armenia (1), Kazakhstan (1), Kyrgyzstan (2), Slovakia (1)[29] and Ukraine (2).[30] During the FGs, some participants pointed out that this process lacked transparency (e.g., selection criteria).

Increased capacities of women-led organizations

75. Most stakeholders reckoned that BOOST helped female entrepreneurs to leverage the power of technology and business approaches to address gender inequalities and create opportunities for women and girls to advance and thrive. By doing so, the project contributed to (i) amplify the number, diversity, reach and impact of innovations in the region; (ii) boost innovators and a pool of international mentors and (iii) connect diverse actors of change and their networks to leverage and benefit from diverse capabilities, resources, and knowledge.

76. The satisfaction level among organizations that have graduated from the BOOST program is notably high, reflecting a robust endorsement of the program's effectiveness. Over 86% of these organizations awarded the maximum score for their overall satisfaction, resulting in an outstanding average score of 4.75 out of 5. It is noteworthy that no respondent rated their satisfaction lower than 3, underscoring the program's positive impact. In addition to overall satisfaction, participants provided valuable insights into the perceived benefits associated with BOOST's Acceleration program:

- All of them reported experiencing network development (59% to a great extent and 41% to some extent), substantial skills development (77% to a great extent and 23% to some extent), mentorship (72% to a great extent and 28% to some extent) and increased awareness and credibility (55% to a great extent and 45% to some extent).

- On the other hand, while 23% acknowledged access to potential investors/funders to a great extent, a majority of 73% reported such access to some extent and 4% reported not having access at all.

- 41% had gained access to peers and an alumni network to a great extent while 54% did it to some extent and 5% not at all.

- Finally, 32% reported improved market traction/scale up to a great extent following program participation, 54% to some extent and 14% not at all.

77. These results confirmed the multi-faceted impact of the BOOST Acceleration Program, showcasing its effectiveness in fostering not only organizational growth but also in providing valuable resources and opportunities for the participating entities.

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[28] Although founded by Albanian partners, the company was incorporated in the United States of America.

[29] With focus on refugees. The Evaluation Board decided to award Female Algorithm the BOOST grant with the condition that activities implemented with received funds should be directed to a Ukrainian target group.

[30] The selected organizations are Spica Technology, Safe YOU, Female Algorithm, ArrowStone OU, Kyrgyz Space Program, Weincrypto, ConsciESG and AppsMakers.

78. As part of Output 2, CEF has focused its efforts on designing, implementing, and dynamically managing five city intervention portfolios (the COs were selected through an open call for proposals). In 2022, all COs undertook baseline assessments, deep listening, sensemaking and/or co-creation and co-design activities. This allowed the respective teams to generate insights about their strategic intents and portfolio options, re-evaluate their relevance, and in some cases re-phrase the intent statements to better match the needs in the changed context. All the city portfolios identified new areas to diversify their portfolios and developed new interventions in these areas.

Table 6 – CEF intervention portfolios

UNDP CO	City	Portfolio objective *(Topic)*	Technical provider	
			Name	**Start date**
Armenia	Stepanavan	Create a vibrant and attractive place for people to live and work *(Urban Vibrancy)*	ALC	March 2022
Kazakhstan	Almaty	Tacking air pollution to improve quality of urban life, economic development, and wellbeing *(Air Quality)*	Dark Matter Lab	February 2023
Kosovo	Prishtina	Creating livable and sustainable neighborhoods & urban ecosystems through inclusive decision-making *(Liveable City)*	ALC	March 2022
Montenegro	Pljeljva	Promoting a green and just transition for inclusive renewal *(Future-proof Work)*	Chora Design	October 2022
North Macedonia	Skopje	Reduce municipal biowaste and move towards recycling and a circular economy *(Circularity & Biowaste)*	Chora Design	October 2022

79. All core teams within the CEF have dedicated themselves to improving their portfolio design capabilities through the implementation of various tools and techniques, including social listening, co-design, co-creation, sensemaking, intelligence generation, and dynamic management. These capabilities played a pivotal role in shaping and refining narratives and options within their respective portfolios. According to the CEF survey, both COs and service providers acknowledged that the program significantly contributed to enhancing participants' capacities to apply portfolio approaches (91%) and systems thinking (73%).

80. According to the feedback from the participating COs, on a scale of 1 (insignificantly) to 10 (significantly), the program's contribution to achieving their urban development objectives was rated at 6.5. The satisfaction level among COs regarding the support received in relation to sensemaking was rather high (75% satisfied or very satisfied and 12% dissatisfied) and significantly lower in relation to dynamic portfolio management (including sensemaking practice and generation of intelligence reports) (50% satisfied and 12% dissatisfied). These results suggest that while there was adequate support and capability for sensemaking, there may be limitations in fully grasping how to apply it effectively

for dynamic management, reflecting the stage at which most CEF portfolio were at time of evaluation – entering dynamic management phase.

Cities better equipped to address complex urban challenges

81. The FGs and the KIIs confirmed that the portfolio iteration for each city has provided increased knowledge on the complex challenges that the city is facing. The lower level of satisfaction with dynamic portfolio management may be explained by the fact that this practice was only recently introduced by the project to accommodate the implementation cycle of the portfolios. In fact, portfolio management is one of the main priority areas for CEF in 2024.

82. In this sense, the portfolio activities were designed to experiment with solutions and provide in-depth lessons and potential opportunities for scaling up. The dynamic management of portfolios through sensemaking, co-creation, and intelligence generation is aimed at capturing insights from activities, applying them in design iterations, and adapting to evolving contexts. All portfolios, except Prishtina,[31] are currently in the second phase of iteration, applying the lessons learned from the first phase. The iterated portfolios (cycle 2) included diversified options and areas of work and showcased the value of dynamic management, which should allow to adapt the portfolios according to the changes in the context but also while the understanding of challenges is improving.

83. Overall, COs expressed a very positive outlook, rating the program's potential to catalyze transformation as good or excellent in various aspects: delivering knowledge and insights (75%), creating opportunities for co-learning and sharing experiences (100%), initiating new dialogues (87%), and initiating new activities (100%). However, they pointed out a perceived limited impact on enhancing the ability to stimulate innovation (37%). This lower percentage may be attributed to the current status of implementation as well as the purpose of CEF and nature of innovation promoted.[32] The KIIs and FGs confirmed that CO teams were in the process of taking concrete steps to implement several identified options, including allocating a budget for their execution. These options are currently under consideration for further development as vehicles to scale portfolios.

84. Several concrete changes, innovations, and developments catalyzed by the CEF were underscored by stakeholders, encompassing:

- CEF led to the identification of bio waste as a new intervention area for Skopje. A joint initiative between UNDP, UNICEF and the Municipality of Skopje developed under CEF secured global funding and resulted in the establishment of the first bio-hacking lab in the sub-region.

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[31] In Kosovo, the CEF initially collaborated with the city of Prizren, but based on the CO advice, activities were ultimately focused more on Pristina (the capital) due to a more conducive environment in the municipality.
[32] It is important to note that the purpose of CEF was to stimulate strategic innovation according to UNDP's strategy, which is not about 'traditional' high-tech innovation. This is fully aligned with UNDP's strategic innovation approach and CEF is an early adopter and pioneering this approach, which is not widely known by stakeholders. The traditional innovation narrative doesn't fit well, as there are no top-down applied innovations in this programme, but rather a strategic innovation approach, which allows tailoring according to the city needs. So, the adoption of innovative solutions reflects the needs of each city system and cannot be forced if the stakeholders do not see the need for it. However, each portfolio has also introduced totally new interventions in their cities, which can be still considered innovation.

- Stepanavan municipality developed a 10-year vision and 5-year strategy based on community sensemaking and vision exercises facilitated by CEF. In addition, a Digital Learning and Youth Hub was established through a partnership between the municipality, the public library, and the Instepanavan Foundation. This hub introduces young individuals to remote learning and job opportunities. It serves as a collaborative space for various stakeholders within and outside the city to organize a range of learning and youth-oriented activities.

- With IRH's support, Kazakhstan CO was applying a portfolio approach in their country programming. In particular, the CO is working on a Regional Development Portfolio and is utilizing capabilities and machinery built by the CEF. This approach integrates priorities on building retrofit with street redesign, showcasing potential for integrated financing. In addition, CEF organized a system thinking and portfolio training session with 30 participants, including the Resident Representative, to learn what it means to apply systems thinking in a complex developmental challenges and practical examples from different COs including the Air Pollution portfolio from CEF Almaty.

- CEF supported the establishment of a Co-Creative Hub in Pljevlja, a mining city (42% of the municipality revenues), promoting youth engagement in finding innovative solutions for decarbonization, green development, and social engagement. The Hub provided an enabling environment for innovation through for example a youth-led Summer Engineering School of Science (included in the municipality budget). The project also sparked complementary initiatives such as (i) a valuable study to analyze the situation (social, economic, financial, infrastructure, etc.) for a just energy transition and (ii) investments in energy efficiency measures, benefiting households and municipal buildings. The portfolio in Pljevlja laid the groundwork for a wider process of national just transition roadmap development in Montenegro and engaged stakeholders widely through collective sensemaking

- CEF played a key role in kickstarting efforts to introduce bus prioritization in Prishtina, aiming to enhance transport efficiency. Despite the project being in its initial phase with a company selected to conduct a feasibility study (co-financed by the municipality), there were optimistic expectations to progress and secure funding for the implementation. In addition, CEF played a vital role in supporting municipal urban transformation projects, notably exemplified by the Block I Master Plan, which involved a collaborative co-design process with the community and set a precedent for future similar projects, emphasizing the importance of sustained leadership and continuity in urban transformation programs beyond limited project or political cycles. CEF successfully co-financed initiatives to co-create interventions, including transforming a concrete impermeable square and installing a green wall within a school, with the dual purpose of showcasing innovative approaches to increase green areas in unconventional spaces and mitigating air pollution.

Partnerships and innovative financial mechanisms

85. To reinforce the initiative, the project actively nurtured communication and socialization skills, which play a crucial role in establishing partnerships, securing funding, engaging stakeholders, and increasing visibility within the entire cohort.

86. According to the results of the BOOST-Tadamon Alumni Survey, 81% of the participants underscored the importance of funding, highlighting the pivotal role it plays in their growth and sustainability. Networking was a game-changer for 66% of organizations, opening doors to new collaborations, partnerships, and opportunities. Mentorship left a lasting impact on 69% of the organizations, providing them with guidance, expertise, and a roadmap for success. In addition, most BOOST participants valued receiving external recognition of their work, acknowledging that visibility is a catalyst for growth and impact.

87. The CEF survey revealed diverse perspectives on these aspects. Both COs and service providers viewed the program's potential to catalyze transformation through initiating new partnerships as good (64%) or excellent (27%). However, while service providers generally held a positive view, respondents from COs pointed out a perceived limited impact of the program on enhancing the ability to form strategic partnerships (50%).

