



Basic Project Information

Title of UNDP supported GEF financed project: Strengthening Montenegro's Nationally Determined Contribution and Adaptation Activities Transparency Framework

UNDP PIMS#: 6225
GEF project ID#: 10021

MTR time frame and date of MTR report: November 2023- April 2024, 23 April 2024

Region and countries included in the project: Montenegro, Europe

GEF Operational Focal Area/Strategic Program: Climate Change
GEF-6 Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT)

Executing Agency/Implementing Partner and other project partners: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Montenegro, Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism

MTR team members:
Tomislav Novovic, International Evaluator (Team Leader)
Ana Simonovic, National Consultant

MID-TERM REVIEW REPORT

April 2024

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With deep admiration for the collective effort invested by the stakeholders at varying levels, we acknowledge the substantial contributions made by the national institutions and beneficiaries whose cooperation was essential for the project's progress under its outputs. The learned opinions and robust participation of the project partners have enriched the evaluation and been a cornerstone in integrating gender considerations and 'Leave No One Behind' (LNOB) practices into the project activities.

We extend our utmost respect and commendation to those who worked on the project's implementation. Through the hands of the numerous unnamed contributors, the foundational structures for the project's governance, procedures, and technical implementations were solidified in resonance with the emerging transparency requirements under the Paris Agreement

Disclaimer

This report, prepared by independent consultants, reflects their findings and conclusions, which may not necessarily align with the views of UNDP Country Office, UNDP Senior Management, or other entities.

List of abbreviations

CA	Contribution Analysis
CBIT Project	Strengthening Montenegro's Nationally Determined Contribution and Adaptation Activities Transparency Framework (The Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency-).
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
EQ	Evaluation Question
ER	Evaluation Report
ETS	EU's Emissions Trading System
EU	European Union
FE	Final Evaluation
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GoM	Government of Montenegro
GRES	UNDP Gender Results Effectiveness Strategy
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contribution
IR	Inception report
JC	Judgement Criteria
KII	Key Informants Interviews
LCDS	Low-Carbon Development Strategy
LNOB	Leave no-one behind
MESPU	Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Urbanism
MTESDNRD	Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development and North Region Development
MMR	Monitoring Mechanism Regulation
MPGs	Transparency Methodologies, Procedures, and Guidelines
MRV-E	Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification
MTR	Mid-term Review
MTRT	Mid-term Review Team
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NEAS	National Strategy with Action Plan for Transposition, Implementation, and Enforcement of the EU ACQUIS on Environment and Climate Change 2016-2020
NIM	National Implementation Modality
NPD	National Project Director
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OVI	Objectively Verifiable Indicator
PMF	Performance Measurement Framework
ProDoc	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PT	Project Team
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Accepted, Realistic and Timely
SoV	Sources of Verification
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
WG	Working Group

Executive Summary

Project information Table			
Project title:	"Strengthening Montenegro's Nationally Determined Contribution and Adaptation Activities Transparency Framework"		
UNDP PIMS+ ID number	6225		
GEF ID number	10021		
Atlas Project ID: 00102063	Atlas Output ID: 00104253		
Quantum Award ID Project ID	00104253.2 00104253		
Country	Montenegro		
Region	Europe and Central Asia		
GEF Focal Area Strategic Objective	Climate change		
Trust Fund:	GEF Trust Fund		
Executing agency/ Implementing partner	Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development and North Region Development		
Other partners- PB members	The Ministry for Capital Investments; the Office for Sustainable Development under the General Secretariat of the GoM; the Statistical Office of Montenegro- MONSTAT; the Environmental Protection Agency and the Institute of Hydrometeorology and Seismology		
Management Arrangements:	National Implementation Modality		
PIF Approval Date	18 May 2018		
CEO Endorsement Date	10 June 2021		
Project Document (ProDoc) Signature Date	25 August 2021		
Date of Inception Workshop	08 April 2022		
Original Planned Closing Date	25 August 2025		
Financial information			
Total Budget	\$ 1,390,000		
At CEO Endorsement (US\$)	\$1,100,000 GEF Trust Fund grant	\$40,000 from UNDP	\$250,000 in-kind MTESDNRD
At Midterm Review (US\$)	\$144.198,27	\$ 0	\$ 93,500
Evaluation Information			
Evaluation type	Project Evaluation		
Final/midterm review/	Mid-term Review		
Period under evaluation	Start	End	
	01 September 2021	31 December 2023	
Evaluators	Mr. Tomislav Novović, Team Leader- Senior Evaluation Expert		
	Ms. Ana Simonovic, Senior Evaluation Expert		
Evaluator e-mail address	tomislav.novovic@gmail.com		
	ana.simonovic@gmail.com		
Evaluation Dates	Start: 23 November 2023	Completion: 23 April 2024	

The "Strengthening Montenegro's Nationally Determined Contribution and Adaptation Activities Transparency Framework" (Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency- CBIT; PIMS+ ID:6225) is dedicated to enhancing the effectiveness of national climate change responses. It aims to align these with Montenegro's broader policies and measures to promote a climate-resilient, low-carbon development path. The project's primary goal is to strengthen institutional and technical capacities to support transparency-related activities, as Article 13 of the Paris Agreement requires. It seeks to improve methodologies and tools for higher transparency standards, vital for accurately formulating, developing, and implementing climate policies.

The project emphasises the importance of a Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV-E) portal to centralise expertise, especially from the Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development (MTESDNRD). Given the current limitations in local expertise and capacities, this effort addresses the need for more coordinated support and climate finance expertise in Montenegro. Including a gender-sensitive approach in assessing the effectiveness of climate change actions also forms a key aspect of the project's methodologies.

The initiative is structured around two components with four expected outcomes, aiming to establish a robust institutional mechanism for tracking contributions and developing a comprehensive transparency framework. It also focuses on strengthening stakeholder engagement, enhancing technical capacities, and institutionalising coordination and information exchange. The MTESDNRD, as the Implementing Partner under the National Implementation Modality, is responsible for the project's management, while UNDP oversees the execution standards and project cycle management services. Inter-institutional coordination is managed by the Working Group on Mitigation and Adaptation, with operational coordination through Project Boards and collaboration with various government bodies and key directorates, operating out of the Directorate of Ecology and Climate Change in MTESDNRD in Podgorica.

Project Progress Summary:

The Project has made some strides towards integrating a Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV-E) system into national legislation, aiming to enhance transparency in line with the Paris Agreement's Article 13. Efforts include advocating for the MRV-E system's inclusion in the new Law on Protection from the Negative Effects of Climate Change to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. The Project has proposed legal revisions to embed the MRV-E system into higher-level frameworks and establish clear responsibilities for climate data provision, aiming to improve the effectiveness of climate change mitigation and adaptation reporting.

Significant progress has been made in institutionalising the MRV-E system, with recommendations for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to oversee the greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) guidelines. However, inefficiencies in inter-agency agreements and high staff turnover have challenged the continuity and effectiveness of data collection and reporting processes.

The Project has also contributed to drafting the Law on Protection from the Negative Impact of Climate Change, providing comprehensive inputs during stakeholder consultations. It has played a strategic role in enhancing the functionality of the National Council for Sustainable Development – a multi-stakeholder entity that facilitates dialogue and fosters collaboration among government agencies, civil society, the private sector, and other relevant stakeholders. It was established under the Prime Minister's Office and functions through five Working Groups, two of them focusing on climate change and sustainable financial development, supported by UNDP GCF funded project National Adaptation Plan, which is pivotal in shaping the country's climate policies.

Regarding capacity development, targeted training and workshops have been delivered to bolster expertise in adaptation, climate finance, and gender. However, challenges in expert recruitment that the MTESDNRD faced within the national execution framework have impacted the timelines and progress of specific outcomes, particularly in developing methodologies for assessing the climate change institutional framework and integrating climate change considerations into national policies. The Project has seen progress in enhancing inter-ministerial communication and incorporating gender perspectives into climate action methodologies. Still, delays in hiring key experts as indicated have affected the application of new tools and methodologies in the domestic MRV-E system and the development of project models and adaptation concept proposals.

Under Outcome 3, progress includes the conceptual design of the MRV-E System's data flows, inputs, and outputs, which are essential for establishing an MRV-E portal as a comprehensive climate-related data repository. Yet, no progress has been recorded in training stakeholders on using the MRV-E portal or establishing a long-term training program, which are critical for the effective management of the system post-project completion.

MTR Ratings and Achievement Summary Table

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievements Description
Project Strategy	Highly Satisfactory	The Project is tailored to meet Montenegro's distinct needs in combating climate change by fostering national institutional and technical capacities, aligning climate action with international standards, and directly addressing methodological and monitoring challenges under the climate change.
Progress Towards Results	CBIT Project's overall objective- moderately satisfactory	Positive steps taken towards enhancing transparency frameworks and policy alignment, but sustainability and comprehensive capacity building remain areas for improvement.
	Outcome 1: Moderately satisfactory	Project made headway in MRV-E system institutionalization and legal framework integration, though progress is tempered by recruitment challenges and incomplete implementation of methodologies, procedures, and guidelines.
	Outcome 2: Moderately satisfactory	Some improvements in inter-ministerial communication and gender mainstreaming yet offset by recruitment delays and unfulfilled development of technical training and stakeholder engagement activities.
	Outcome 3: Moderately satisfactory	Development of the MRV-E System's conceptual design, but the lack of advancement in stakeholder training programs and the MRV-E portal's operationalization highlight areas needing further attention.
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	Moderately unsatisfactory	Due to extensive and time-consuming efforts to establish management and operational systems, which, along with political instability and operational challenges, have significantly affected the project's timely execution and efficiency.
Sustainability	Satisfactory	The sustainability of the CBIT Project is rated as satisfactory because, despite facing various implementation challenges, the project has successfully built national ownership and robust institutional and legal frameworks, particularly for the MRV-E system, which demonstrates a strong commitment to maintaining long-term results in climate action transparency and capacity building.

Summary of conclusions

The CBIT is designed to address the country's unique challenges in combating climate change by fostering a transparent, robust climate action system aligned with global standards and commitments, particularly the Paris Agreement. Despite challenges, the Project has made commendable progress in establishing necessary institutional frameworks and advancing priority capacity development initiatives. It emphasises enhancing methodologies and tools for increased transparency, signifying Montenegro's dedication to improving its climate change actions and policies. This is highlighted by efforts to develop a comprehensive MRV-E system and a National Adaptation Plan (NAP). The Project's strategic relevance is further reinforced by key national partners' active and strategic participation, notably the Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development, and North Region Development (MTESDNRD). This collaboration ensures that the Project's direction is well-aligned with Montenegro's climate change policy and sustainable development strategies, underlining the Project's deeply

rooted collaborative design process. Moreover, the CBIT Project is noted for its internal coherence, successfully linking its activities, outputs, and outcomes to enhance Montenegro's climate action capabilities. The strategic framework, underpinned by a Theory of Change, effectively directs the Project's focus towards increasing institutional transparency and boosting technical capacities for implementing a robust transparency framework.

Externally, the Project aligns well with Montenegro's policy directives, legislative enactments, and the environmental standards set by the European Union, supporting significant national strategies such as the National Climate Change Strategy (NCCS) and the National Strategy of Sustainable Development (NSSD). This strategic alignment facilitates Montenegro's adherence to the Paris Agreement and EU benchmarks, particularly in developing a formal MRV-E system crucial for effective climate action data management and reporting.

However, the Project faces challenges in improving coordination, establishing formal mechanisms for the MRV-E system, and integrating climate considerations into national policies and practices. These challenges are compounded by inefficiencies in existing inter-agency agreements, high staff turnover, and the need for enhanced crisis management strategies. Political changes, recruitment difficulties, and operational hurdles have also impacted the Project's pace, highlighting the necessity for adaptive and resilient management strategies.