88. In addition to the mentioned above, examples of the project's efforts to forging partnerships, securing funding, engaging stakeholders, and enhancing visibility across the entire cohort include:

   • Before the engagement of the service providers, the IRH team developed a portfolio pitching template. This template not only offers actionable insights but also provides guidance and tools for UNDP COs to craft compelling portfolio narratives. These narratives serve the dual purpose of attracting additional funding and promoting their work related to city-based portfolios.

   • A pitching training was organized for the cohort in May-June 2022 (also prior to the service provider onboarding) to improve their communication and socialization capabilities for partnerships, funding, stakeholder engagement and visibility. Several workshops were organized around four sessions, each focusing on different aspects of how to pitch and what to keep in mind while telling a strong story to the target audiences like Mayors, municipalities, development partner, community as well as UNDP colleagues. The sessions were a mix of hands-on tools to build their pitches and telling a portfolio story, live pitching sessions, target audience roleplays, followed with continuous Q&A and feedback to reflect on.

   • Through a partnership with ALC, Prishtina and Stepanavan were a part of the City Learning Circle (CLC), together with cities in Ukraine (through the Mayors for Economic Growth project, M4EG). CLC was a small, interactive group of practitioners from various UNDP COs and municipalities who connected virtually to share experiences, tools, ideas, and challenges to

learn ways to grow, expand, and improve their work via social listening and community engagement.[33]

- All the portfolios have organized several events on engaging stakeholders and partners through sensemaking, deep listening or co-creation sessions, which have built new partnerships and engagement models and contributed to building ecosystems for city transformations. These have included citizens and communities, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and academia, national and local governments, private sector, development organizations, international financial institutions, etc.

89. Some COs were able to leverage additional funding as a result of their engagement in CEF. For instance, (i) the portfolio work in Pristina is based on co-financing with the municipality which allocated USD 199,000; (ii) Montenegro CO mobilized USD 1,000,000 from the EU for an investment in energy efficiency by the Pljevlja Municipality as well as positioning UNDP as the key stakeholder in just transition on the national level; and (iii) municipality of Prizren (Kosovo) is in the process of allocating approximately USD 200,000 for the portfolio activities that were incepted with support of CEF.

90. Nevertheless, both the interviews and the survey results confirmed that the prevailing sentiment among stakeholders was that there were notable limitations in the activities aimed at exploring innovative financing mechanisms. Only half of the respondents deemed these activities as complete or very complete, while 25% perceived them as incomplete or very incomplete. Notably, 25% of CO representatives expressed a positive opinion, contrasting with 33% who held a negative view. The outcomes were even more unfavorable among beneficiary urban partners (government institutions), where less than one-third believed the activities to be complete, while two-thirds held a negative opinion.

91. The satisfaction level among CO staff regarding the support received in relation to innovative finance to date varied greatly across teams (ranging from one to four) but a significant proportion (37%) were unsatisfied with the support they had received and only 12% satisfied. Three quarters of them rated as just fair or poor the CEF potential to catalyze transformation through increasing access to innovative finance models.

92. In July 2023, the Project team engaged an Innovative Urban Financing Consultant to identify financing opportunities and develop bankable and fundable projects to diversify the city portfolios together with the portfolio teams. This work is meant to explore how to leverage a portfolio as a mechanism to attract additional funding and financing and align with requirements and conditions of funding programmes without jeopardizing the intent of the portfolios to induce lasting transformative change. At the time of the evaluation, all CEF country portfolios had been reviewed and a shortlist of potential financing options put forward for team consideration. As such, it is not surprising that both

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[33] The prototype tested two core elements:
- Can the structure and method of a multi-city, transnational CLC provide an effective way to engender peer-to-peer learning and stronger relationships between cities?
- How can the social listening tools created by ALC be improved and adapted to assist cities in Eastern Europe who want to learn these practices as part of a community engagement system that helps build a culture of trust and social innovation?

the interviews and the survey results captured the prevailing sentiment among stakeholders that there were notable limitations in the activities aimed at exploring innovative financing mechanisms.

6.3. Efficiency

Timeframe

93. The project is scheduled for implementation over a 38-month period spanning from November 2021 to December 2024. In general, BOOST participants found the training timeframe to be sufficient, yet they believed that additional time for networking, learning, and scaling would be beneficial. On the other hand, while a majority of stakeholders (53%) found the CEF program timeframe suitable for covering all pertinent topics and activities, a significant portion expressed that it was somewhat (34%) or too short (6%). Notably, the percentage characterizing it as right is particularly low among CO respondents, over 61% of them perceived it as somewhat (46%) or too short (15%).

94. The feedback on the project duration encompasses a range of perspectives, highlighting both positive aspects and concerns. The feedback underscored the need for a nuanced approach to project duration, with some stakeholders suggesting adjustments to specific CEF phases, such as portfolio design, while others advocated for an overall extension to accommodate the complexities of urban transformation and ensure sustained progress. For example, some stakeholders emphasized the need for a longer timeframe to support multiple iterations of portfolio building, financing case development, and scaled-up experiments. It was argued that such complex processes require more time for thorough evaluation and effective implementation (emphasizing that system transformation and profound change cannot occur within a three-year period).

95. Several stakeholders expressed the difficulty of designing and using the portfolio approach within the existing timeframe, particularly when considering the wide audience and the intricacies of implementation. Another recurring suggestion was the need to streamline the learning process and enhance the efficiency of portfolio development (with a focus on learning through action). In this sense, training individuals carries the risk of subsequent departures, and in a relatively brief period, the effective transfer of knowledge within the organization may be compromised. Additional concerns mentioned by stakeholders included, the time constraints imposed by UNDP procurement and budgeting procedures. Finally, it was broadly acknowledged that developing financial mechanisms required more time for proper structuring and implementation due to its complexity.

Use of resources

96. The STF is implemented under a financing agreement signed in November 2021 between the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic and UNDP for a total contribution of USD 2.97 million[34] (provided in three instalments between 2021 and 2023). The Multi-Year Work Plan (MYWP) offers a degree of implementation insight into the nine planned activities, encompassing elements such as (i)

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[34] In addition to the contribution amount, the donor also paid a coordination levy in the amount of USD 29,700.

annual resource allocation, (ii) the nature of activities or budgetary components (e.g., contracts, grants, salaries, workshops, digital tools, and technical assistance), and (iii) the responsible entity, with UNDP overseeing all of them.

97. The 2022 Progress Report included various notable budget reallocations. For example, there was a significant increase of 2.5 to 3 times in the budgets for Activities 1.1 (Design and delivery of BOOST: Impact Accelerator) and 2.1 (Making sense/collaborative workshops to generate insights from five portfolios in CEF and generation of insights to direct investments). The budget allocations for the COs were restructured under Activity 2.3, with the specific purpose of decentralizing the authority and entrusting budget decisions to the respective COs.

98. As shown in Table 7, over 90% of the overall budget was allocated for the execution of substantive activities directly associated with the two outputs, which encompasses team costs constituting approximately 12% of the total (a figure lower than the PRODOC forecast of 17%).

Table 7 – Project´s budget (in USD)

	MYWP (PRODOC 2021)				REVISED MYWP (Project Board Decision August 2023)				EXPENSES AND COMMITMENTS
	YEAR 1 (2021-2022)	YEAR 2 (2023)	YEAR 3 (2024)	TOTAL	YEAR 1 (2021-2022)	YEAR 2 (2023)	YEAR 3 (2024)	TOTAL	YEAR 1 (2021-2022)
Output 1	**209,700** [a]	**209,700** [a]	**129,700** [a]	**549,100** [a]	**327,771**	**177,279**	**136,518**	**641,569**	**383,993** [e]
Activity 1.1	85,000	85,000	5,000	175,000	239,052	73,354	41,852	354,258	
Activity 1.2	25,000	25,000	25,000	75,000	31,020	57,407	48,148	136,576	
Activity 1.3	40,000	40,000	-	80,000	57,699	46,518	46,518	150,734	
Output 2	**779,422** [d]	**779,422** [d]	**579,422** [d]	**2,138,266** [d]	**572,488**	**1,087,940**	**576,647**	**2,237,075**	**749,811** [f]
Activity 2.1	30,000	30,000	30,000	90,000	39,735	111,843	100,000	251,578	
Activity 2.2	270,808	270,808	270,808	812,424	244,848	213,995	206,670	665,514	
Activity 2.3	200,000	200,000	-	400,000	185,723	469,140	133,088	787,951	
Activity 2.4	72,814	72,814	72,814	218,442	93,060	203,888	79,295	376,244	
Activity 2.5	20,000	20,000	20,000	60,000	9,084	20,000	13,518	42,603	
Activity 2.6	80,000	80,000	80,000	240,000	37	69,074	44,074	113,185	
Subtotal	**989,122**	**989,122**	**709,122**	**2,687,366**	**900,259**	**1,265,220**	**713,164**	**2,878,644**	**750,195**

Evaluation	5,000	4,000	10,000	19,000	-	-	-	- [g]	
Direct implementation costs	14,453	14,453	14,453	43,360	-	-	-	- [h]	
Subtotal	**1,008,575**	**1,007,575**	**733,575**	**2,749,726**	**900,259**	**1,265,220**	**713,164**	**2,878,644**	
General Management Support	*80,686*	*80,606*	*58,686*	*219,978*	*72,023*	*101,217*	*57,053*	*230,294*	
TOTAL	**1,089,261**	**1,088,181**	**792,261**	**2,969,704**	**972,283**	**1,366,437**	**770,218**	***3,108,938***	

[a] The total figure comprises team costs of USD 58,000 per year, amounting to a sum of USD 174,000.

[d] The total figure comprises team costs of USD 105,800 per year, amounting to a sum of USD 317,400.

[e] The figure includes the estimated support (indirect) cost (USD 26,222) and commitments (USD 30,000).

[f] The figure includes the estimated support (indirect) cost (USD 45,802) and commitments (USD 13,521).

[g] The evaluation costs are included under Activities 2.2 and 2.4.

[h] The direct implementation costs are included under all activities and do not exceed the planned amount (USD 43,360).

Quality of outputs

99. On a scale ranging from 1 (bad) to 5 (good), respondents in the BOOST graduation survey rated the program structure, content sessions, teaching style, and mentorship meetings between 4.5 and 4.6.[35] The KIIs FGs confirmed that deliberate attempts were undertaken to tailor the content to the audience, such as featuring speakers from social enterprises. This approach significantly contributed to a heightened satisfaction level among participants regarding the quality of the speakers. Certain participants expressed dissatisfaction with the absence of a practical component in the programme, which could have facilitated the application of their acquired knowledge in their daily work.