Sustainability prospects for the CBIT Project's outcomes are promising, attributed to the Montenegrin government's commitment to international and EU standards and the Project's focus on strengthening institutional capacities and ensuring national ownership. Yet, the Project's long-term impact and the sustainability of capacity development programs hinge on overcoming current challenges, including slow policy execution and ensuring legislative alignment with EU regulations. The pronounced ownership of national partners and alignment with strategic priorities bolster the Project's sustainability, underpinning its critical role in Montenegro's ongoing climate action efforts.

Recommendation Summary Table

<p>Recommendation 1: For: MTESDNRD (Implementing partner)</p>	<p>Extension with Enhanced National Co-financing: The MTRT suggests a 12-month extension for the CBIT Project to ensure completion of activities and capacity building, proposing to offset the extended period with increased national co-financing for sustained results and ownership.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: For: MTESDNRD (Implementing partner)</p>	<p>Comprehensive Team Engagement and Support: The MTRT advises promptly filling vacant roles in the Project Implementation Unit and reinforcing the Ministry's finance unit, complemented by additional national co-financing, to expedite project implementation and resolve financial bottlenecks</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: For: MTESDNRD (Implementing partner)</p>	<p>Revision of Work Plans and Indicators: The PIU , in close cooperation with the NPD and PB, should prepare new Project work plans to include revised timeframe and realistic annual targets and periodic milestones.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: For: MTESDNRD (Implementing partner)</p>	<p>Improved Results Reporting: The MTRT advises improving results reporting by detailing changes and progress against the Project's indicators to better evaluate effectiveness and guide future adjustments</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: For: MTESDNRD (Implementing partner)</p>	<p>Enhance awareness and capacities concerning the MRV-E specifically and the climate change broadly and support sound capacity development efforts: The MTRT emphasises enhancing stakeholder awareness and capacities on MRV-E and broader climate change aspects, advocating for comprehensive communication strategies and an innovative and creative approach to capacity development that blends online and in-person training for a more effective learning experience.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6: For: MTESDNRD (Implementing partner)</p>	<p>Regular High-Level Meetings and Discussions on Progress: The MTRT suggests regular monthly progress meetings between the NPD, directorate heads, and</p>

UNDP (Oversight role)	UNDP, plus high-level quarterly or six-monthly meetings between UNDP and MTESDNRD leaders to bolster political support and ensure project continuity.
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1 Introduction

This document is the mid-term report (MTR) for the review of the Project entitled "Strengthening Montenegro's Nationally Determined Contribution and Adaptation Activities Transparency Framework" (Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency – CBIT; PIMS+ ID: 6225 -). This MTR provides a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the project's progress and implementation against its stated initial objectives and goals, as outlined in the Terms of Reference (TOR).

The report is structured to offer a detailed assessment of the project's strategy, progress towards results, implementation, adaptive management and sustainability, mainly focusing on how these elements align with Montenegro's development priorities. It incorporates a thorough overview of the data collection methods and analysis techniques, ensuring that each aspect of the evaluation aligns with the established criteria and questions outlined in the TOR. The report addresses potential limitations encountered during the evaluation, and how these were mitigated.

Key components of the MTR include an evaluation matrix (Annex 3) that links all elements of the review and comprehensive interview guides tailored for different stakeholders. These guides contain specific questions about each evaluation criterion, adhering to the TOR and the Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects¹.

The report is organized into several interrelated sections:

The first section explores Montenegro's environmental stewardship and climate change efforts, providing a comprehensive overview of the CBIT Project. This section discusses the systemic factors that have influenced the project's formulation and implementation within Montenegro's unique environmental and developmental challenges.

Section 2 defines the purpose of the mid-term review, detailing its specific objectives and scope. It outlines the target groups and beneficiaries of the project, ensuring that the review's goals align with the Terms of Reference and provide a clear direction for the evaluation process.

It continues with **Section 3**, which presents the evaluation criteria, including considerations of cross-cutting issues such as human rights and gender equality. It lays out the key evaluation questions and conducts an evaluability analysis to assess the feasibility and appropriateness of the evaluation approach.

Section 4 presents the specific approach taken in this evaluation, including the reconstruction of the Theory of Change. It details the data collection methods and instruments, the process of data analysis, and addresses ethical considerations. This section also analyses underlying assumptions and potential risks, proposing mitigation measures.

Section 5 presents findings grouped into several categories: project strategy, progress towards results, project implementation and adaptive management, and sustainability. Each category addresses relevant key questions, such as the project's relevance, alignment with Montenegro's reform priorities, efficiency in implementation, and considerations of gender equality.

Section 6, Conclusions and Lessons Learned from the Report, synthesises the main conclusions drawn from the evaluation and highlights significant lessons learned in each aspect of the project. It critically reflects the project's strategy, progress, implementation, and sustainability.

Based on the findings and conclusions, actionable recommendations are provided for the future course of the project under **Section 7**. These recommendations aim to enhance the project's effectiveness, efficiency, and impact in its ongoing and future activities.

The annexes include the Terms of Reference (Annex 1) and the Evaluation matrix (Annex 2), Interview guides (Annex 3), Ratings scale (Annex 4), List of interviewed stakeholders (Annex 5), List of consulted documents (Annex 6), Co-financing table (Annex 7), Signed Code of Conduct form (Annex 8) and MTR Report Clearance Form (Annex 9).

¹ https://erc.undp.org/pdf/Guidance_Midterm%20Review%20_EN_2014.pdf

2 Development Context and Background

2.1 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND CLIMATE CHANGE EFFORTS IN MONTENEGRO

Montenegro has initiated several positive steps towards environmental stewardship and addressing climate change. However, it continues to face challenges in aligning with the EU standards in climate change and in general, particularly in legislative compliance, administrative capacity and implementation of critical policies and regulations. Addressing these issues is crucial for Montenegro to advance its environmental goals and contribute to global sustainability efforts.

Institutional and Legislative Framework in Montenegro: The country is progressing in developing its institutional and legislative framework to address climate change, notably with the 2019 Law on Protection Against Adverse Impacts of Climate Change². This law marked a critical milestone by aligning Montenegro's environmental policies with the EU's Emissions Trading System (ETS)³, signifying a commitment to international standards in climate change mitigation. This alignment integrates Montenegro into the broader European environmental policy landscape and showcases its readiness to adopt market-based approaches for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Montenegro has adopted the National Climate Change Strategy by 2030⁴, which accompanied this legal foundation and laid out a clear pathway for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The Strategy delineated specific targets, sectoral strategies, and mechanisms for monitoring progress, emphasizing the country's dedication to mitigating the factors contributing to climate change. However, it revealed a gap in comprehensive planning for climate change adaptation and highlighted the need for more specific approaches to reduce vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change. In addition, the Strategy underscored the necessity to develop integrated plans that address the multifaceted impacts of climate change, including environmental, social, economic and public health aspects. This approach would require a collaborative effort across various sectors and stakeholders to develop and implement effective adaptation measures, enhancing community and national resilience. Aligning this Strategy with the European Union's 2030 climate and energy policy framework is an ongoing challenge. The focus is to ensure consistency with the EU acquis, including crucial elements like the ETS, Effort Sharing Regulation, and Governance Regulation. Enhancing administrative capacity for effective implementation and enforcement of these policies remains a crucial area of focus⁵.

In February 2023, the National Council for Sustainable Development⁶ set up a permanent working group for mitigation and adaptation to climate change with the support of UNDP. The aim of the working group, among others, is to support setting up of a monitoring and reporting system for greenhouse gas emissions and to prepare policies and measures for adaptation and mitigation to climate change by the EU acquis. The Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development and North Region Development (MTESDNRD⁷) has promoted environmentally friendly practices, such as adopting low fuel consumption and CO₂-emission vehicles. The MTESDNRD is also preparing a national climate-change adaptation plan with the United Nations Development Programme. The National Energy and Climate Plan to achieve decarbonisation by 2050 is not yet in place and is delayed for 2024. Montenegro needs to take decisive steps for the establishment of a mechanism on carbon pricing, aligned with the EU ETS to advance the implementation of the EU acquis and adequately prepare for the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism that entered into force in its transitional phase on 1 October 2023⁸.

² Official Gazette of Montenegro- Nr: 01-2251/2 Podgorica, 25. December 2019.

³ https://www.dnv.com/maritime/insights/topics/eu-emissions-trading-system/index.html?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiA98WrBhAYEiwA2WvhOqTT2Ws8b1h6qvv8SjEpQLpTJ_tCJoSELhfkpR5R638hkMme71R2CBoCJ_oQAvD_BwE

⁴ https://www.preventionweb.net/files/60580_montenegroclimatechange.pdf

⁵ Montenegro's legislative alignment with the EU acquis in areas such as water management, waste management, and nature protection is still a work in progress. While there is some level of preparedness, significant efforts are required to implement and enforce regulations in these sectors. The country needs to adopt and start implementing the Waste Management Law, the national waste management plan, and the Strategy on air quality management for 2020-2029 to advance its green transition ambitions.

⁶ NSCD of Montenegro was established in 2002. The Council has 23 representatives: representatives of Government (5), local authorities (3), academia (2), business sectors (4), NGOs (4) and independent persons/experts (4) and Secretary - Head of the Division for the support to the NSCD.

⁷ Established 31 October 2023, previously it was the MESPU) <https://www.gov.me/vlada-crne-gore/sastav-vlade>

⁸ EU Progress report on Montenegro, 2023

National Commitments and Climate Change Strategy: Through the initial Intended Nationally Determined Contribution⁹ submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat, the country committed to a 30% reduction, and that goal has already been achieved. In June 2021, the Government of Montenegro adopted **enhanced** Nationally Determined Contribution (eNDC)¹⁰. **Enhanced** NDC committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 35% by 2030, compared to the base year 1990. In addition, there is a need for a comprehensive MRV-E system, which is essential for tracking progress towards the eNDC targets and identifying gaps in implementation. Still, the opportunities to improve the accuracy of emission calculations further, remove certain unreliability in economic projections, and include data from forestry and agriculture under the existing MRV indicate that Montenegro could increase the target level of emission reduction in Montenegro. Montenegro's relevant institutions have started with preparatory activities for the new revision of the nationally determined contribution. Meanwhile, in December 2022, the Council of Ministers of the Energy Community decided on new targets for reducing GHG emissions¹¹, which set a 55% reduction compared to the base year 1990 as the new target for reducing emissions. In this regard, the next revision of the NDC should elaborate scenarios for achieving the new target value.

Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability: Montenegro's pursuit of economic development, particularly in critical sectors like energy, tourism and agriculture, brings challenges and opportunities in the realm of climate action. As a fundamental sector, energy has shifted towards greater efficiency and an increasing reliance on renewable sources as crucial steps toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to a low-carbon economy. Similarly, the tourism and agriculture sectors offer opportunities for sustainable practices, such as eco-tourism and sustainable farming methods, which can contribute to environmental conservation while boosting economic growth. However, integrating climate action into these sectors presents a significant challenge. While the push for renewable energy is commendable, ensuring this transition is economically viable and sustainability is crucial. Tourism substantially contributes to Montenegro's economy, but there is a need to promote sustainable tourism practices and minimise environmental impacts. The challenge lies in adopting environmentally friendly and economically feasible practices for agriculture. These sectors require strategic planning, investment, and innovative approaches to harmonise economic growth with environmental sustainability. Achieving this balance demands a multifaceted approach that involves stakeholders from various sectors. Policymakers must create conducive environments for sustainable practices, incentivise green investments, and promote technologies that align economic development with environmental health. This approach should also involve educating and engaging the public and private sectors to adopt sustainable practices. Montenegro should prioritise environmental sustainability in its economic development plans and ensure its growth builds on protecting and preserving natural resources, thereby contributing to a sustainable future.

Gender Mainstreaming in Climate Action: Montenegro's efforts to integrate gender considerations into its climate change policies represent an evolving area of focus. The country has developed a Gender Action Plan¹² regarding climate change that addresses gender goals. This includes incorporating a gender perspective into climate change policy, mainstreaming gender into the climate change transparency framework, including a gender representative in the Working Group for Climate Change in its National Council for Sustainable Development, and strengthening the collection of sex- and gender-disaggregated data for MRV-E purposes (UNDP, 2020.). Under the framework of this plan, Montenegro dedicated a part of its NDC Background Report to gender mainstreaming. This section contains an analysis of all proposed mitigation measures from a gender perspective, as well as recommendations for further data collection and decision making. Similarly, gender-related indicators and information were included in Montenegro's NDC Roadmap¹³ (UNDP, 2021.). Montenegro

⁹ Government of Montenegro Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) of Montenegro following decision 1/CP.19 and decision 1/CP.20 Podgorica, September 2015

¹⁰ <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/Updated%20NDC%20for%20Montenegro.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.energy-community.org/implementation/packae.html#:~:text=At%20its%20meeting%20in%20Vienna,2050%20on%2015%20December%202022.>

¹² National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025 with Action Plan 2021-202, June 2021- <https://wapi.gov.me/download/33985332-d431-4c25-9643-e9a15d76e548?version=1.0> and Gender Analysis within the Third Biennial Update Report (TBUR) by Olgica Apostolova <https://www.undp.org/montenegro/publications/gender-and-climate-change-analysis/gender-capacity-assessment-ngos-within-climate-promise>

¹³ <https://climatepromise.undp.org/what-we-do/where-we-work/montenegro#:~:text=Key%20highlights%20from%20the%20NDC,Adaptation%20Plan%20is%20currently%20underway.> And <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/Montenegro%20First/Updated%20NDC%20for%20Montenegro.pdf>

plans to continue its work on gender mainstreaming during the development of its Fourth National Communication and First Biennial Transparency Report. This includes providing training to the employees of its statistics agency on collecting and analysing sex- and gender disaggregated data and gender mainstreaming methodology, and analysing measures taken to assist women in adapting to climate change in priority sectors, such as health education, and agriculture.

International support has been a cornerstone in Montenegro's journey towards effective climate action, helping the country build capacity in critical areas of climate action (such as greenhouse gas inventory development, climate change mitigation strategies, and adaptation planning). International partnerships have also facilitated knowledge exchange, enabling Montenegro to learn from global best practices and tailor them to its specific context. Montenegro's active participation in regional networks and climate-focused projects has enhanced its climate action capabilities. These networks offer platforms for exchanging ideas, experiences, and lessons learned with neighbouring countries facing similar climate challenges. This regional collaboration is vital in addressing transboundary environmental issues and fostering a collective approach to climate change challenges in the Balkan region. Additionally, international forums and conferences provide Montenegro with opportunities to engage in global climate discussions, keeping abreast of the latest developments and innovations in climate science and policy.

The continuous support from international partners in training, technical assistance, and financial backing is essential for developing Montenegro's climate action capabilities. This support is crucial for enhancing existing initiatives and exploring new areas of climate action, such as advanced technologies in renewable energy and innovative adaptation strategies. As Montenegro continues to navigate its climate action path, sustained engagement and support from the international community will be vital to ensuring the successful implementation of its climate commitments and contributing to global efforts in combating climate change.

2.2 OVERVIEW OF THE CBIT PROJECT “STRENGTHENING MONTENEGRO’S NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTION AND ADAPTATION ACTIVITIES TRANSPARENCY FRAMEWORK”

The project "Strengthening Montenegro's Nationally Determined Contribution and Adaptation Activities Transparency Framework" (Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency- CBIT; PIMS+ ID:6225) is an intricate initiative aimed at augmenting the efficacy of national climate change responses, strategically aligning them with other national endeavours, policies and measures. This alignment is critical for fostering a climate-resilient and low-carbon developmental trajectory. The Project's **primary objective** is to bolster national capacities, both institutional and technical, to facilitate a more effective articulation. These efforts should contribute to an improved environment that enables activities related to transparency, in line with the stipulations of Article 13 of the Paris Agreement. Additionally, the Project focuses on adopting and refining methodologies and tools to elevate the standard of transparency.

Central to the Project's mission is enhancing Montenegro's proficiency in formulating, developing, and implementing climate policy and measures. Utilising timely, accurate information and a comprehensive system for monitoring and evaluating the applied instruments to address climate change further underpins these efforts. The Project also envisages incorporating a gender-sensitive perspective in its methodologies, assessing the adequacy, effectiveness, and impacts of adaptation and mitigation actions and policies. Due to limited expertise and capacities in Montenegro, more coordinated support and climate finance expertise are still needed. The Project strategically utilises the MRV-E system¹⁴ portal to foster a more cohesive team of experts, particularly from the MTESDNRD.

The Project's anticipated objective includes establishing a robust institutional mechanism for tracking nationally determined contributions and developing a more comprehensive transparency framework. While preparing Montenegro's Second Biennial Update Report, the authorities developed a conceptual framework and a pilot information system. This system is the foundation for Montenegro's endeavours to gather and process data, informing decision-makers about climate change-related actions and progress. This system also contributes to

¹⁴ In the draft of the new law, Article 44, it is proposed to establish a reporting system that includes: a greenhouse gas inventory system and a system for policies, measures and projections of greenhouse gas emissions, measures for adaptation to climate change and climate change financing reporting - MRV-E system instead of the proposed two systems (one for mitigation measures and GHG inventory, other for adaptation). Therefore, the terminology MRV-E system is used in all document. – primeniti u cijelom dokumenta

reporting and understanding the broader impacts of these actions on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Responding to these needs and priorities, the CBIT Project is structured as a set of outputs and activities organised in two (2) complementary components, but with four (4) expected outcomes:

Component 1: Strengthening active stakeholder engagement and embedding MRV-E of climate action within existing sectoral functions and sustainable development goals

Outcome 1: A strengthened institutional mechanism for increased transparency

Component 2: Enhancing technical capacities to implement an ambitious enhanced transparency framework

Outcome 2: Strengthened national institutions to implement enhanced transparency

Outcome 3: Strengthened coordination and information exchange is institutionalised with an enhanced transparency framework

Outcome 4: A technical roadmap on low-carbon and climate-resilient development is formulated and adopted

The Project, with a total budget of \$1,390,000, was officially initiated on 25 August 2021 for four years, until 25 August, 2025. Funding includes a \$1,100,000 GEF Trust Fund grant, \$40,000 from UNDP, and \$250,000 of in-kind support from MTESDNRD. The Project is implemented under National Implementation Modality (NIM), with the MTESDNRD as the Implementing Partner. The NIM mandates MTESDNRD to manage the Project, including its monitoring, evaluation, and the effective use of resources. The National Project Director (NPD) from MTESDNRD provides government oversight and guidance for project implementation.

The UNDP is accountable to the GEF for the Project's implementation. This accountability includes overseeing project execution by the agreed standards. UNDP is responsible for delivering GEF project cycle management services.

Inter-institutional coordination is ensured by the Working Group on Mitigation and Adaptation of the National Council for Sustainable Development, with operational coordination through the Project Boards that is comprised of various government bodies. Moreover, operating out of Podgorica, specifically the Directorate of Ecology and Climate Change in MTESDNRD, the Project collaborates with various key directorates and institutions- the Ministry of Energy and Mining, and the Ministry of Transport and Maritime Affairs¹⁵; the Office for Sustainable Development under the General Secretariat of the GoM; the Statistical Office of Montenegro-MONSTAT; the Environmental Protection Agency and the Institute of Hydrometeorology and Seismology, among other. As a NIM project, it maintains a physical office at MTESDNRD.

3 Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope

3.1 PURPOSE OF THE MID-TERM REVIEW

This MTR conducted an independent and comprehensive mid-point review to assess the CBIT Project's progression, measuring the extent to which it has achieved its expected results and specific objectives, as outlined in the Project Document.

3.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the CBIT Project delineate the purpose and objectives.

The central aspect of this MTR was to provide critical input for the mid-course correction and offer strategic guidance on the future trajectory of the CBIT Project. Additionally, the MTR identified lessons learned and formulated recommendations to adjust the CBIT's intervention (for the remaining implementation period).

The objectives of this review are multi-fold:

- **Assessment of Progress:** Evaluated the advancement made towards achieving the objectives and planned results detailed in the project documents. The MTR provided credible evidence if the Project delivers results and utilises resources efficiently.

¹⁵ Formerly, this was the Ministry for Capital Investments

- **Identification of Emerging Demands:** Detected and understood emerging needs from partners to facilitate adjusting project activities in response to the evolving requirements.
- **Generation of Evidence-Based Knowledge:** The MTRT generated substantial evidence-based knowledge by identifying best practices and lessons learned from the Project. These insights are expected to benefit other development interventions and contribute to the sustainability of the CBIT project or some of its components.
- **Recommendations for Improvement:** The MTR Team provided recommendations for mid-course adjustments during the remaining period of the Project. In addition, these recommendations have been crafted to inform the stakeholders strategically on the possible future direction of the CBIT Project.

3.3 SCOPE OF THE MID-TERM REVIEW

MTR was not initially planned in the Project Document, but considering the challenges faced, discussions with the Country Office led to the decision that conducting an MTR would be beneficial to identify and address persisting issues affecting the project's implementation and delivery

The scope of the mid-term review of the CBIT Project covers the period from the project's official start (25 August 2021- Project Document signature date) until 31 December 2023, intending to analyse its various components. The MTR encompassed a comprehensive analysis of its deliverables, processes and interactions to ensure a thorough understanding of its multifaceted elements.

3.4 TARGET GROUPS AND BENEFICIARIES

The MTRT ensured inclusive participation from the relevant stakeholders, including both men and women. The evaluation will benefit the MTESDNRD as the Implementing Partner and UNDP, providing a detailed analysis of the Project's status at the mid-point implementation moment.

The Government of Montenegro (GoM) and its ministries would also gain valuable insights to inform future policy and strategic direction. The environmental stewardship institutions and organisations are set to benefit from identifying new opportunities for enhancement and development, ensuring that the findings from this MTR process support planning and improvements in their activities.

4 Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The MTR team utilised the Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects to inform their comprehensive assessment, ensuring a thorough evaluation of the Project's progress in these critical areas. Also, the MTRT considered additional cross-cutting criteria, gender mainstreaming, and leaving no one behind (LNOB).

4.1 EVALUATION CRITERIA

The focus has been on the following key categories:

In the **Project Strategy category, corresponding to relevance, coherence, and flexibility criteria**, the MTRT reviewed the problem, the needs the project addressed, and the underlying assumptions. This process included assessing the effect of any incorrect assumptions or contextual changes on achieving the project results. The MTRT assessed the Project's strategy relevance to determine if it provided the most effective route towards the expected results. The team also determined how well the Project aligned with country priorities and whether decision-making processes had adequately considered the perspectives of affected stakeholders. Additionally, the MTRT analysed if and how the Project integrated gender issues into its design and followed them during implementation, intending to suggest improvement areas.

Regarding internal coherence, the MTRT analysed the project's Results Framework/Log frame, critically examined its indicators and targets, and evaluated their 'SMART' (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) attributes, suggesting specific amendments, as necessary. This effort included reviewing whether the Project Team effectively monitored broader development and gender aspects.

In assessing **Progress Towards Results (effectiveness)**, the team reviewed the log-frame indicators against the progress made towards the mid-point targets using the Progress Towards Results Matrix. The MTRT assessed

progress under each component and outcome/output and identified areas not on target. The team also compared and analysed the GEF Tracking Tool at the Baseline with the one completed before the Midterm Review, identifying remaining barriers to achieving the project objective and expanding successful elements of the Project.