100. Opinions were mixed regarding the time commitment required by the program, with an average score of 3.5 out of 5. During FG discussions, many participants emphasized that the program was quite demanding in terms of time commitment (up to three or four meetings per week according to participants). Some service providers and participants highlighted the need to split into groups depending on the participants familiarity with and interest in the tools. The training was only provided in English which was highlighted as a barrier for some participants. Most highlighted that the virtual program had advantages (e.g., accessibility) but also disadvantages (e.g., difficult to keep focused during a two-hour online session). Many complained about the lack of in-person sessions such as a regional final hackathon or conference but they also recognized the organizational hustle of it.

101. In assessing the satisfaction levels of COs with the support provided, a breakdown of key areas reveals insights into the participants' experiences. As a part of the project strategy, the team seeks to introduce new methods of development, which includes introduction of new capabilities and language that often are not available at the start of engagement. Most respondents (46%) expressed contentment with the quality of facilitators and trainers while 8% were dissatisfied. 38% found the clarity of materials and content to be satisfactory. However, 23% of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction, suggesting a need for enhancement in this area. Finally, 38% assessed the usefulness of applied frameworks, tools and resources as satisfactory while 8% were dissatisfied. One respondent emphasized the importance of initial collaboration between the core team and technical providers. This suggestion underscores the need to align practices to kick-start the collaboration effectively that had already been identified by IRH. Other shortcomings highlighted during the interviews were related to the lack of scaled outcomes/impact (see Section 6.4). While stakeholders' expectations often exceeded the project's scope in this area, this sentiment offers an insight for enhancing the project results in the potential next project phases.

102. STF employs a single service provider for each city throughout all stages, in contrast to the TGFF approach, which employed one provider per stage across all cities. This approach minimized disruptions between phases, a challenge experienced in previous projects. In addition, some stakeholders asserted that it is also valuable as it facilitates the testing of various implementation methods

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[35] For example, an overwhelming majority found the communication tools, including Email, SparkBlue, Slack, Zoom, Surveys-Airtable, and Surveys-Google, to be "great" and easy to use.

for the emerging methodology. Adapting the portfolio approach slightly in each CO was anticipated to enhance the collective knowledge base, fostering a process of co-learning with service providers.

Organizational arrangements

103. The project is implemented by IRH's Innovation team (Direct Implementation Modality) and overseen by a Project Board, chaired by the IRH's Manager and comprised of representatives of the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic and the COs in Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia. The mains tasks of the Project Board include:

- Provide overall leadership, guidance and direction in successful delivery of outputs and their contribution to outcomes under the programme.

- Be responsible for making strategic decisions by consensus, including the approval of project substantive revisions (i.e., changes in the project document).

- Approve annual work plans, annual reviews, and other reports as needed.

- Meet at least once a year (either in person or virtually) to review project implementation, management risks, and other relevant issues.

- Address any relevant project issues as raised by the Project Coordinator.

- Provide guidance on new project risks and agree on possible countermeasures and management actions to address specific risks.

Figure 4 – Project Organisation Structure
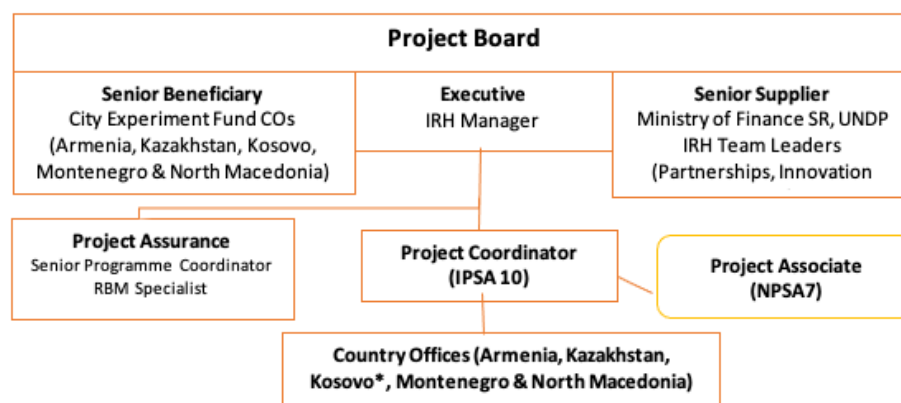
104. As previously indicated, the project is being executed by the Innovation team within IRH. More precisely, distinct implementation arrangements are employed to deliver each output:

- Output 1, BOOST, operates with a streamlined project structure composed of the STF Project Manager and an Accelerator Lead. During the implementation of BOOST: Women Innovators programme, a part time IC was added to the team (sponsored by Koç Holding) and a Ukrainian intern was recruited to support project implementation and grant management. Importantly, the project's methodologies and insights have been

disseminated and expanded upon through multiple partnerships supported by the STF team, not least BOOSTxKosovo Green Accelerator" (first and second editions) financed by the Embassy of Japan and with technical assistance and small grants from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and local banks to support SMEs working on green transformation and the Tadamon Acceleration Program for CSOs in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank (ISDB) and the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development (ISFD) (see Section 1.5). Output 2, CEF, is managed by five UNDP CO teams (i.e. Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia), each consisting of 2-3 team members, including one designated as the Project Coordinator (partly financed by the STF, first time for a regional project) and coordinated by the STF Project Manager from Regional level. The CEF initiative also benefits from the expertise of the IRH Innovation Team's Lead in areas such as learning, systems thinking, digital technology, and process and portfolio design. As shown in Table 4, three technical partners have been instrumental in supporting the implementation of the CEF.

- Furthermore, the project involved six interns to varying degrees throughout 2022 and 2023 and an Innovative Urban Financing Consultant in 2023.

105. Most stakeholders, including participants and grantees, were overall satisfied with the organizational arrangements. On the other hand, the CEF survey revealed mixed findings concerning the cost-effectiveness of the STF in achieving anticipated results. While most stakeholders assessed the organizational arrangements as efficient or very efficient (56%), this percentage decreases to 42% among CO respondents, with 17% of them rating it as inefficient.

106. The engagement of COs was not only a necessary starting point for piloting the methodology, but it also enabled developing capacity across the organization. Notably, COs were identified as a primary target group and direct beneficiaries of CEF's initiatives. These COs, in turn, bear the responsibility of enhancing the capacities of diverse city partners through experiential learning. Nevertheless, concerns were raised about the need for more clarity in the governance structure of the CEF portfolios, particularly regarding management and key decision-making. The question of final approval for proposed activities was highlighted. Issues related to the time for approval of activities and time management within implementation were identified as areas for improvement. Staff turnover was acknowledged as a challenge affecting continuity of regional oversight and management.

107. Stakeholders raised additional concerns regarding various logistics and administrative issues, offering insights on potential paths for enhancing the overall efficiency of the STF:

- The challenge of aligning dynamic management with UNDP's Program and Operations Policies and Procedures (POPP) was acknowledged, emphasizing the need for alignment (e.g., misalignment between UNDP's linear processes and the iterative nature of the CEF). Suggestions were

made to explore ways to harmonize these aspects, aligning UNDP processes with iterative development for improved compatibility[36].

- The complexity and challenges in UNDP procurement processes, particularly in hiring partners for portfolio components, were highlighted as significant barriers to timely progress. Furthermore, there was recognition that the portfolio approach may not align well with UNDP procurement guidelines. The impact of hiring providers on project timelines was recognized as a factor influencing project progress. A recommendation was also made to avoid breaks in funding, as it has been observed to impact procurements and support for cities negatively.

- Beyond initial discussions between CO portfolio teams and BOOST about the opportunity to launch joint innovation challenges, there was little evidence indicating complementarity between BOOST and CEF. A recommendation was made to introduce more overlapping areas or sessions where beneficiaries (startups, cities, etc.) can learn from each other, fostering collaboration and shared insights. These may encompass either output-specific activities or broader initiatives related to the project as a whole.

- During the KIIs and FGs, some stakeholders affirmed that the project management structure facilitated synergies within each component. Nevertheless, the need for better knowledge exchange and learning within the entire cohort (IRH and COs) was emphasized, urging a more collaborative approach, especially in areas like design, implementation, financing, and organizational aspects. Proposals also included increasing collaboration with NGOs and municipalities to enhance coordination within communities, recognizing that this might require additional budget allocations.

- Suggestions were made to enhance the CEF support by further focusing on tangible and pragmatic projects at local level, specifically targeting youth, women, and entrepreneurs.

108. Overall, stakeholders believed that there was scope for improvement in aligning the project's format with the effective delivery of support to meet learning and networking needs. Specifically, only 50% considered the support to COs as efficient or very efficient for learning and networking, with 17% deeming it inefficient. Similarly, only 25% found the support to cities efficient or very efficient, while 17% considered it inefficient. A knowledge product (City Snapshots), published on a regional level, elucidating the actions taken in each portfolio, stands as a commendable example of the project's efforts to foster learning. In addition, to publishing the knowledge products the Project regularly publishes programmatic blogs on a dedicated website.[37]

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[36] In line with the Strategic Plan, at the time of Evaluation (December 2023) UNDP has adopted a dedicated policy that the key principles and requirements for the design, approval, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation of UNDP portfolios (grounded in systems thinking). In this sense, the Slovak Transformation Fund acted 'ahead of the curve' and the experiences developed through five CEF CO portfolios went into informing the portfolio policy development.

[37] https://innovation.eurasia.undp.org/blog/

109. There was consensus that the project benefited from UNDP's capability to facilitate and foster partnerships, providing a platform for collaborative reflection and learning to address pressing issues like climate change. Through years of experimentation, UNDP has grown a network of partners in the ECA region that work on applying innovative processes, finance and technologies to development challenges.[38] This enables efficient and effective cooperation of COs with local authorities, local government associations and key local stakeholder across various sectors.

110. The KIIs and FGs confirmed that the flexibility offered by the project was one of the most appreciated aspects by stakeholders as it enabled to invest seed funding in strategic areas. The project has capitalized on synergies with other initiatives at both the national and regional levels to enhance cost-effectiveness, including building on the investments and partnerships to leverage diverse sources of finance to a certain extent (see also Sections 6.2 and 6.4 for further details).

6.4. Sustainability and impact

Help female entrepreneurs leverage the power of technology and business approaches to address gender inequalities and create opportunities for women and girls to advance and thrive.