Under **Project Implementation and Adaptive Management (efficiency)**, the MTRT considered management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications. This assessment utilised the Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects.

Finally, in reviewing **sustainability** prospects, the MTRT validated whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Project Implementation Reports (PIRs), and the Atlas/Quantum Risk Management Module were the most important and whether the risk ratings applied were appropriate and current. The team also explored opportunities to ensure the sustainability of results, reflecting on financial, socio-economic, institutional framework and governance, and environmental risks.

4.1 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

The MTRT implemented a multifaceted approach to undertake a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of cross-cutting issues throughout the evaluation, ensuring a deep integration of gender considerations and incorporating diverse stakeholder perspectives at every evaluation phase. Specifically, the MTRT examined the extent to which human rights considerations have been embedded in the Project's activities, also focusing on the benefits to people experiencing poverty, women, and other disadvantaged groups. For gender equality, the evaluation assessed how the CBIT Project addressed gender issues throughout the lifecycle. It also included the analysis of these measures in the context of their transformative changes in promoting gender equality and reflected on the Project's overall contribution to gender equality, human rights, and human development. Central to this approach is the adherence to gender-responsive evaluation, an analytic method that scrutinises the influence of interventions on gender equality.

4.2 KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The TOR and the guidelines provided for conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects provided the basis for the evaluation questions. The MTRT analysed and proposed seven key evaluation questions, using opportunities to introduce other questions to ensure that all areas indicated under the TOR are considered and covered. The report answered these questions using specific, objectively verifiable indicators (OVI).

Table 1 Presentation of the key evaluation questions

Key Evaluation Questions (KQ)	Project Strategy	Progress Towards Results	Project Implemen and Adaptive Mngm	Sustainability
Key Question 1: Has the CBIT Project been relevant in responding to the needs of the country, national institutions and beneficiaries?	X			
Key Question 2: Has the CBIT Project aligned its intervention with the reform priorities, and development goals of Montenegro?	X			
Key question 3: Have the CBIT Project and its approaches and activities delivered its outputs as planned?		X		X
Key Question 4: Has the CBIT Project considered gender equality, and followed the principle of leave no-one behind (LNOB) during its design and implementation?		X		X

Key question 5: Has the implementation of the CBIT Project so far been efficient concerning adherence to the work plans (timely implementation), flexibility and responsiveness?		X	X	X
Key Question 6: Does the CBIT Project contribute to partnerships, policies and capacities of stakeholders to ensure sustainability of achieved results?			X	X

X- main evaluation criteria; X- additional evaluation criteria

These evaluation questions, judgement criteria, indicators and evidence, following all the provisions, have been presented in the evaluation matrix (Annex 3).

4.3 EVALUABILITY ANALYSIS

The MTRT assessed the evaluability of the CBIT Project across several dimensions per criteria and comments outlined in the evaluability checklist matrix (Annex 3). The Project presented a clearly defined Theory of Change (ToC), confirming that the subject of the evaluation was well understood, with a common consensus on the initiatives to be evaluated. Montenegro's development of a conceptual framework and a pilot information system while preparing its Second Biennial Update Report provided evidence. The CBIT Project's structure encompassed two complementary components designed to achieve specific outcomes, including institutional transparency and enhancing technical capacities within an improved transparency framework.

Furthermore, a well-established results framework for the CBIT Project included clearly defined goals, outcome statements, outputs, inputs, and SMART indicators. This framework provided a strategic outline for pursuing desired results. However, it required some updates and reformulations during the inception phase to better correspond with the Project's objectives and to integrate legal practices for MRV-E systems.

In terms of data availability, there was a sufficient collection of baseline data, monitoring data against set targets, a detailed progress report, and minutes from Project Board meetings, ensuring a comprehensive mid-term review could be conducted. Despite changes in the Project's context, the evaluation's purpose and scope remained clearly defined and shared among stakeholders, with realistic evaluation questions aligned with the Project's design and data availability.

Lastly, the MTRT considered political, social, and economic factors to allow for effective implementation and utilisation of the evaluation. The evaluation was designed to be adaptable, integrating these factors into the assessment and leveraging opportunities to promote institutional mechanisms for transparency. Additionally, the evaluation was supported by adequate human and financial resources, with the MTRT bringing relevant expertise and experience, promising a thorough and insightful evaluation process. The comprehensive methodology proposed by the MTRT included theory-based evaluation, systemic study, and contribution analysis methods to provide a deep understanding of the Project's impacts and inform decision-making for future directions.

5 Evaluation approach and methodology

5.1 SPECIFIC APPROACH TO THIS EVALUATION

The framework for this ex-post evaluation has been set in the ToR, and following its provisions, the MTRT has developed a tailor-made methodology. The primary references have been the Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects¹⁶, the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines¹⁷ and the OECD/DAC

¹⁶ https://erc.undp.org/pdf/Guidance_Midterm%20Review%20_EN_2014.pdf

¹⁷ http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/documents/PDF/UNDP_Evaluation_Guidelines.pdf

Evaluation Criteria¹⁸. The MTRT adhered to UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards¹⁹ and UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation²⁰.

Expanding this basis, the MTRT applied a theory-based evaluation approach²¹ using the Theory of Change (TOC-Chapter 6.2.); furthermore, the evaluation included contribution analysis and system thinking, reflecting gender-responsive principles and following a human-rights-based approach. The subsequent paragraphs outlined the methodology that the MTRT applied during this process.

The theory-based evaluation was grounded in the analysed and confirmed ToC for the CBIT Project, providing a comprehensive and dynamic evaluation approach, emphasising accountability and continuous learning. This method provided a structured framework, looking at the ToC as a roadmap that outlined the intended sequence of events and causal pathways leading to the desired outcome. This clear articulation of assumptions and expected outcomes allowed the MTRT to systematically assess whether and how the CBIT Project activities led to the planned outputs and desired outcomes. This approach was instrumental in the context of the CBIT Project, as it facilitated the identification of critical components and variables to measure and analyse. This was especially important in the CBIT Project as multiple, interrelated factors contributed to the outcomes.

The MTRT promoted the theory-based evaluation for adaptability and learning. The EC could compare the actual achievement of outputs and outcomes with those presented in the (reconstructed) ToC. This comparison could reveal discrepancies, revealing aspects of the Project that may not have worked as expected. From experience, this iterative process of testing the ToC fostered a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors that influenced the delivery of outputs and progress towards outcomes.

Furthermore, this theory-based approach was complemented by contribution analysis and systems thinking.

Contribution analysis was a robust evaluation tool, mainly used to complement the methodology for complex interventions like the CBIT Project. At its core, this method focused on disentangling and examining the plausible connections between the Project's activities and results and the changes at the observed outcomes, striving to comprehend the mechanisms and reasons behind the changes observed.

This methodology began with establishing a causal chain as expressed in the ToC, detailing the expected sequence of events from the project's activities to its outputs, outcomes, and the ultimate impacts- comparing it with how the Project's designers envisioned the intervention's success. Following this, the analysis involved meticulous evidence gathering to validate each step of this chain. For the CBIT evaluation, this meant verifying whether the planned activities were executed, whether they achieved immediate results within the period of the MTR's coverage, progressing towards the project's overarching goals.

The strength of contribution analysis has been in its thorough consideration of alternate explanations for the observed outcomes and impact. Reviewing the Project involved scrutinising external influences or other interventions that might have impacted the CBIT or the environmental sector, including environmental stewardship implementation. By excluding or integrating these other factors, the mid-term review could more convincingly attribute to the observed changes to the Project. Additionally, contribution analysis acknowledged the critical role of context, especially relevant for the CBIT Project in Montenegro, where the political, economic, and social landscape and the EU accession process significantly shaped the policies and practices related to the environmental sector. The mid-term review was, therefore, adaptive, continuously refining the causal chain based on emerging evidence, ensuring that the understanding of the Project's impacts remained relevant and accurate in the light of new findings.

The contribution analysis provided a robust and flexible framework for a nuanced understanding of the Project's effects. It went beyond simply documenting changes to unpacking the intricate web of causality, helping stakeholders understand the Project's results and challenges and informing plans and strategies.

¹⁸ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development / Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC), Network on Development Evaluation, Better Criteria for Better Evaluation Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use, 2019, available at: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf>

¹⁹ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2787>

²⁰ <http://www.uneval.org/document/download/1294>

²¹ Centre of Excellence for Evaluation (2012). Theory-Based Approaches to Evaluation: Concepts and Practices. Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat.

The MRTT used benefits from **systems thinking**²², with its holistic emphasis on understanding interactions and relationships within a system. This approach enabled to grasp the broader interplay within the environmental sector in Montenegro, enabling the MRTT to delve into the root causes behind observed outputs (and outcomes) and ensure that recommendations were grounded in the foundational dynamics of the system.

Moreover, systems thinking introduced adaptive feedback loops, ensuring the evaluation remained agile and responsive to emerging findings and changing circumstances. The intricate web of CBIT-related stakeholders and their relationships could be mapped and analysed more clearly, revealing power dynamics and potential synergy or conflict areas. This “systems thinking” approach was particularly useful when analysing CBIT Project’s sustainability, highlighting possible environmental/environmental stewardship system advantages and vulnerabilities and suggesting possible measures to bolster CBIT’s ability to address these challenges.

5.2 RECONSTRUCTING THE THEORY OF CHANGE

The Theory of Change (ToC) for the CBIT project in Montenegro is intricately designed, considering the unique challenges and potentials of Montenegro and its evolving institutions. The Project recognised the limitations in absorptive capacity, primarily due to a shortage of skilled personnel and limited exposure to best practices and adopted the strategy to address these hurdles and foster climate-resilient development.

At its core, the CBIT project endeavours to fortify institutional capacities through targeted, experiential learning activities. These initiatives involve leveraging existing expertise and integrating high-level official mechanisms to ensure institutionalisation and long-term sustainability. The Project aimed to augment the efficacy of existing structures and mechanisms by introducing innovative tools for climate action, thereby enhancing their operational effectiveness. A critical aspect of this strategy has been inclusivity, ensuring that expert stakeholders have been actively involved and that practical, user-friendly methodologies have been developed to effectively use new data, information, and models in climate action monitoring, reporting, and verification.

The CBIT Project was strategically designed to achieve specific outputs, each dependent on a series of critical assumptions for successful implementation. Key among these was the continued legitimacy and effective functioning of pivotal national entities, including the National Council for Sustainable Development, along with the Working Group (WG) on Mitigation and Adaptation and WG for Financing Sustainable Development. The effectiveness of the Project hinged on these bodies perceiving it as a supportive and strengthening force, enhancing their authority and thereby contributing to their legitimacy and effectiveness. Additionally, the relevance of the National Strategy with Action Plan for Transposition, Implementation, and Enforcement of the EU ACQUIS on Environment and Climate Change 2016-2020 (NEAS) was assumed to persist as a crucial guiding framework. This strategy was vital for Montenegro’s alignment with the EU climate change obligations, ensuring that the Project’s actions aligned with broader environmental goals and regulations. Moreover, the Project presupposed a firm commitment from the government to finance the measures necessary to ensure full compliance with EU environmental and climate change directives. This financial backing was essential for the Project to meet its objectives and for Montenegro to adhere to its international commitments in the realm of climate change and environmental stewardship.

Assuming these conditions were met, the CBIT Project aimed to deliver a comprehensive series of outputs that were instrumental in advancing Montenegro’s climate action strategies:

Governance and Capacity Enhancement: This involved strengthening governance structures, procedures, and technical capacities to effectively respond to the emerging transparency requirements stipulated under the Paris Agreement.

Development of Transparency Methodologies: The project was to develop Transparency Methodologies, Procedures, and Guidelines (MPGs) for various aspects of climate action. This included MPGs for tracking Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), adaptation activities, and climate finance, ensuring comprehensive coverage and standardisation in monitoring and reporting these critical areas.

Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Projections: Improvement of the greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory and projections was a key output which would enhance the accuracy and reliability of national emissions data.

Capacity Building for Public Authorities and Institutions: The project focused on building the capacities of selected public authorities and scientific institutions. This enabled them to apply these MPGs effectively in their

²² Richard Hummelbrunner (2011). Keynote Address “Systems Thinking and Evaluation”. Conference “Systemic Approaches in Evaluation; and Bowman K. et al. (2015). Systems Thinking: An introduction for Oxfam Project Staff

first reporting period on national adaptation actions, as required under Article 15 of the Monitoring Mechanism Regulation (MMR).

Gender Mainstreaming in Climate Action: An important aspect of the project was enabling relevant national institutions to integrate gender considerations into the enhanced transparency framework, thereby promoting inclusivity in climate action.

Strengthening the Transparency Portal: The transparency portal was to be bolstered and made fully operational. This platform would be a central hub for climate action data and information, facilitating easier access and utilisation.

Training and Support: The project included training initiatives focused on effectively using portal information to aid decision-making. This was aimed at enhancing the competency of stakeholders in utilising data for informed climate actions.

Feedback and Global Coordination: There was a continuous feedback mechanism on the project's implementation, results, and lessons learned, which would be shared through the Global Coordination Platform. This ensured learning and collaboration beyond national borders.

Development of a Technical Roadmap: The drafting of a technical roadmap for a National Low-Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) was included. This roadmap would align with the enhanced transparency framework, providing a strategic direction for low-carbon development in Montenegro.

These outputs collectively aimed to solidify Montenegro's approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation and climate change finance, ensuring alignment with international standards and commitments, and fostering a transparent, inclusive, and effective climate action framework. They were expected to culminate in substantial outcomes, including a strengthened institutional mechanism for increased transparency, the enhancement of national institutions for implementing such transparency, institutionalized coordination and information exchange, and a technical roadmap for low-carbon and climate-resilient development.

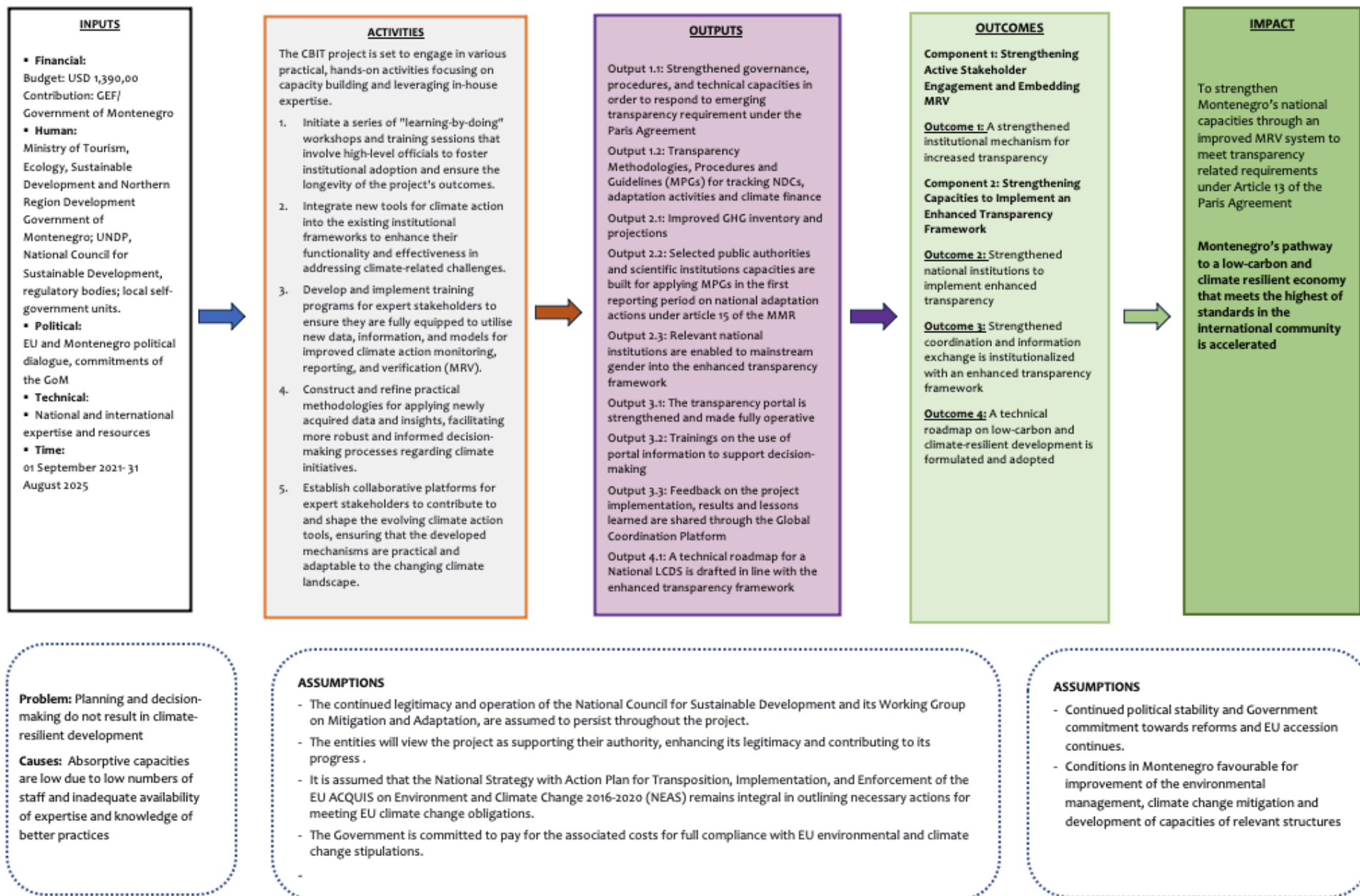
The achievement of these outcomes, alongside assumptions of continued political stability and government commitment to reforms and EU accession efforts, remained a priority. Additionally, it was assumed that external developments would remain conducive to effective environmental management and capacity development, aiming to bolster Montenegro's national capacities. A central goal was the establishment of an improved MRV-E system, essential for meeting the transparency requirements stipulated in Article 13 of the Paris Agreement, thereby advancing Montenegro's commitments to global climate action objectives.

During the data collection phase, the MTRT focused on the TOC, as indicated in the previous paragraphs under the Theory-based evaluation, focusing on two areas:

The MTRT assessed the **validity and credibility** of the TOC through an analysis of the intervention logic, including the hierarchy of objectives, potential gaps in the logic, and the sufficiency of preconditions to reach specific and overall objectives.

The MTRT analysed whether the **TOC was realistic and achievable**, assessing if the CBIT Project could achieve its outputs and progress towards outcome targets (hence, contribute to progress towards planned impact). The analysis included whether the partners, primarily the CBIT and critical national institutions like the Directorate of Ecology and Climate Change in the MTESDNRD, the Institute of Hydrometeorology and Seismology, and the Environment Protection Agency, government ministries, and other public bodies, had enough capacity and resources to implement the planned activities and continue using established capacities or required additional support. Furthermore, the evaluation assessed whether the scope, expectations, and timeline of the TOC needed any adjustment.

Figure 1 Theory of Change for the CBIT Project (see below)



5.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The CBIT Project mid-term review is encompassing both summative and formative methodologies. The summative component aimed to encapsulate and critically evaluate the lessons learned, pinpointing the realization of discernible results at both output and outcome levels during the first years of implementation. The formative facet looked ahead, pondering the adaptability of these results for future phases and possible expansions of the CBIT Project. In this context, the evaluation used several information sources and benefited from different data-gathering tools that enabled exhaustive comprehension of the Project's roll-out and influence in Montenegro. The MTRT's proposed methodology for this evaluation reflected the ToC model, employing a mixed-methods paradigm that synergised qualitative and quantitative data collection and interpretative techniques.

While qualitative data methods dominated the landscape—featuring tools like key informant interviews, group discussions, and reflective sessions—quantitative data, derived from entities such as the CBIT Team and UNDP Montenegro, the Directorate of Ecology and Climate Change in the MTESDNRD, other vital directorates/institutions such as the Institute of Hydrometeorology and Seismology and Environment Protection Agency, and other institutions, complemented the findings.

The MTRT ensured data triangulation and harvested insights from various sources, authenticating findings and spotlighting consensus and variance points.

This evaluation methodology and its well-elaborated approach, based on the MTRT's experience from similar settings, enabled the CBIT Project evaluation to stand robust in its relevance, applicability, and integrity within the context of Montenegro's environmental sector and its reform.

5.3.1 Analysis of Project records and secondary literature

The evaluative process began with an in-depth examination of the CBIT Project, its inputs, and deliverables, while also reviewing national and sector-specific strategic documents and project-level inputs. This examination included national regulations, environmental (and energy)-related sectoral and EU Progress Reports, and overarching strategic directives aligned with the Project's intent. These sources provided insights into Montenegro's environmental, socio-economic, institutional, and developmental context during the Project's implementation. Additionally, the MTRT expanded its focus to external variables influencing the environmental sector and reforms within it, thereby situating the CBIT Project within its operational context. Furthermore, the MTRT's desk audit integrated insights from various national reports, refining the evaluation questions and aligning them with the objectives of the evaluative mission. This methodical approach created a coherent narrative that intertwined the Project's goals, evaluation questions, and data methodologies as outlined in this report. In subsequent stages of the evaluation process, the MTRT planned to enrich its findings, revisit documents, and strengthen collaborations with key and participating institutions.

The MTRT deployed a standardized analytical tool to systematically organize findings from diverse primary and secondary sources, following the evaluative matrix. This approach aimed to facilitate a cohesive and comprehensive understanding of the Project.

5.3.2 Primary data collection

This mid-term review followed gender-sensitive and feminist approaches, ensuring the participation of stakeholders in the interviews and focus groups. This included men and women from the national institutions such as the CBIT Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and MTESDNRD, governmental entities, regulatory bodies, and CSOs. These methods were further enriched through a human rights-based approach (HRBA), integrating principles of transparency, equality, and non-discrimination.

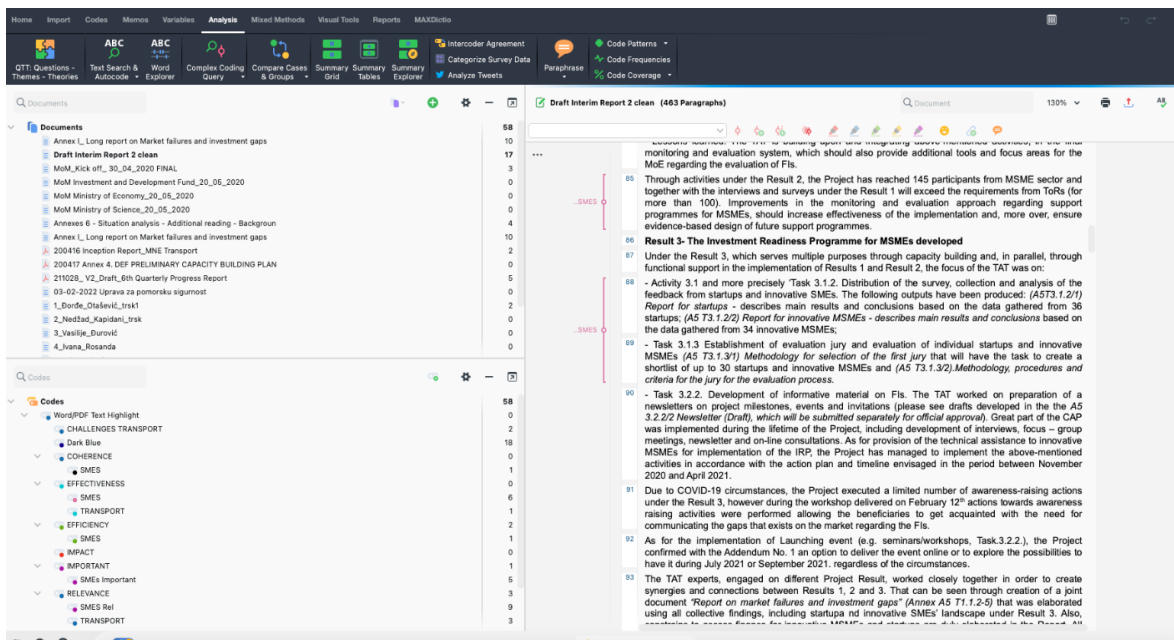
The MTRT employed a purposive sampling technique, focusing on selecting key informants influenced by their level and nature of engagement, which included formulation, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and benefiting. The MTRT organized in-person and online semi-structured interviews with these individuals to extract in-depth insights from stakeholders intimately involved in various stages of the CBIT Project. This approach ensured a multi-faceted perspective on its accomplishments and challenges.