111. BOOST was built to scout, support and scale innovations that could lead to transformational change and systemic impact at a global, regional or country level. It aimed at strengthening innovation ecosystems and enabling co-creation of innovative development solutions by applying systems thinking and bringing together actors from different parts of society. The STF contributed to these broader goals through the Women Innovators programme that, as highlighted in the final report, not only provided women innovators the opportunity to meet with and learn from various experts in the global entrepreneurship ecosystem but it also provided a platform where the participating organizations learnt from each other to a certain extent. The KIIs and FGs confirmed that BOOST created a safe and inspiring environment for women innovators to connect with peers, share knowledge and experiences, and get targeted advice from experts who recognize the challenges that women face in entrepreneurship and innovation, including gender discrimination. The sensemaking workshops, mentorship sessions, and the continued interaction and check-ins with participants allowed the BOOST team to identify interconnections between teams and facilitate networking and collaboration amongst these organizations. Some grantees confirmed that the programme allowed them to improve and re-focus their products for strengthened impact and better alignment with the SDGs.

112. However, stakeholders also concurred that for the attainment of a systemic and enduring impact, it is imperative to discern emerging trends within and across program cohorts. Additionally, testing and learning from innovators should play a pivotal role in informing policy-making and shaping UNDP's programming

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[38] Among others, these partners include Future of Cities SEE initiative & Clean, Healthy Cities ran by Climate KIC, CHORA Foundation, Dark Matter Lab, ALC, UCL Bartlett School of Architecture, Vinnova - Swedish Innovation Agency, Finnish Innovation Fund - SITRA, European Space Agency and German Aerospace Center.

strategies. To realize these objectives, it is crucial to (i) establish stronger connections among participants, including those from previous calls, and (ii) actively follow up on and learn from the initiatives that have been implemented.

113. The project team has been actively working to enhance these aspects. For example, upon completion of the programme, the graduates were offered to join the BOOST Alumni network, an informal network comprising all BOOST graduates, facilitated by IRH. In response to the identified need to provide support the innovators also post acceleration, UNDP officially launched the BOOST Alumni network in January 2024.[39] The network set out to expand professional growth opportunities to all BOOST and Tadamon graduates through networking events, mentorship, investment-ready trainings, etc. BOOST is also helping to shape UNDP's global Impact Venture Accelerator platform, where alumni will be featured and matched with impact investors.

114. In addition, graduates from the BOOST: Women Innovators programme were offered a streamlined application process to join Startup Grind's global members network, the regional STEM4ALL network led by UNDP and UNICEF, as well as UNDP's global initiative "Digital X", designed to find, match, and connect ready-to-scale digital solutions with the urgent needs of COs and governments in 170 countries. Despite these efforts, the prevailing sentiment among most stakeholders was that further enhancements are needed.

115. BOOST brought together organizations from different sectors of society and continuously adapted content to their needs. It proved to be relevant to all types of organizations, regardless of their level of maturity or sectoral focus. For example, 85% of the organizations had never undertaken impact measurement activities in the past. By participating in the programme, they built understanding on sustainable development and developed their organization's first impact models. A substantial number of stakeholders underscored the importance of BOOST and CEF targeting the same cities and innovation ecosystems to strengthen STF internal coherence and scale impact.

Support cities to address complex urban challenges using the portfolio approach and induce urban transformation.

116. The introduction of a portfolio approach through CEF contributed to encouraging (i) a strategic and diversified perspective to address complex challenges and (ii) a mindset change at the community and municipality levels, empowering local actors and creating an ecosystem of change. In this sense, 81% of the respondents to the survey believed that the CEF will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the urban transformation process in the target cities while 19% were uncertain.

117. There was agreement that CEF played a pivotal role in supporting tangible interventions co-designed and implemented on a small scale within the local context. The examples provided above showcase the diverse and impactful outcomes attributed to the CEF, ranging from local interventions and partnerships to strategic vision development and the establishment of innovative hubs (see Section 6.2). The emphasis on stakeholder engagement

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[39] https://boostimpact.org/undp-launches-boost-alumni-network-to-offer-post-acceleration-support-to-impact-ventures-and-non-profits/

and partnership building for community transformation was recognized as crucial. The evaluation further delved into stakeholders' perceptions regarding the impact and potential areas for improvement of the CEF:

- In response to the question of enabling the deployment/use of a portfolio approach in target cities, a significant majority (81%) either strongly agreed or agreed.

- The expectation for the CEF to accelerate target cities' transformation garnered support from 78% of respondents. Nevertheless, this percentage is significantly lower among COs (50%) and beneficiary urban partners (67%).

- Similarly, the ambition to scale urban system transformation and impact in the region received favorable responses from 75% of stakeholders. Nevertheless, only 50% of the CO respondents and 67% of the beneficiary urban partners (government institutions) thought the CEF will successfully scale urban system transformation and impact in the region.

- On the goal of reducing gender inequalities and fostering opportunities for women and girls, opinions were less unanimous, with 53% expressing agreement. The percentage is also lower among COs (62%) and beneficiary urban partners (50%). The KIIs and FGs confirmed that no intentional efforts were made to unearth the specific needs of women or vulnerable groups. Most agreed that there was room to intentionally mainstream gender into the pilot initiatives. In fact, without a gender-responsive approach to urban planning, cities often compound gender inequalities that restrict women's social and economic opportunities, health and wellbeing, sense of safety and security, and access to justice and equity.[40]

118. The likelihood of recommending the CEF to other cities was generally positive, with a mean score of 7.67 on a scale of 1 to 10. Despite there was some variability, the survey results indicated a relatively consistent positive sentiment that was confirmed during the KIIs and FGs.[41] Nevertheless, stakeholders expressed some concerns about the uncertainty of portfolio management practices continuing beyond the current programme due to:

- Relatively small budget that only allowed engaging a limited number of COs preventing a wider regional impact.

- As observed in some cases, overreliance on service providers to drive portfolio work that jeopardized ownership and capacity development within COs and among local partners (especially when the service providers are hired before building the local partnerships).[42]

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[40] See for example UNDP publication "Cities Alive: Designing cities that work for women" (2022) available at: https://www.undp.org/publications/cities-alive-designing-cities-work-women

[41] The median and mode were both 8.00 and the standard deviation was 1.83.

[42] It is important to clarify though that the service providers were engaged at various stages. Initially, the IRH team played a pivotal role in supporting and mentoring the COs teams and the situation evolved over time. For example, the CO Kosovo and Pristina portfolio currently depend entirely on IRH support, having been without a service provider or portfolio methodology partner for some time. This statement could reflect instances where the capacity of COs in portfolio methodologies was significantly lower than that of the service providers.

- Limited budget allocated for each city that only allowed engaging a reduced number of local stakeholders.

Support the development of new capabilities, innovations, partnerships, and practices that will contribute to the achievement and sustainability of the project's desired outcome and impact.

119. One of the few examples of concrete synergies between the main STF components was the adoption of the BOOST methodology at the CO level in Kosovo. The CO successfully funded and implemented two BOOST programs tailored to their specific needs. A participant (Space Syntax) in the acceleration programme became a partner in the implementation of CEF. Another example of synergies was the knowledge transfer to CEF. Different methods for achieving system transformation in a city were explored, with discussions in Montenegro and North Macedonia about applying the innovation challenge modality—a process for which BOOST has the necessary infrastructure. The project team affirmed its commitment to bringing these initiatives even closer in the coming year, fostering a meaningful connection between innovators who have benefited from BOOST and the challenges addressed by CEF innovations.

120. The KIIs and FGs confirmed that most stakeholders thought that the STF facilitated collaborative efforts that resulted in partnerships that were expected to extend beyond the programme's short-term objectives. The implementation of both BOOST and CEF involved collaborating with external partners in specific activities or scaling up the methodology, including (see also Section 6.2):

- An additional "Track 2 - BOOST: Women Innovators in Türkiye" was launched in collaboration with Koç Holding focusing on women-led startups in Türkiye. This involved funding a consultant within the BOOST project team and sharing best practices from their holding companies with the cohort (e.g., Arcelik as part of the BOOST Talks series).[43]

- The project also benefited from an extended collaboration with the STEM4All network (including the design of the innovation challenge, local pitch training support and post-acceleration networking opportunities) and UNDP's Crowdfunding Academy (ensuring more targeted trainings on fundraising beyond the grants provided by the STF, and opportunities for continuous and personalized feedback).

- In 2022 and 2023, the BOOST methodology and learnings were scaled through (i) cross-regional acceleration programme "Tadamon Accelerator" financed by IsDB under the NGO Empowerment for Poverty Reduction Project to support CSOs working in areas of crisis response;[44] and (ii) locally-run "BOOSTxKosovo Green Accelerator" (first and second editions) financed

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[43] In 2022, the Innovation Team launched the Urban Talks, an eight-part webinar series (with three bonus episodes) that spotlights cities and initiatives building new inclusive visions across Europe and Central Asia – and beyond. Through presentations, interviews, and panel discussions, the series showcased how cities were demonstrating resilience, reinventing their economies, transitioning to inclusive and smart cities, and building new partnerships. Urban Talks opened a space for exchanging insights and learnings and brought together a growing community of cities, practitioners and thinkers to approach urban challenges in a systematic way. This contributed to create a growing community of 300+ people – experts or interested in the field of urban transformation.

[44] In 2024, the BOOST methodology and learnings are planned to be further scaled through a second edition of the Tadamon Accelerator (supporting CSOs working in areas of food security).

by the Embassy of Japan and with technical assistance and small grants from EBRD and local banks to support SMEs working on green transformation. In addition, the STF team provided support to the COs in Cyprus and Tajikistan to design innovation challenges and capacity building programs, leveraging resources, tools, and best practices developed by BOOST. Two city-specific BOOST programmes are also being discussed with STF's peer program, M4EG for design and implementation in 2024.

- An expanded partnership with CDO allowed access to the BOOST participants to the online course "Digital Principles" and forged a new strategic partnership with the Digital X programmme designed for scaling innovations. As a result, proven innovative digital solutions accelerated through the BOOST programme were connected to UNDP COs and governments in 170 countries (two graduates have been successfully integrated into the database). Nevertheless, BOOST graduates confirmed during the KIIs and FGs that more should be done to strengthen networking.

- In 2020, UNDP signed an agreement with the European Commission to scale the work around the urban agenda (CEF) through the M4EG project, working directly with mayors in ECA countries. The two projects mutually reinforce one another, harness shared resources, and collaborate in building and sharing partnerships (see Section 6.2).

- A collaborative effort between UNDP and UNICEF harnessed the CEF initiative to support a biohacking lab in Skopje and subsequently applied for the Green Shark Innovation Challenge. Their proposal secured a grant of USD 250,000 and the lab has been institutionalized under the stewardship of local partners.

121. Despite these examples, the KIIs and FGs with COs confirmed that the project should have a clearer strategy to actively pursue, establish, and enhance partnerships, including concrete initiatives to capture and leverage the knowledge and experiences gained as integral components of the overall portfolio. The impact of the project in terms of financial models also saw a rather divided opinion. Only 60% of the CEF survey respondents considered that the project will leverage innovative financial models, a noteworthy 9% stated disagreement and 22% had a neutral opinion. Only 50% of the beneficiary urban partners (government institutions) and 12% of the COs thought that the CEF will leverage innovative financial models, which can be explained due to the current stage of the project in this area, as described above

122. Most stakeholders emphasized the need for more support and funding to ensure sustainability and maximize impact, various improvements were suggested such as:

- Organizing regular BOOST networking events, thematic alumni groups and establishing an alumni platform where alumni can meet, share experiences, and create meaningful connections. In this sense, findings from the BOOST graduate survey indicated that participants were ready and willing to actively engage in skills sharing with new participants, fostering a culture of continuous learning and growth (65%) and a strong desire to contribute to an upcoming iteration of the BOOST program (average rating of 4.75 out of

5, with a minimum score of 4 given by any respondent). This involvement may take various forms, including serving as a mentor, speaker, BOOST Talk guest, etc.

- Establishing shared portfolio governance structures between UNDP and cities to strengthen coordination and localize local goals against the SDGs.

- Allocating more in-field time and additional technical support to (i) strengthen partnerships between municipalities and civil society organizations and (ii) provide need-based coaching on "softer" aspects of portfolio management.

- Organizing regional sensemaking sessions (involving UNDP staff and possibly key decision makers from the cities).

- Strengthening the focus on building the resource mobilization capacities of cities (e.g., by involving thematic focus experts in innovative financing or embedding long-term capacity development processes for municipalities) to ultimately rise additional funding for activation of local options.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Relevance and internal coherence

123. The STF project showcased its alignment with UNDP strategies and its successful response to beneficiary needs, with a particular focus on COs. Overall, stakeholders acknowledge the project's distinctive value and its significant impact, especially in promoting innovation and fostering comprehensive transformation within urban systems. Cities, as pivotal hubs of innovation, productivity, and opportunities, serve as melting pots for diverse individuals and cultures.

124. Consistent with its inherent nature, the project design did not include a comprehensive TOC and the logical framework primarily centers around quantifying the volume of activities executed and products delivered. The project operated on the premise that, although system change can be guided by identifying emerging opportunities and establishing new positive feedback loops, the timing and specifics of the change are ultimately beyond the project's control.

125. Stakeholders highly valued the project's flexibility, enabling strategic seed funding in diverse areas. However, aligning the project's dynamic management with UNDP's policies and procedures posed a significant challenge, marked by difficulties arising from the complexities inherent in UNDP procurement and budgeting processes. In response to these challenges, UNDP has developed and is currently planning to implement a Policy on Portfolios to facilitate flexibility and dynamic management. The IRH Innovation team has played a key role in shaping this policy, drawing from the experience and insights gained from the CEF initiative. Despite these recent organizational changes, UNDP has yet to fully internalize concepts related to system change and seamlessly integrate them into day-to-day operations.

126. While the design lacked intentional efforts to forge strong linkages between BOOST and CEF, there were observable complementarities in certain cities and COs that were well-regarded by all stakeholders. Consequently, there were recommendations to enhance internal coherence between BOOST and CEF, focusing on improving aspects of the programme such as innovative financing, cross-cooperation, and learning opportunities.

Efficiency of implementation arrangement

127. Implemented by IRH's Innovation team, the project employs two distinct strategies: BOOST operates with a streamlined structure, whereas CEF is managed by five UNDP CO teams coordinated by the STF Project Manager. Both components involve the engagement of service providers. Opinions on the cost-effectiveness of organizational arrangements of CEF varied among stakeholders, with 56% perceiving it as efficient overall, in contrast to 42% among CO respondents.

128. The engagement of COs was not only a necessary starting point for piloting the CEF methodology, but it also enabled developing capacity across the organization. Notably, COs were identified as a primary target group and direct beneficiaries of CEF's initiatives. These COs, in turn, bear the responsibility of enhancing the capacities of diverse city partners through experiential learning. Nevertheless, stakeholders raised concerns about clarity in the governance structure of CEF portfolios, challenges associated with approval processes, time management, and the impact of staff turnover on regional oversight.

129. The project leveraged UNDP's expertise to foster partnerships and encourage collaboration, successfully tackling systemic issues. Synergies were harnessed with other initiatives at both national and regional levels, tapping into diverse sources of finance. While consensus suggested it was premature to assess the STF results and impact, the MTE provided valuable insights to address the three evaluation questions.

(EQ1) To what extent has the STF contributed to empower female entrepreneurs in harnessing technology and business approaches to address gender inequalities and foster opportunities for women and girls?

130. The BOOST program, designed to drive transformational change and systemic impact, particularly for women entrepreneurs and innovators, successfully created an environment fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing. The programme garnered a widespread response from the entire region. In general, participants provided positive feedback for the 12-week online acceleration programme, with more than 86% of organizations giving it the highest satisfaction score. However, there were mixed opinions regarding the time commitment, as some participants expressed concerns about the demanding nature of the programme.

131. BOOST made a substantial contribution by augmenting the capacities of participating women-led organizations and providing valuable resources and opportunities for some of them. There was evidence that this contributed to enhanced organizational growth, improved products, and strengthened alignment with the SDGs. However, for sustained impact, it is crucial to discern emerging trends across program cohorts, necessitating stronger connections among participants and active follow-ups on implemented initiatives. The launch

of the BOOST Alumni Network in January 2024, and the development of a global UNDP-led Impact Venture Acceleration Platform is an indication that the STF is listening and responding to stakeholders expressed need for post-acceleration support and widespread engagement. Despite these efforts, stakeholders expressed the need for further enhancements to ensure widespread engagement.

(EQ2) To what extent has the STF supported cities to address complex urban challenges using the systems portfolio approach and induce urban transformation?

132. Acknowledging cities as pivotal hubs of innovation, CEF focused on designing, implementing, and managing city intervention portfolios. There was evidence of its contribution to enhance the capacities of key stakeholders, encompassing both COs and city partners, and to foster urban development. The utilization of systems thinking and the portfolio approach played a pivotal role, encouraging a strategic perspective and empowering local actors.

133. Stakeholders conveyed overall satisfaction with several aspects of the programme. Overall satisfaction was demonstrated for example by the positive likelihood of recommending CEF to other cities. Nevertheless, with some room for improvement. For example, CO satisfaction varied in areas such as facilitator quality, clarity of materials, and the usefulness of applied frameworks and tools.

134. Stakeholders largely agreed on the CEF's potential for achieving long-term impact. For example, COs expressed a positive outlook on the program's potential to catalyze transformation, with high ratings for delivering knowledge and initiating dialogues, and creating opportunities for co-learning. Nevertheless, COs also acknowledged areas for improvement, particularly in addressing learning needs and enhancing activities related to innovative financing mechanisms. Overall, it was suggested that further efforts would be needed to operationalize these aspects.

135. Several concrete changes and innovations were identified in participating cities, showcasing the impact of CEF on urban development. However, a significant number of stakeholders expressed disappointment in the perceived absence of tangible results. This suggests a recognition of the uniqueness of the concept but also a desire for more demonstrable impact at city/population level.

136. In general, there was a consensus that the current project duration allows for the identification of city challenges and the initiation of activities/experiments. However, it is deemed insufficient for assessing long-term transformations and instilling broader capabilities in the city system. Stakeholders proposed nuanced adjustments to specific CEF phases and an overall extension to address the complexities of urban transformation and ensure sustained progress.

137. The MTE did not find strong evidence of gender considerations being integrated into CEF. There was limited evidence of intentional efforts to identify gender inequalities and mainstream gender into most of the pilot initiatives. However, most stakeholders acknowledged that the planning and design of cities can disproportionately impact women. Designing cities that cater to the needs of women brings broader social, economic, and environmental benefits, fostering safer, healthier, and more inclusive spaces not only for women but for entire households and communities. This integration is integral to achieving the SDGs.

(EQ3) To what extent has the STF contributed to develop new capabilities, innovations, partnerships, and practices that will contribute to the achievement and sustainability of the project's desired outcome and impact?

138. The project proactively nurtured communication and socialization skills to foster partnerships, secure funding, engage stakeholders, and increase visibility within the cohort. Although the CEF received overall positive feedback for its impact and potential, stakeholders emphasized specific areas for improvement to bolster sustainability. For instance, while COs successfully accessed additional funding, the project was in its early stages of exploring innovative financing mechanisms.

139. While there is evidence of the project contributing to a profound mindset transformation in key stakeholders, including COs and urban partners, the ultimate impact will depend directly on the quality and quantity of collaboration opportunities generated. Despite the project efforts, the management logic lacks the necessary systematization to operate at scale. According to an interviewee, COs and city teams are neglecting long-term scalability and sustainability in their designs. The absence of an innovative financing component from the outset leads to the creation of small-scale experiments aligning with the currently available funding from the existing grant. At the time of the MTE, the innovative financing component was being prioritized for the remaining half of the project, the logic applied is that the portfolios by the time of the middle of the project have actually tested small-scale experiments that are considered for scale up. As a part of the work of the Finance IC, a list of funding opportunities were developed per each CEF Portfolio, focusing on innovative and transformative finance.

140. As highlighted by a service provider, co-creation processes must combine various levels of intervention to have a systemic impact: community actions, small scale initiatives with a business model, large scale initiatives and public-private collaborations, public services redesign and regulation as well as consideration of power dynamics and political economy.[45] All the multi-level, co-created and narrative-connected actions, need to be interconnected.

141. In this sense, concrete synergies between BOOST and CEF were observed, with examples like using the BOOST methodology to learn about and connect with entrepreneurship ecosystem players in Kosovo and in this way bring up the capability of future CEF partners, or ongoing knowledge transfer attempts to CEF in Montenegro and North Macedonia. The recently launched BOOST Alumni Network and the global UNDP-led Impact Venture Accelerator Platform has also pawed the way for new partnerships and collaboration in the region and beyond, including knowledge exchange and co-creation of post-acceleration activities - with both UNDP colleagues, external business support entities and BOOST alumni. Collaborative efforts led to partnerships extending beyond short-term objectives, involving external partners and scaling methodologies. Despite positive sentiments, stakeholders emphasized the need for a clearer strategy to actively pursue and enhance partnerships, leveraging gained knowledge and experiences. Calls for more support and funding included suggestions such as

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[45] For further details, visit: https://medium.com/@undp.innovation/from-projects-to-systems-early-findings-from-our-work-on-social-innovation-platforms-in-asia-98f6592cc4bf

organizing regular BOOST networking events, establishing shared governance structures, and allocating additional technical support to strengthen partnerships between municipalities and CSOs.

142. Regarding scalability at the national level, opinions were diverse. Some believed there would be interest from national governments, seeing it as the way forward especially in highly centralized countries. On the contrary, others argued that this approach could be a mistake, as engaging in policy dialogue might exhaust all resources in a relatively small-sized project and divert attention from the core objective of experimentation. It was suggested that COs should rather focus on establishing connections between CEF and other projects addressing multi-level governance.