Semi-structured interviews and group discussions were chosen as the most practical methods, considering the CBIT Project's scope, implemented activities, and the timeframe for the review. The semi-structured interview approach ensured consistent data collection on pre-determined themes, while also providing the flexibility to explore spontaneously emerging insights, challenges, and success narratives. The list of interviewed representatives of stakeholder institutions is available in Annex 1.

5.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The MTRT analysed data to facilitate the preparation of the evaluation report, using the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA to upload completed data collection instruments²³.

Figure 2 Overview of the MAXQDA interface



The MTRT prepared codes and classifications based on the evaluation matrix and its elements - the sub-questions, judgment criteria, and indicators. In parallel, the MTRT added classifications or other attributes (such as duty bearer, rightsholder, and implementation strategy) to facilitate data analysis that was tailored to the evaluation purpose.

The MTRT applied a **cross-validation approach**²⁴ for information from various sources and collection methods to ensure the accuracy of findings. In parallel, the MTRT examined multiple sources to confirm the internal validity of the findings. This **triangulation**, involving various sources, ensured the confirmation and cross-check of major trends while establishing a pattern through the convergence of data.²⁵

The MTRT established correlations and causations between the CBIT's strategies and outcomes, including identifying direct effects and unintended consequences and comparing findings against the initial objectives, goals and best practices from similar programs. Key stakeholders were engaged to validate these conclusions, providing nuanced insights and grounding the conclusions in the findings and realities.

The conclusions and findings served for formulating recommendations, and MTRT prioritised recommendations based on possible impact, feasibility, and urgency, articulated clearly, specifically, and actionable. The MTRT actively engaged with stakeholders, including the CBIT's participants and beneficiaries, to refine and validate recommendations, ensuring relevance and achievability. Recommendations were future-oriented, addressing past challenges and guiding the fine-tuning of the CBIT's implementation. Finally, feedback loops were established by sharing draft recommendations with key

²³ Such instruments include document review templates, semi-structured interview guides (individual and group), and discussion or reflection guides.

²⁴ Morras-Imas and Rist define triangulation of methods as "Collection of the same information using different methods in order to increase the accuracy of data", p. 300. Morra Imas, L. G., & Rist, R. C. (2009). *The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations*. Washington, D.C., World Bank.

²⁵ Morras- Imas and Rist, p. 376.

stakeholders for feedback. The MTRT remained flexible, revising recommendations based on new insights or feedback to ensure relevancy and actionability. This systematic and participative approach in drawing recommendations from the evaluation findings guaranteed that the advice was evidence-based and refined through collaborative input, ensuring its relevancy and practicality.

Risks and Assumptions

Assumptions

The MTRT made several assumptions for the smooth conduct of the evaluation. These included timely data and information availability, the provision of documentary sources by CBIT PIU / UNDP Country Office team and the availability of critical informants for interviews and group discussions and their willingness to cooperate during the evaluation. Moreover, the MTRT assumed no unforeseen setbacks during the evaluation process.

Risk, limitations and mitigation measures

While thorough, the MTR encountered certain inherent limitations typical of mid-term evaluations. One primary limitation was the reliance on available data, which may not fully capture the project's long-term impacts and outcomes. This was mitigated by triangulating data from multiple sources, including project documents, stakeholder interviews, and field observations, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the Project's progress and effectiveness.

Another limitation was the potential for response bias in stakeholder interviews. To address this, the MTRT employed various techniques, such as cross-referencing interview data with project records and observations, to validate and corroborate the information gathered. In addition, the MTRT could not contact the former NPD, who was replaced in the aftermath of political changes and did not respond to meeting requests. Additionally, the MTR was conducted within a limited timeframe, which may constrain the depth of analysis in certain complex areas of the Project. However, the team prioritized key evaluation criteria and questions to ensure that the MTRT thoroughly examined the Project's most critical aspects. Remarkably, the evaluation did not face any significant risks during its implementation. This is partly attributable to the robust planning and methodological rigor employed by the MTRT. Before the mid-term review, the team identified and proactively addressed potential risks such as data inaccessibility, stakeholder non-cooperation, and logistical challenges through comprehensive planning, stakeholder engagement strategies, and flexible scheduling.

The lack of significant risks can also indicate the strong stakeholder support and commitment to the Project, which facilitated smooth access to information and resources necessary for the evaluation. The MTRT maintained a transparent and communicative approach throughout the process, further mitigating any potential risks that could arise.

5.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Generally, the MTRT is aware of the OECD DAC ethical considerations for development evaluations²⁶ and United Nations Ethical Guidelines²⁷. The MTRT followed ethical considerations in selecting interviewees, interacting with them, and respecting their personal and institutional rights. The MTRT requested informed consent from stakeholders before asking questions about the CBIT. To obtain consent, the MTRT briefly explained the evaluation's reasons and objectives and the questions' scope. Stakeholders had the right to refuse or to withdraw at any time. The MTRT also ensured respondent privacy and confidentiality, as disclosing confidential information may seriously jeopardise the efficiency and credibility of the evaluation process. The MTRT respected informants' right to provide information confidently and ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source to protect the key informants from reprisals. The MTRT is fully independent and unaware of any conflicts of interest for this work and during the evaluation process, and followed the principles of impartiality, credibility, and accountability. Please refer to the signed Code of Conduct within Annex 8.

²⁶ <https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf>

²⁷ United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation- UNEG/CoC, 2020. Ref to <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866>

6 Presentation of findings

The MTRT has presented the following findings, responding directly to the evaluation questions and judgement criteria detailed in the evaluation matrix (reflecting the mid-term review's scope and objectives). These findings are derived from the evidence generated from data collection and analysis methods²⁸.

6.1 PROJECT STRATEGY

Key Question 1: Has the CBIT Project been relevant in responding to the needs of the country, national institutions and beneficiaries?

In answering this question, the MTRT considered several critical aspects. Initially, it assessed the extent to which the Project addressed the needs of the stakeholders and the degree of partner involvement in its design, following GEF guidance and the problem analysis. In addition, the MTRT examined if the CBIT and its intervention areas remained relevant to the mid-point in its implementation, analysing the need for revision and changes in the implementation framework.

F1. The partners designed the CBIT to respond to Montenegro's specific needs in enhancing its climate change response mechanisms. The Project aimed to establish a more robust and transparent system for climate action, ensuring that Montenegro's efforts in climate change mitigation and adaptation were effective and aligned with global standards and commitments. The Project's comprehensive approach, addressing institutional and technical aspects, was crucial for advancing Montenegro's capacity to tackle the challenges of climate change effectively.

Montenegro has progressed in establishing its institutional framework and developing capacities (of these institutions and their employees) concerning engagement in climate change mitigation and adaptation. However, these efforts met considerable challenges, including insufficient financial, operational and technical support to address the escalating complexities of climate change. For example, the country grappled with issues such as inconsistent methodologies and inadequate data monitoring and reporting systems. These challenges were compounded by jurisdictional uncertainties and language barriers, hindering the development of an effective MRV-E system²⁹. The need for continuous enhancement in policy drafting, aligned with the EU climate change regulations and international conventions, was apparent. Additionally, the technical team responsible for greenhouse gas inventory required ongoing support to ensure accuracy and sustainability in future inventory development³⁰. Recognising these gaps, the authorities in Montenegro made concerted efforts to improve its climate action framework, as evidenced by the technical analysis of its Biennial Update Reports³¹. These reports highlighted the necessity for improved transparency in institutional data exchange, the accuracy of inventory data, and the methodologies for mitigation actions. Despite advancements in certain areas, the country still needed improvements, such as a comprehensive National Adaptation Plan³² (NAP) and a robust MRV-E system.

These deficiencies highlighted the need for an integrated approach to climate change in Montenegro that required a more strategic focus on enhancing its MRV-E system, refining its policy frameworks, and aligning national efforts with international climate action goals.

The CBIT stakeholders stated that their intention with the CBIT Project has been to respond to these “distinct challenges and needs under the climate change framework³³”, prioritising national institutional and technical

²⁸ The methodology section of the report provided details

²⁹ More details available at the EC Progress Reports on Montenegro- 2019, 2020

³⁰ Ibidem, EC Progress Reports

³¹ For example, Third Biennial Update Report of Montenegro to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change- https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/BUR3_Montenegro%20-%202024.%20Jan%20-%20FINAL.pdf

³² Available at <https://napmontenegro.me/en/homepage-english/#about>, The National Adaptation Plan (NAP) is both a document and a process that helps countries implement comprehensive medium- and long-term climate change adaptation planning, using scientific research and facts. The purpose of the NAP drafting process itself is to provide assessments of vulnerability and risk from climate change, and, after they have been identified, to define potential measures for their mitigation.

³³ KII notes

capacities development as “paramount in overcoming methodological inconsistencies and monitoring challenges³⁴”. More specifically, the MTRT finds that the CBIT’s pledge to adopt and refine methodologies and tools to heighten transparency was in direct alignment with Article 13 of the Paris Agreement³⁵, addressing Montenegro's need for more consistent processes and clarity in jurisdictional matters. The Project is committed to improving the efficiency of national climate change actions and ensuring their alignment with other national endeavours, policies, and measures, aiming to cultivate a climate-resilient and low-carbon development pathway.

Furthermore, the Project was designed to enhance Montenegro's proficiency in formulating, developing, and implementing comprehensive climate policies and measures. This component of the Project addressed the need for “ongoing training in policy and legislation drafting by EU regulations and the requirements of international conventions”³⁶. In this context, the Project recognised benefits and supported efforts to strategically use the MRV-E portal in addressing the gap in coordinated support and climate finance expertise. Practically, it entailed establishing a robust institutional mechanism for tracking nationally determined contributions and developing a comprehensive transparency framework, which directly responded to the lack of a formal MRV-E system in Montenegro. This system is and remains vital for gathering data, monitoring, and reporting on the progress and gaps in implementing mitigation and adaptation actions and managing climate finance.

Generally, the MTRT finds that the CBIT’s structured approach has been tailored to meet Montenegro's specific needs in enhancing its response mechanisms to climate change, ensuring that the country’s efforts in climate change mitigation and adaptation were practical and aligned with international standards and commitments, thus contributing to the global fight against climate change.

F2. The involvement of key national partners in the conceptualisation and design of the CBIT project in Montenegro was comprehensive and strategic. This profound engagement underpinned the Project's relevance and effectiveness in enhancing Montenegro's capacities for climate change mitigation, adaptation, and transparent reporting.