8.   RECOMMENDATIONS

143. Drawing upon the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are suggested for consideration **during the remaining implementation period and when planning a potential follow-up phase of the STF**.

Recommendation #1:	Strengthen the integration of BOOST and CEF
Description and specific actions:	Intentionally link BOOST and CEF thematically and geographically. This linkage aims to target the same ecosystems, allowing one component's products to leverage the other through connections, partnerships, and enhanced visibility. For instance, integrating the BOOST program into city experimentation could attract more partners and ideas for urban innovation and transformation. Additionally, through BOOST, CEF pilots could connect with other UNDP Impact Venture Accelerators, potentially spotlighting a pipeline of innovations previously unseen by various investors and stakeholders.
Cross-reference to findings:	Sections 2.4, 6.1 and 6.3

Recommendation #2:	Implement BOOST as a modular programme
Description/actions:	Recognizing the diverse needs of organizations, it is recommended to develop a modular programme within BOOST. This approach would allow for tailored support and training, acknowledging that not all organizations benefit from the same resources and training methods. For this, it would be crucial to strengthen the verification process for needs and opportunities before participant selection. To address the challenge of predicting everyone's knowledge, implementing a questionnaire at the beginning could be useful. Furthermore, structuring the curriculum in sprints or

	modules with milestones and offering shorter, targeted sessions in specific areas of interest could enhance the overall learning experience. Explore opportunities for former graduates to act as mentors, sharing their experiences and growth journeys.
Cross-reference to findings:	Section 6.3

Recommendation #3:	**Formalize BOOST Alumni Network**
Description/actions:	There is a call for more coaching, mentoring sessions, and peer-to-peer learning discussions. Continued efforts should be directed towards identifying and connecting participants with experts and networks that can assist them in taking their innovations to the next level. During the remaining implementation period, formalizing and strengthening the BOOST Alumni Network, with regular networking events, thematic groups, and an online platform, would be effective for sustaining a supportive community though: (i) continuous identification of new opportunities for learning and funding (including the creation of an online repository of resources such as webinars and e-learning courses); (ii) additional technical and personal mentorship support post programme implementation; (iii) matching and connecting current and former participants with each other and with UNDP networks.
Cross-reference to findings:	Sections 6.2 and 6.4

Recommendation #4:	**Strengthen technical support for COs**
Description/actions:	To strengthen the project sustainability during the remaining implementation period, it would be necessary to equip COs to take initiatives forward without external assistance and enhance their relationships with local on-the-ground partners. This support could involve on-and-off technical support for COs. During the remaining implementation time, the project should consider developing such a plan and explore viable funding and implementing mechanisms.
Cross-reference to findings:	Sections 6.2 and 6.4

Recommendation #5:	Develop a portfolio financing framework
Description/actions:	To facilitate the long-term scalability and sustainability of the initiatives and go beyond the design of small-scale experiments, it would be necessary to develop a portfolio financing framework as an integral part of the methodology piloted by CEF. This would allow to explore funding options early enough, including loans and profitability considerations.
Cross-reference to findings:	Sections 6.2 and 6.4

Recommendation #6:	Enhance learning from urban portfolios
Description/actions:	To capture learning from the dynamic management of urban portfolios, it is suggested to establish a monitoring portfolio tool, embedding the developed learning questions on the portfolio activities, and create task forces for each area of the portfolio or methodology, during the remaining implementation period. This would allow to go beyond micro reflexive learning in engagement within the city portfolio to synthesizing higher-level insights and recommendations.
Cross-reference to findings:	Sections 6.2 and 6.4

Recommendation #7:	Scaling up initiatives
Description/actions:	Use the interest generated by successful experiments to transition from localized to scalable initiatives. This would involve developing not an urban portfolio for an specific city, but an urban portfolio for the CO from which multiple cities can benefit. Another opportunity is focusing on cross-cutting strategic innovation topics that emerge from multiple city portfolios. Consider adopting a cohort-based approach, including (i) extending the participation to other COs interested in addressing urban transformation challenges on common issues and (ii) engaging mayors for local leadership and ownership.
Cross-reference to findings:	Sections 6.2 and 6.4

Recommendation #8:	Mainstream gender equality
Description/actions:	Integrate gender equality as an integral part of the portfolio methodology from the beginning. This would involve integrating gender considerations into the life-cycle of portfolios aiming to create city structures that enable equal participation and opportunities for all gender groups (considering solutions such as conducting women's local needs analysis, producing a gender-responsive city action plan and pledge, establishing a task force for gender-responsive planning, appointing a champion, adopting mechanisms for gender-responsive procurement and project financing, advocating for policy reform, and ensuring diverse voices are heard in project shaping).
Cross-reference to findings:	Sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.4

9. LESSONS LEARNED

144. Although the MTE was primarily aimed at identifying immediate improvements and crucial adjustments to ensure the success of the STF project, it simultaneously enabled the uncovering of essential knowledge. This knowledge, gleaned from the project's execution, holds relevance for similar future initiatives. Considering their significance to enhance organizational knowledge and inform long-term strategic planning, key insightful lessons are presented hereafter.

145. **Flexibility and dynamic management:** Despite some challenges to align the implementation with existing UNDP policies and procedures, the project's flexibility in seed funding and its dynamic management approach were highly valued by stakeholders. This adaptability not only met immediate project needs but also led the way for organizational changes, demonstrating the value of responsive and agile project management in achieving impactful results.

146. **Integration and coherence:** Even without deliberate efforts to strengthen connections between its components, the project demonstrated synergies that stakeholders greatly valued, underscoring the potential benefits of more intentionally forged linkages. These observed complementarities not only underscored the benefits of integrated approaches but also highlighted the potential for enhancing project outcomes through the establishment of stronger, more intentional linkages.

147. **Long-term transformations:** The project significantly contributed to enhancing the capacities of participating women-led organizations, providing valuable resources and opportunities. Similarly, the project's approach to urban transformation was generally well-received. However, achieving tangible impact at local level and wider engagement were identified as areas needing further enhancement as key elements for ownership and sustainability.

148. **Gender mainstreaming:** Not conducting a comprehensive gender analysis during the project design, led to insufficient efforts to identify and respond to women's needs. Gender considerations (including intersectionality) should be an integral part of any urban transformation efforts to effectively address the diverse needs of all stakeholders and enhance the project's inclusivity and impact.

ANNEX 1 – TERMS OF REFERENCE

ANNEX 1 – TERMS OF REFERENCE

ANNEX 2 – EVALUATION MATRIX

EVIDENCE SOUGHT Criteria / Sub-Questions	EVIDENCE SOURCES	EVIDENCE COLLECTION TOOLS
RELEVANCE AND COHERENCE *The MTE will assess the internal coherence of the project, the plausibility of the assumed causal paths towards impact and the relevance of the strategy to address the identified gaps. It will also analyze the alignment of the project design and Results Framework with UNDP's policies and strategies as well as with donors, partners, and global strategic priorities. The evaluation will assess to what extent other initiatives that addressed similar needs were considered either at design or during implementation.*		
Sub-questions		
- To what extend is the project aligned with UNDP's Strategic Plan, the SDGs, and priorities and needs of the target audience of output 1 and 2, respectively and the requirements of targeted women, men and vulnerable groups? To what extent do the project objectives remain valid? - To what extent is the project design clear and coherent? Are project activities consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of its objectives? How well do the various elements within the project exhibit cohesion and internal coherence? (CEF, BOOST & innovative finance) - To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project? What has been the focus of the project implementation so far? Who are the main beneficiaries? How were they selected? To what extent did UNDP adopt gender-sensitive and human rights-based approaches? - To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant projects considered in the design of the project and specific activities? - To what extent were different perspectives considered during project design processes? (e.g. of men and women who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the attainment of stated results) - Does the project undermine/duplicate or supplement the effects of any existing programmes in the region or target cities/countries?	- Project data and documents - Other relevant documents - UNDP (IRH, COs) - Implementing partners - Donor	- Document Review - KIIs - FG with COs

EVIDENCE SOUGHT Criteria / Sub-Questions	EVIDENCE SOURCES	EVIDENCE COLLECTION TOOLS
EFFECTIVENESS *The MTE will explain the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its programmed outputs and meeting expected quality standards. It will report evidence of attribution, contribution or credible association between UNDP's intervention and the project outcomes. The assessments will include a review of the Logframe indicators against progress made towards the midterm-project targets but also to other proxis to gather any evidence of contribution to the intermediate results as per the reconstructed TOC.*		
Sub-questions		
- Have the implemented activities contributed to the achievement of the planned outputs? - To what extent has the project addressed existing capability needs? Has the project responded to on demand requirements and generated added value for COs and partners? - Has the UNDP partnership strategy been appropriate and effective? Has the project deepened existing engagements at country and regional level? What factors contributed to or jeopardized its effectiveness? - In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements to date? Why and what have been the supporting factors? How can the project build on or expand these achievements? - In which areas does the project have the fewest achievements? What have been the constraining factors and why? How can the project overcome these? What, if any, alternative strategies would have been more effective in achieving the project objectives? - What new capabilities, innovations, partnerships, and financing opportunities have the BOOST programme and its methodology supported? To what extent has the project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women? Did any unintended effects emerge for women, men or vulnerable groups? - What new capabilities, innovations, partnerships, and practices have the CEF portfolios unlocked? To what extent has the project and the respective portfolios applied a gender lens? (e.g. unpacking challenges, understanding gender dynamics, inclusion of women and women perspectives in designing initiatives, and ensuring that designed initiatives address the distinct challenges that women face) - To what extent has the project allowed exploring the linkage between system transformation and finance? (including design and testing of new financial mechanisms) - To what extent are project management and implementation participatory, and is this participation of different types of actors (e.g. types and sizes of organizations, men, women, vulnerable groups, etc.) contributing towards achievement of the project objectives?	- Project data and documents - Other relevant documents - UNDP (IRH, COs) - Implementing partners - BOOST grantees and participants - Municipalities and other CEF partners and beneficiaries in Stepanavan, Almaty, Prishtina, Pljeljva, Skopje	- Document Review - KIIs - FGs - Survey