The CBIT’s conceptualisation and design were deeply rooted in a collaborative effort involving main national partners³⁷; and this proactive stakeholders’ stance in climate change policy followed the country’s succession to the UNFCCC in 2006³⁸. The MTESDNRD³⁹, the leading national entity responsible for environmental and climate change policy and the National Focal Point of the UNFCCC, played a central role in this process.

Operationally, preparing the CBIT was a comprehensive and strategic endeavour that required detailed coordination and planning⁴⁰. Initially, the Ministry thoroughly assessed the country's environmental and climate change needs, identifying policy gaps and understanding how to bridge these gaps effectively, particularly in the context of Montenegro's commitments under international conventions. In parallel, this process involved considering and analysing national strategies for sustainable development, climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and other environmental priorities. At the same time, the Ministry engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including government departments, CSOs, academic institutions, and the private sector. This engagement facilitated the gathering of diverse insights and guaranteed that the proposed activities and expected results areas (within the CBIT) addressed the multifaceted aspects of environmental and climate challenges.

With support from technical experts, the Ministry drafted a comprehensive proposal detailing the project description, objectives, expected outcomes, implementation strategies, budgetary requirements, and monitoring and evaluation plans. The stakeholders reported that the "proposal underwent several rounds

³⁴ Meeting minutes from the Project Board Meetings and interviews with the national stakeholders

³⁵ Article 13 of the Paris Agreement established an enhanced transparency framework for action and support, with built-in flexibility which takes into account Parties’ different capacities and builds upon collective experience. More at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

³⁶ EC progress reports and also problem analysis carried out during the CBIT formulation

³⁷ Statements of the key national stakeholders from the Ministry and members of the

³⁸ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/INC_Montenegro_Eng.pdf

³⁹ Until 31 October 2023, it was the Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism- MESPU

⁴⁰ KII notes

of internal review and refinement, along with consultations with external experts and stakeholders, to enhance its robustness, relevance, and feasibility". The Ministry's role in the environmental sector and the participation of the critical stakeholders ensured the relevance of GEF support in the context of Montenegro's climate change priorities and broader environmental and developmental objectives.

F3. The CBIT remains highly relevant for Montenegro, addressing critical needs in climate policy development, institutional capacity building, and adherence to international environmental standards. Its comprehensive approach aids in fulfilling immediate climate action requirements and supports the long-term goal of sustainable development and EU integration⁴¹.

The CBIT remains a critical initiative that supports the country's ongoing efforts to combat climate change, for example, strengthening Montenegro's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and Adaptation Activities Transparency Framework, also supporting progresses toward European Union (EU) membership⁴². The Project's emphasis on improving transparency in climate action aligns with the EU's stringent environmental and climate policies. Specifically, the CBIT project's focus on enhancing institutional capacities and technical skills remains highly pertinent for the country's work towards aligning its policies with the EU acquis in areas like greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy, and energy efficiency. Namely, the Project's work to ensure the tools and frameworks for effective policy formulation, implementation, and reporting fully respond and address critical aspects of EU environmental directives.

The Project's role in enhancing Montenegro's MRV-E system is particularly relevant, especially considering enduring challenges in data collection, monitoring, reporting, and analysis. The robust MRV-E is required to track climate action progress under EU regulations and the Paris Agreement. The enhanced MRV-E system aids in producing accurate and comprehensive greenhouse gas inventories, an essential element for informed decision-making in climate policy and for meeting international reporting obligations. Moreover, the CBIT addresses the need for capacity building within the leading institutions involved in environmental management and climate action. The Project focuses on training and skill development as preconditions to effectively implement climate-related policies and measures. This aspect of the Project is particularly relevant in light of Montenegro's administrative and technical challenges in environmental governance. Strengthening these institutions ensures that Montenegro's efforts in climate change mitigation and adaptation are both efficient and sustainable.

The Project's integration of gender-sensitive approaches and its focus on broader developmental impacts resonate with Montenegro's commitment to inclusive and sustainable development, ensuring that climate action contributes positively to social and economic development⁴³.

Key Question 2: Has the CBIT Project aligned its intervention with Montenegro's reform priorities and development goals?

The MTRT examined the CBIT's internal consistency, analysing the logical connection between its objectives and Montenegro's overall climate change priorities. In addition, the MTRT assessed the Project's external coherence in the context of international obligations and initiatives.

F4. The CBIT Project in Montenegro ensured strong internal coherence, with its activities, outputs and outcomes logically connected and consistent, leading to its stated objective.

The Project created a robust connection between its objectives, activities, and anticipated outcomes, focusing on enhancing Montenegro's capacity for climate action transparency in line with the Paris Agreement.

The strategic framework of the CBIT was underpinned by a well-defined Theory of Change, serving as a primary analytical tool that maintained the Project's internal coherence. The Project was structured into two main components, each targeting specific areas of climate action transparency. Component 1, aimed at

⁴¹ The MTRT assessed if the external developments required response and if the Project adjusted and fine-tuned its intervention as set out in the ToC and its intervention logic. The evaluation has focused on whether the overall objective and outcomes, as the main references under the intervention logic, remained valid and achievable or whether there was a case for revision to take account of changes in the external environment, demand, or speed of delivery.

⁴² https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_694%20Montenegro%20report.pdf

⁴³ The Second Voluntary National Review: Montenegro and Sustainable Development Goals 2016–2021, GoM, June 2022-
<https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2022/VNR%202022%20Montenegro%20Report.pdf> and
<https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/montenegro/fact-sheet>

strengthening stakeholder engagement and embedding MRV-E of climate action within sectoral functions, focused on developing institutional mechanisms for increased transparency. Component 2 focused on enhancing technical capacities to implement an ambitious transparency framework. This structured approach allowed for a systematic development of Montenegro's capabilities in addressing climate change and fulfilling international commitments. The ToC served as a roadmap for Project implementation, outlining the interconnections between various project elements in achieving the outputs and linking them with outcomes (and broader development objectives within the sector).

The deep understanding of the national context and involvement of the main national stakeholders additionally contributed to the Project's internal coherence, as the components aligned with Montenegro's specific needs and priorities in climate action. The MTRT finds synergy among project elements that enhance strategic resource allocation and efficacy in strengthening Montenegro's institutional and technical capacities for climate action transparency.

F5. The CBIT Project is aligned with policy, legislative commitment, and EU requirements, contributing to Montenegro's climate action framework.

The stakeholders stated that the "CBIT in Montenegro represents a strategic intersection of national commitment and practical capacity-building in the realm of climate action⁴⁴", that aligns with and propels the nation's climate change response. The main references have been various national policy directives and legislative enactments, and also with the EU's environmental standards that determined national accession objectives.

The Project aligns with the National Climate Change Strategy (NCCS) by 2030⁴⁵ as the primary reference for Montenegro's climate priorities and actions. The NCCS provides a strategic direction towards effectively reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and sets forth a trace that aligns with global climate action requirements. The Project underpins these objectives by strengthening the country's ability to track, report, and, hence, scrutinise the efficacy of its mitigation measures. The MTRT finds that the Project's support for establishing a robust MRV-E system aligns with Montenegro's strides in controlling and monitoring on reducing GHG emissions. In addition, these activities align with the NCCS priorities for transparency and accountability in environmental governance.

Parallel to this, the CBIT Project aligns with the National Strategy of Sustainable Development (NSSD) until 2030⁴⁶, supporting the transition to a "resource-efficient and circular economy as a prerequisite for Montenegro's sustainable future". The Project contributes to the NSSD by institutionalising climate change consideration into developmental planning and bolstering the country's ability to manage its resources sustainably. The stakeholders stated that efforts to "include climate action into Montenegro's broader development vision enhance understanding and generate momentum to integrate sustainable practices into the fabric of national progress⁴⁷".

The MTRT finds that the CBIT aligned with the Law on Ratification of the Paris Agreement⁴⁸ provisions, showcasing Montenegro's commitment to cut GHG emissions. The MTRT finds that the Project is steadily working on equipping the country with the institutional and technical prowess needed for a granular and accurate GHG emissions inventory, thus contributing to its adherence to the international commitments (as highlighted in this law). Similarly, the Project aligned with the practical implementation of the Law on Protection Against Adverse Impacts of Climate Change by elevating institutional capacities and finessing data management and reporting procedures.

The EU accession process remains high on the national agenda, and critical priority remains to ensure that Montenegro's strategic environmental direction align with the EU Acquis on Environment and Climate Change. Here, the CBIT project emerges as the initiative that facilitates Montenegro's adaptation of its

⁴⁴ KII notes

⁴⁵ <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/cd1130f8-668b-4fbd-a094-20a04af536aa>

⁴⁶ <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/6852d215-af43-4671-b940-cbd0525896c1>

⁴⁷ KII notes

⁴⁸ <https://zakoni.skupstina.me/zakoni/web/dokumenta/zakoni-i-drugi-akti/246/1529-9633-27-1-17-6.pdf> details also available at <https://www.informea.org/en/legislation/law-ratification-framework-agreement-between-government-montenegro-and-european>

climate strategies to meet EU benchmarks⁴⁹, particularly the Emissions Trading System (ETS)⁵⁰. Such alignment is crucial for Montenegro's aspirations for EU accession, exemplifying its determination and capability to comply with stringent EU environmental policies⁵¹.

F6. The CBIT has effectively anchored Montenegro's climate change initiatives within the ambit of its international commitments and obligations, fostering its alignment with global standards and directives.

The Project addresses the specific needs identified in the Second Biennial Update Report (SBUR⁵²), the Third National Communication (TNC)⁵³, and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)⁵⁴. It aligns with Montenegro's focus on improving its reporting under the UNFCCC⁵⁵. The CBIT's priority is to enhance the existing MRV-E framework into a more robust transparency framework that resonates with the Paris Agreement, which is crucial for upholding the commitments in Montenegro's NDC. In addition, its systematic response to identified needs for developing Montenegro's institutional capacities and technical competencies has been critical in ensuring adherence to the enhanced transparency framework stipulated by the Paris Agreement⁵⁶. These capacity development efforts responded to Montenegro's priority to produce “transparent and accurate biennial reports⁵⁷” and maintain this consistent biennial reporting regime. The stakeholders recognised CBIT's relevance in working on establishing system for providing comprehensive information enriched with the latest GHG indicators, trends, and projects as highlighted in the NDC reports, thus showcasing its commitment to an accountable and forward-looking climate policy⁵⁸.

The Project's alignment with the EU's climate and environmental acquis has been particularly strategic, demonstrating Montenegro's commitment to meeting and integrating European standards into its domestic climate policy.

F7. The CBIT aligned with the UN and UNDP priorities delineated in the strategic plans for Montenegro

The Project aligned with the Integrated United Nations Programme for Montenegro 2017 – 2021⁵⁹ Environment Sustainability Area and its Outcome 2, which was committed to ensuring benefits to all people of Montenegro through sustainable management of cultural and natural resources, combating climate change and disaster risk reduction. The Project remained aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework for Montenegro (2023–2027)⁶⁰, contributing to Strategic Priority 1, Inclusive

⁴⁹ EU benchmarks are standards and targets established by the European Union to guide and assess member states' performance in critical sectors such as climate action, energy consumption, and renewable energy deployment, with key objectives including reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, increasing the use of renewable energy, and enhancing energy efficiency, as part of the broader European Green Deal aiming for climate neutrality by 2050.