EVIDENCE SOUGHT Criteria / Sub-Questions	EVIDENCE SOURCES	EVIDENCE COLLECTION TOOLS
EFFICIENCY *The MTE will assess the management arrangements and work planning as well as the level of finance (including leveraged resources). It will report on the rate of spend and financial reporting standards as well as the cost-effectiveness[46] and timeliness[47] of project execution. It will describe any adaptive management action carried out as well as any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximize results. It will also consider whether the project is being implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternative approaches. The quality and usefulness of the project implementation tracking system and project reporting will also be analyzed (whether the system was operational and facilitated the timely tracking of results and progress towards project milestones and targets throughout implementation.*		
Sub-questions		
- How well do the available resources (time and financial resources) align with the project's design and requirements? Is the method of delivery selected by UNDP appropriate to the development context? - To what extent is the implementation strategy efficient and cost-effective? Are resources (funds, personnel, expertise, etc.) allocated strategically to achieve outcomes? To what extent are resources being used efficiently? (activities are cost-effective) - To what extent is the project management structure efficient in generating the expected results? - Is the project capitalizing on synergies with other initiatives at both the national and regional levels to enhance cost-effectiveness? Does the project offer flexibility enabling the IRH and COs to invest seed funding in strategic areas? (nature of the contribution, unearmarked funds) - To what extent has UNDP (both the IRH and COs) and other partners (municipalities, women-led organizations, etc.) built on the investments and partnerships to leverage diverse sources of finance? - To what extent are resources used to address inequalities in general, and gender issues in particular? - To what extent are appropriate M&E arrangements planned and satisfactorily implemented (fulfilling both accountability and learning requirements)? Is the log frame used as an effective management tool? - To what extent has the project established effective mechanisms for continuously exploring new and emerging trends, adapting based on acquired knowledge, and incorporating learning mechanisms within its portfolios? (Adaptiveness and learning)	- Project data and documents - Other relevant documents - UNDP (IRH, COs) - Implementing partners - Donor	- Document Review - KIIs - FG with COs - Survey

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[46] Focusing on the translation of inputs into outputs, cost-effectiveness is the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its results at the lowest possible cost.

[47] Timeliness refers to whether planned activities were delivered according to expected timeframes as well as whether events were sequenced efficiently.

EVIDENCE SOUGHT Criteria / Sub-Questions	EVIDENCE SOURCES	EVIDENCE COLLECTION TOOLS
SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT *The MTE will assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the endurance of benefits at the outcome level, including factors already embedded in the project design and contextual circumstances or conditions that have evolved during implementation. It will ascertain that the project put in place measures to mitigate risks to sustainability and validate whether the risks identified in the PRODOC were the most important and up to date (financial, socio-economic, institutional, and environmental). It will identify the realized and likelihood of impact.[48] Given the level and time of completion of the planned activities, the evaluation will focus on performance at the output and outcome levels, but observations about likelihood of impact will be provided.*		
Sub-questions		

- Does the project have a clear sustainability strategy to sustain its effects?
- To what extent has UNDP (both the IRH and COs) and other partners (municipalities, women-led organizations, etc.) built on the investments and partnerships to scale up and replicate innovative models or approaches?
- What are the major factors which can positively or negatively influence the sustainability of the project, with a specific focus on capabilities, ways of working, partnerships, and funding/financing?
- What is the level of stakeholders' ownership (COs, municipalities)? Is the project contributing to develop a shared vision and effective mechanisms/platforms for advocacy, dialogue and action on urban development?
- To what extent will the funds allocated to the two primary initiatives, CEF and BOOST, effectively achieve the desired impact at the grassroots level (through enhancing the capabilities of COs, municipal and women-led organizations staff to replicate portfolio-based approaches and attract additional funding to expand their respective portfolios and business models)? In particular,
    - To what extent is CEF contributing to urban transformation through the portfolio approach?
    - To what extent is BOOST contributing to strengthened entrepreneurship through enhanced capabilities to develop and scale innovations?
- Has the project contributed to changes in knowledge, attitudes, perspectives, relationships, behaviors, partnerships and collaborations (networks)?
- Is the project systematically recording lessons on how the different strategies and methods support or not innovation, urban transformation and scalability?
- Has the project contributed to reach agreement on policies or strategies? Do the legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes within which the project operates pose risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project benefits?
- Are there any risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outputs? (financial, social or political)
	- Project data and documents
	- Other relevant documents
	- UNDP (IRH, COs)
	- Implementing partners
	- BOOST grantees and participants
	- Municipalities and other CEF partners and beneficiaries in Stepanavan, Almaty, Prishtina, Pljeljva, Skopje
		- Document Review
		- KIIs
		- FGs
		- Survey

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[48] Based on the articulation of longer-term effects as defined in the TOC, the evaluation will assess the likelihood of the intended, positive impacts becoming a reality. It will also consider the extent to which the project played a catalytic role or promoted longer-term scaling up and/or replication as well as the likelihood that the intervention led, or contributed, to unintended negative effects.

ANNEX 3 – DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Slovak Transformation Fund

- STF ProDoc and annexes (2021)
- Revised ProDoc and Budget Documents (2023)
- STF 2022 Annual report (2023)
- Innovation teams website, including impact stories (2023)
- Project Board TOR

BOOST

- BOOST Impact Accelerator Vol.2 Concept Note (2021)
- Procurement documents:
    - Annex 1 - Guidelines BOOST
    - Annex 2 - Budget Template
    - Annex 3 - Evaluation Criteria
    - Annex 4 - Agreement Template
    - Terms of Reference
    - Terms of Reference UPDATED (2022)
- Selection of participants (2022)
- Boost needs assessment survey responses (2022)
- BOOST SparkBlue Guide (2022)
- SparkBlue Boost page with all content from the programme (2022)
- Boost session Insights 2022 acceleration programme (2022)
- Boost graduation responses (2022)
- Boost graduation survey responses - google sheet (2022)
- Boost alumni survey responses (2023)
- Boost: Startup Grind's business acceleration module report (2022)
- Boost: The Behavioural Insights Team's behavioural insights module feedback report (2022)
- Boost: Impact evaluation of Koc BOOST Impact Acceleration Programme (2022)
- Boost: Women Innovators Programme Report (2022)
- Selection of grantees (2022)
- Agreements with 2022 Boost grant awardees (2022)
- Boost grantee reports 2022-2023 (2023)

- Boost website with featured stories and blogposts (2023)
- Alumni survey report, 2023

City Experimentation Fund

- CEF Brief (2023)
- City Snapshot (2023)
- CEF Phase 1 Evaluation (2022)
- CEF - Agirre Lehendakaria Center Final Report (2023)
- Urban talks (2023)
- CEF Skopje, North Macedonia: The iteration of the Biowaste portfolio
    - Portfolio overview 2022-2023
    - Blogpost on how it started - working in complex systems (part 2,3 links in blog post) (2022)
    - Blogpost on the biohacking lab (2023)
    - Seed portfolio (2021)
- CEF Pljevlja, Montenegro: The iteration of Future-Proof Work Portfolio
    - Portfolio overview (2023)
    - Portfolio Brief
    - Blog on Just Transition work in Montenegro (bridging two Slovak funded initiatives CEF and Just Transition Montenegro) by the RR of UNDP MNE
    - Video on the Creative Hub
    - Additional comms materials
- CEF Almaty, Kazakhstan: Air pollution portfolio
    - Portfolio overview (2023)
    - Yerassyl's blog (a shortened version) regarding the CEF work in Almaty (2023)
- CEF Stepanavam, Armenia: The iteration of Urban Vibrancy Portfolio
    - Portfolio overview 2022-2023
    - Portfolio Approach
    - Key reports (sensemaking, forsesight, etc)
- CEF Prishtina, Kosovo: The iteration of Liveable City Portfolio
    - Portfolio overview 2022-2023
    - Pristina visit and co-creation (2022)
    - A piece by Arlinda Sadiku (and other colleagues) on the CEF work in Pristina (2023)

ANNEX 4 – CEF SURVEY RECIPIENTS

NO	NAME/DESIGNATION	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL
1	Lejla Sadiku, Innovation Team Lead	UNDP IRH	lejla.sadiku@undp.org
2	Merve Yaldiz, STF Project Associate	UNDP IRH	merve.yaldiz@undp.org
3	Shreya Krishnan, Portfolio and Community Engagement Designer + IRH CEF Focal Point for North Macedonia	UNDP IRH	shreya.krishnan@undp.org
4	Ievgen Kylymnyk, STF Project Manager (since August 2023)	UNDP IRH	ievgen.kylymnyk@undp.org
5	Aditi Soni, Service Designer + IRH CEF Focal Point for Armenia and Kosovo*	UNDP IRH	aditi.soni@undp.org
6	Elina Jarvela, Strategic Designer + IRH CEF Focal Point for Montenegro	UNDP IRH	elina.jarvela@undp.org
7	Yaera Chung, Portfolio Learning Lead + IRH CEF Focal Point for Kazakhstan	UNDP IRH	yaera.chung@undp.org
8	Svetla Baeva, Communications Lead	UNDP IRH	svetla.baeva@undp.org
9	Igor Izotov, CEF Focal Point North Macedonia	UNDP North Macedonia CO	igor.izotov@undp.org
10	Yerassyl Kalikhan, CEF Focal Point Kazakhstan	UNDP Kazakhstan CO	yerassyl.kalikhan@undp.org
11	Aleksandra Kikovic, CEF Focal Point Montenegro	UNDP Montenegro CO	aleksandra.kikovic@undp.org
12	Nelli Minasyan, CEF Focal Point Armenia	UNDP Armenia CO	nelli.minasyan@undp.org
13	Arlinda Rushaj Sadiku, CEF Focal Point Kosovo	UNDP Kosovo CO	arlinda.rushaj.sadiku@undp.org
14	Lazar Pop Ivanov	UNDP North Macedonia CO	lazar.popivanov@undp.org
15	Bojana Tomovic	UNDP Montenegro CO	bojana.tomovic@undp.org
16	Enisa Serhati	UNDP Kosovo CO	enisa.serhati@undp.org
17	Zhirayr Edilyan	UNDP Armenia CO	zhirayr.edilyan@undp.org
18	Maja Kustudic	UNDP Montenegro CO	maja.kustudic@undp.org
19	Ardita Zekiri	UNDP North Macedonia CO	ardita.zekiri@undp.org
20	Mariela Atanassova, Chora	Chora Design	mariela.atanassova@chora.design
21	Lolo Xin Chen, Chora Senior Strategic Innovation Designer	Chora Design	lolo.xinchen@chora.design
22	Steven Bland, DML Focal Point	Dark Matter Lab	steven@darkmatterlabs.org
23	Eunsoo Lee	Dark Matter Lab	eunsoo@darkmatterlabs.org
24	Laura Sanz Corada, ALC Focal Point	Agirre Lehendakaria Center	laura@agirrecenter.eus
25	Jayne Engle, Dr	Agirre Lehendakaria Center	jayne.engle@mcgill.ca
26	Maria Hovoumyan	UNDP Armenia CO (contractor)	mariahovoumyan@gmail.com
27	Justyna Krol	Former CEF coordinator	Linkejust@gmail.com

NO	NAME/DESIGNATION	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL
28	Former Kazakhstan Focal Point	*To be identified in collaboration with IRH/CO*	*TBC*
29	Ruben Khachatryan	Instepanavan development foundation head	shekspir55@gmail.com
30	Lusine Hovhannisyan	Resilient Stepanavan Fund director/advisor to the mayor	lucihovhan@yahoo.fr **LANGUAGE SUPPORT REQUIRED**
31	Anush Kirakosyan	Stepanavan municipality "portfolio-based living strategy" team member	anush_kirakosyan_1997@mail.ru **LANGUAGE SUPPORT REQUIRED**
32	Armen Arakelyan	Lore rescue NGO, Resilient Stepanavan Fund board member	lore2008@yandex.com **LANGUAGE SUPPORT REQUIRED**
33	Marusya Balayan	CEF social listening focal point	marusyabalayan@yandex.ru **LANGUAGE SUPPORT REQUIRED**
34	*City Representative*	*To be identified in collaboration with IRH/CO*	North Macedonia TBC
35	*Academic partner*	*To be identified in collaboration with IRH/CO*	North Macedonia TBC
36	*Academic partner*	*To be identified in collaboration with IRH/CO*	North Macedonia TBC
37	*Waste Management Representative*	*To be identified in collaboration with IRH/CO*	North Macedonia TBC
38	*School representative*	*To be identified in collaboration with IRH/CO*	North Macedonia TBC
39	Nadezda Brkovic	Co-Creation Hub Coordinator	nadezdabrkovic87@gmail.com **LANGUAGE SUPPORT REQUIRED**
40	Milos Jelovac	NGO KSAN (Summer School organizers)	jelovacmilos52@gmail.com
41	Mirsad Hadzalic	NGO START (Startup educations in Hub)	hadzalicm@gmail.com
42	Igor Golubovic	Former Mayor of Pljevlja	budirmont@gmail.com
43	Xhezide Vllashi	Landscape Architect, Department of Public Spaces and Parks	xhezide.vlashi@rks-gov.net
44	Mentor Isufi	Operations Manager, Urban Traffic, Public Bus Transport Company	mentor.isufi@trafikurban-pr.com **LANGUAGE SUPPORT REQUIRED**
45	*Co-design sessions participant*	*To be identified in collaboration with IRH/CO*	*TBC*
46	Senem Safci	Civil Society and Partnership	Senem.Safci@savethechildren.org

NO	NAME/DESIGNATION	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL
		Specialist, Save the Children	
47	Loris Begu	Part of the Municipal Child Council Board/ Pristina and student at High school Xhevdet Doda in Pristina	loris.10.begu@gmail.com

ANNEX 5 – CEF SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

GENERAL INFORMATION

Please select the type of your organization (role played in the CEF):
- UNDP Country Offices in Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia
- UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub
- UNDP (other than the five Country Offices mentioned above or the Istanbul Regional Hub)
- Service provider (i.e., Agirre Lehendakaria Center, Dark Matter Lab and Chora Design)
- Beneficiary/urban partner (government institution, civil society organization, academia, etc.)
- Other

What is your position?
- Executive Leadership (e.g., Resident Representative, Deputy Resident Representative, CEO, Director, etc.)
- Managerial and Programme Leadership (e.g., Team Lead, Project Manager, etc.)
- Technical Expertise (e.g., Coordinator, Specialist, etc.)
- Research and Development (e.g., Researcher, Analyst, etc.)
- Administrative Support (e.g., Administrative Assistant, Coordinator, etc.)
- Other (Please specify):_____

Please specify your sex.
- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- I prefer not to say

In which of the five city portfolios did you participate? (please select as many options as necessary)
- Stepanavan (Armenia): Create a vibrant and attractive place for people to live and work
- Almaty (Kazakhstan): Tacking air pollution to improve quality of urban life, economic development, and wellbeing
- Prishtina (Kosovo): Creating liveable and sustainable neighbourhoods & urban ecosystems through inclusive decision-making
- Pljeljva (Montenegro): Promoting a green and just transition for inclusive renewal
- Skopje (North Macedonia): Reduce municipal biowaste and move towards recycling and a circular economy
- None

In which iterations and stages are you currently involved with respect to your city/ies portfolio/s? (please select as many options as necessary)
- Initial portfolio design

- Portfolio activation and dynamic management (1st cycle)
- Portfolio design iteration (2nd cycle)
- Portfolio activation and dynamic management (2nd cycle)
- Portfolio design iteration (3rd cycle)
- I do not know

RELEVANCE

How responsive is the City Experiment Fund to the needs of the target city/ies?
- Very Responsive
- Unresponsive
- Neutral
- Responsive
- Very Responsive
- I do not know

How would you rate the comprehensiveness and completeness of the City Experiment Fund's activities in covering the essential topics and skills needed for…?

	Very Incomplete	Incomplete	Neutral	Complete	Very Complete	I do not know
Inducing urban systems transformation						
Exploring innovative financing mechanisms						

Are there specific areas or topics you felt are not adequately covered, or do you believe any additional components could enhance the City Experiment Fund's comprehensiveness? Please provide your insights.

Do you consider that the support provided by the City Experiment Fund is unique and not provided by anyone else?
- The target city/ies has/have benefited from similar support
- Although the target city/ies has/have not benefit from it, there is similar support available in the region
- There is similar support available in the region but it would be difficult for the target city/ies has/have to benefit from it
- I am not aware of similar support available in the region
- I do not know

Please provide additional details if possible

What do you think is the main added value of the City Experiment Fund?

EFFICIENCY

How would you rate the efficiency of the organizational arrangements for the City Experiment Fund?
- Very Inefficient
- Inefficient
- Neutral
- Efficient
- Very Efficient
- I do not know

Were there any logistical or administrative issues that could be improved? (e.g. specific support areas/types)

Does the program duration provide enough time to cover all relevant topics and activities? The program timeframe is:
- Too Short
- Somewhat Short
- Just Right
- Somewhat Long
- Too Long
- I do not know

Please explain why and suggest any adjustments or specific areas that might benefit from more or less time.

How effective/practical do you find the format to deliver the support in meeting learning and networking needs?

	Very Ineffective	Ineffective	Neutral	Effective	Very Effective	I do not know
Of UNDP COs						
Of cities						

Please rate your level of satisfaction with the support provided in terms of:

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	I do not know
Quality of facilitators and trainers						
Clarity of materials and content						
Usefulness of applied frameworks, tools and resources						

Do you have any specific feedback or suggestions regarding the technical quality of the support? Please share your thoughts on what worked well and what could be improved.

EFFECTIVENESS *[only for COs and beneficiaries]*

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Your participation on the programme has contributed to strengthen your capacity for…

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	I do not know
…system thinking						
…apply portfolio approaches						
…capacity for innovation						
…capacity for strategic partnerships						

Please rate your level of satisfaction with the support you have received in terms of:

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	I do not know
Sensemaking						
Dynamic portfolio management (including sensemaking practice and generation of intelligence reports)						
Innovative finance						

Please rate the City Experiment Fund's potential to catalyze transformation through:

	Very Poor	Poor	Neutral	Good	Excellent	I do not know
Delivering knowledge and insights (i.e.,						

actionable intelligence / briefs)						
Creating opportunities to co-learn and share experiences						
Initiating new dialogues						
Initiating new activities						
Initiating new partnerships						
Increased access to innovative finance models						

To what extent did the City Experiment Fund help COs achieve their objectives with regard to urban development?
- Very Ineffective
- Ineffective
- Neutral
- Effective
- Very Effective
- I do not know

Please provide specific examples of any changes, innovations, or developments that can be attributed to the City Experiment Fund.

IMPACT

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? The City Experiment Fund will...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	I do not know
...enable the deployment/use of portfolio approach in the target cities						
...leverage of innovative financial models						
...accelerate target cities transformation						
...scale urban system transformation and impact in the region						
...reduce gender inequalities and foster opportunities for women and girls						

SUSTAINABILITY

Do you believe the City Experiment Fund will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the urban transformation process in the target cities?
- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

Are there specific areas of the City Experiment Fund that you believe should be improved to enhance sustainability? (e.g. additional technical support)

OVERALL SATISFACTION / REPLICABILITY *[only for COs and beneficiaries]*

On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely would you be willing to apply/recommend the City Experiment Fund to other cities?
- 1 (Not Likely)
- 10 (Extremely Likely)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Please provide any additional comments or suggestions regarding the City Experiment Fund.

ANNEX 6 – ONE-TO-ONE KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

NO	NAME/DESIGNATION	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL
Slovak Transformation Fund, including IRH			
1	Lejla Sadiku, Innovation Team Lead	UNDP IRH	lejla.sadiku@undp.org
2	Eva Horváthová, Development cooperation, International Affairs Section	Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic	eva.horvathova1@mfsr.sk
3	Rikard Sjöstrand, former STF Project Manager	UNDP IRH	rikard.sjostrand@undp.org
4	Ievgen Kylymnyk, STF Project Manager (since August 2023)	UNDP IRH	ievgen.kylymnyk@undp.org
5	Aditi Soni, Service Designer + IRH CEF Focal Point for Armenia and Kosovo*	UNDP IRH	aditi.soni@undp.org
6	Elina Jarvela, Strategic Designer + + IRH CEF Focal Point for Montenegro	UNDP IRH	elina.jarvela@undp.org
7	Yaera Chung, Portfolio Learning Lead + IRH CEF Focal Point for Kazakhstan	UNDP IRH	yaera.chung@undp.org
BOOST			
8	Louise Skärvall, BOOST Accelerator Lead and STF PM ai April-August 2023	UNDP IRH	louise.skarvall@undp.org
9	Phin Mpofu, former Director, Global Community	Startup Grind (Lead Service Provider)	phin@startupgrind.com
10	Ariel Bothen, Senior Advisor & Behavioural Scientist	The Behavioural Insights Team (Service Provider)	ariel.bothen@bi.team
CEF			
11	Armen Grigoryan, UNDP Resident Representative	UNDP North Macedonia	armen.grigoryan@undp.org
12	Ekaterina Paniklova, UNDP Resident Representative a.i	UNDP Montenegro	ekaterina.paniklova@undp.org
13	Sukhrob Khojimatov, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative	UNDP Kazakhstan	kasia.wawiernia@undp.org
14	Natia Natsvlishvili, UNDP Resident Representative	UNDP Armenia	natia.natsvlishvili@undp.org
15	Nuno Queirós, UNDP Resident Representative	UNDP Kosovo	nuno.queiros@undp.org
16	Zarina Dauletkan (CEF beneficiary)	Almaty Management University (AlmaU)	z.dauletkan@almau.edu.kz

ANNEX 7 – FOCUS GROUPS

NO	NAME/DESIGNATION	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL
BOOST			
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