⁵⁰ https://climate.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2016-12/factsheet_ets_en.pdf

⁵¹ KII notes and EC Progress Reports- Chapter 27

⁵²

https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/SECOND%20BIENNIAL%20UPDATE%20REPORT%20ON%20CLIMATE%20CHANGE_Montenegro.pdf

⁵³ https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/SubmissionsStaging/NationalReports/Documents/8596012_Montenegro-NC3-1-TNC%20-%20MNE.pdf

⁵⁴ <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/Updated%20NDC%20for%20Montenegro.pdf>

⁵⁵ These efforts are dating back to the Initial National Communication and the First Biennial Report in 2011

⁵⁶ In congruence with the Agreement, Montenegro ratified its commitment to a 30% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 relative to 1990. The CBIT supported the country in progress towards this goal, facilitating the establishment of accurate GHG monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

⁵⁷ IReport on implementation of the National Strategy on Climate Change until 2030- (covered period September 2018. until September 2021), More at: <https://wapi.gov.me/download-preview/57944aff-dc8d-4afb-8396-6a88a88034ce?version=1.0>

⁵⁸ This approach will ensure high-quality data, which the Working Group on Mitigation and Adaptation will utilise to assess progress towards the NDC, forecast emissions trajectories, and identify potential policy gaps.

⁵⁹ https://montenegro.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Integrated%20United%20Nations%20Programme%20for%20Montenegro%202017%20-%202021_o.pdf

⁶⁰ <https://montenegro.un.org/en/188526-united-nations-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework-montenegro-2023-2027>

economic development and environmental sustainability. Particularly relevant is Outcome 1, which plans to ensure improved management and state of natural resources and increasingly innovative, competitive, gender-responsive, and inclusive economic development that is climate resilient and low-carbon, ensuring benefits for all people, especially the vulnerable. By strengthening institutional frameworks and enhancing technical capabilities for climate action reporting, the Project supported Montenegro in fulfilling its international commitments, fostering inclusive and sustainable development aligned with international environmental standards.

Another aspect of the Project's coherence is its multifaceted alignment with the UNDP Country Programme Document for Montenegro (CPD) 2017-2021⁶¹ and its broad objective to ensure that the people of Montenegro benefit from sustainable management of natural resources and effective government approaches in combating climate change and disaster risk reduction. The Project aligned with the priority area for ensuring climate change targets and environmental protection measures are integrated into national policies and planning. Additionally, the Project's efforts in developing institutional capacities reflect the CPD's commitment to enhancing public administration capabilities, including implementing gender policy priorities.

F9. The CBIT aligns with the broader Agenda 2030 and SDGs. This integration highlights the interconnectedness of climate action with various aspects of sustainable development, emphasising the importance of a holistic approach to environmental governance and policymaking.

Under SDG 13, which addresses Climate Action, the Project has played a role in strengthening institutional and technical capacities (Target 13.1) by enhancing adaptive capacity and resilience to climate-related hazards. The Project facilitated the development of robust mechanisms for tracking nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and establishing a comprehensive transparency framework (Target 13.2), as it promoted the integration of climate change measures into national policies, strategies, and planning. Additionally, the CBIT Project was instrumental in advancing Target 13.3 through its focus on education, awareness-raising, and human and institutional capacity-building on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning. This approach fostered a more informed and proactive stance towards climate action in Montenegro, ensuring that strategies and actions were well-aligned with the nation's commitment to addressing climate change and its multifaceted impacts.

The Project is aligned with SDG5, recognising the intersectionality of climate action and gender equality, ensuring that strategies and solutions in climate governance were equitable and inclusive. Specifically, it advanced women's roles in decision-making processes within the environmental and climate sectors, recognising their unique perspectives and expertise concerning effective climate action (Target 5.5). Additionally, the Project aligned with Target 5.c by integrating gender perspectives into climate policies, addressing the differentiated impacts of climate change on men and women. Furthermore, the project facilitated technology-enhanced capacity-building programs for women professionals in the climate action sector, aligning with Target 5.b

Regarding SDG 16, which focuses on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, the CBIT Project has enhanced the institutional capacity for transparent governance in climate action. It engaged various stakeholders in the policy-making process. These efforts contributed to the country's effective, accountable, and transparent institutions (Target 16.6) and strengthened inclusive and participatory decision-making (Target 16.7).

The Project has focused on enhancing collaboration with international experts and aligning national climate policies with global standards, thus ensuring Montenegro's climate change approach is globally informed and locally relevant. These activities supported the targets of SDG 17, particularly in fostering international cooperation in science and technology (Target 17.6) and enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development (Target 17.14).

⁶¹The CPD was extended until 2022; the Project remained aligned with the new CPD, covering 2023-2027.

<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/me/c4986ab85c602c358a498f076420e9b31726ca7042a5b9e03b4800713097807d.pdf>

6.2 PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS

Key question 3: Have the CBIT Project and its implementation approaches and activities delivered outputs as planned?

In evaluating the effectiveness of the CBIT, the focus was on the extent to which the Project met its targets and achieved its intended outputs and outcomes at mid-term level. The MTRT assessed if and in which form the CBIT is progressing towards outcomes influencing institutional aspects and policy changes in the area of climate change. The team assessed CBIT's (possible) ability to combine structured support, informed policy-making, and sustainable practices into a formidable and innovative response to climate change issues in Montenegro.

A more detailed analysis of CBIT's objective and its outcomes, measured against established targets and defined indicators, is presented in the following table:

Table 2 Progress towards results

CBIT Objective	Indicators (including benchmarks)
To strengthen Montenegro's national capacities through an improved MRV-E system to meet transparency-related requirements under Article 13 of the Paris Agreement	<p>Mandatory Indicator 1: IRRF 1.4.2 - Extent to which implementation of comprehensive measures, i.e. plans, strategies, policies, programmes, and budgets to achieve low-emission and climate-resilient development objectives has improved.</p> <p>Baselines: Existing coordination and formal mechanisms need to be improved. The solutions are only available within the construct of externally funded projects.</p> <p>Targets: One new cooperation mechanism (involving stakeholder agencies and organisations) has been established at directorate level⁶². Coordination improved from a rating of 1 (not adequately) to 3 (partially).</p> <p>Mandatory Indicator 2: Number of direct project beneficiaries that increase their capacities to meet enhanced transparency requirements.</p> <p>Baselines: i) The baseline is set at zero as the training under the project will provide new and expanded skills; ii) The existing institutional structures and mechanisms for data and information management are out of date and hindered by limited data sharing.</p> <p>Targets: i) At least 420 different stakeholders have benefitted directly from project activities, of which 210 (or 50%) are women; ii) Institutional and technical capacities to use data and information for planning and decision-making based on better climate models and information</p>
Comments on Impact	Comments on Indicators (including benchmarks)
In Montenegro, the MRV-E system supported under the CBIT Project is a foundational element in the national effort to combat climate change, supporting a wide range of activities from policy development and international cooperation to public engagement and adaptation strategies. Its role in ensuring accurate data collection and reporting is indispensable for driving effective	Mandatory Indicator 1 (IRRF 1.4.2) is critical for measuring the CBIT objective to strengthen Montenegro's national capacities through an improved MRV-E system for meeting the transparency requirements of the Paris Agreement. Initially, Montenegro faced challenges with inadequate coordination and formal mechanisms,

⁶² i.e., the National Council for Sustainable, Climate Change, and Integrated Coastal Zone Management targeted to catalysing Rio Convention mainstreaming

<p>and accountable climate action within the country.</p> <p>In the context of Montenegro and the CBIT Project, a functional MRV-E system is crucial in enhancing climate change management through improved transparency and accountability. This system is pivotal for precisely tracking and reporting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and mitigation efforts, which is integral to holding the government and organizations in Montenegro accountable for their climate commitments. Thus, the Project's efforts to ensure reliable data from the MRV-E system will be critical for informed policymaking and implementation within the country, facilitating the assessment of current strategies and aiding in developing new, more effective climate actions.</p> <p>Furthermore, the MRV-E system is critical for Montenegro to meet its international reporting obligations, particularly under the UNFCCC, which contributes to Montenegro's climate action efforts. Additionally, the system's role in providing data integrity will be key to accessing climate finance, which is crucial for the country's climate action plans.</p> <p>Operationally, the MRV-E system that the CBIT supported enables tracking progress towards national and international climate targets, offering clarity on the country's performance against its goals. This clarity is crucial for assessing progress, guiding policy adjustments, and strengthening organizational mandates. In carbon markets, the MRV-E system ensures the integrity and verification of emissions data, bolstering the effectiveness of carbon trading initiatives.</p> <p>Moreover, the transparent MRV-E system under the CBIT Project in Montenegro can potentially increase public awareness and engagement in climate action, fostering a supportive environment for emission reduction and adaptation efforts. It also plays an important role in adaptation and resilience building, monitoring the effectiveness of strategies, and assessing community vulnerability to climate change impacts.</p>	<p>primarily relying on externally funded projects for climate change and sustainable resource management solutions.</p> <p>The target set under this indicator is to establish a new cooperative mechanism involving stakeholder agencies and organizations at the directorate level, aiming to elevate Montenegro's coordination capacity from a rating of 1 (not adequately) to 3 (partially). This target reflects the CBIT objective of fostering systemic improvements in climate action coordination and integration, indispensable for a robust and transparent MRV-E system. Furthermore, these enhancements are critical for effective climate action tracking, ensuring national efforts align with international commitments, thus making this indicator appropriate for assessing progress in strengthening Montenegro's capacity for climate transparency.</p> <p>The MTRT finds that Mandatory Indicator 2 is required; still, the MTRT finds the need for additional inputs for assessing progress towards strengthening Montenegro's national capacities through an improved MRV-E system.</p> <p>There is a need for developing and implementing indicators that can capture the extent to which the training and capacity-building efforts have resulted in actual improvements in the institutional and systemic capabilities of Montenegro's MRV-E system. This would involve assessing the effectiveness of the training programs, the extent of integration of MRV-E processes into national systems, and the subsequent impact on the country's ability to meet the transparency requirements stipulated by the Paris Agreement.</p>
Validation of progress towards CBIT's objective (measured by mandatory indicators)	
F10. The Project achieved some progress towards improving coordination and formal mechanisms through an improved MRV-E system to meet transparency-related requirements under Article 13 of the Paris Agreement	

The CBIT progressed towards MRV-E institutionalisation, advocating to reflect the MRV-E system in Montenegro's new Law on Protection from the Negative Effects of Climate Change⁶³. The Law aims to contribute to achieving climate neutrality by 2050 and the long-term temperature goal set in the Paris Agreement.

The CBIT experts suggested revisions to integrate the MRV-E system into higher-level legal frameworks and establish by-laws to clarify responsibilities for climate data provision. In this context, the Project-supported analysis suggested delegating the monitoring of climate change mitigation and adaptation to the Working Group for Climate Change within the National Sustainable Development Council.

In addition, the analysis recommended that reporting on the National Adaptation Plan needs to align with the Paris Agreement and the Energy Community Treaty, with the Ministry preparing reports for government approval and subsequent submission to relevant international organizations. The Project recommended that government bodies in sectors like hydro-meteorology, environmental protection, and others need to have mandates to provide data for reports covering aspects like greenhouse gas emissions and climate change measures. These changes aim to streamline the Law, enhance clarity, and ensure adherence to international commitments⁶⁴. One of the critical recommendations concerning operational and practical MRV-E aspects has been that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as the competent public body, entrusted with the role of environmental protection- including monitoring state of the environment, monitoring air pollution, permitting, GHG Inventory among other. EPA's mandate it to prepare the inventory of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in line with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In connection with this, the CBIT recommended that this Agency conclude an agreement establishing the obligations of those data-collection relevant bodies and organisations, especially regarding the data quality, collection practices, deadlines, form, and manner of their delivery to the Agency (Article 45, paragraphs 5 and 7). Namely, the CBIT analysis identified inefficiencies in existing inter-agency agreements, particularly the memorandum between the EPA and Monstat on providing data essential for the greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory calculations. This memorandum was in place but without the backing of legal authority, and its effectiveness hinged on the voluntary collaboration of the institutions involved. This lack of formal enforceability has led to issues with the reliability and timeliness of data delivery — a critical factor given the dynamic nature of GHG inventory requirements and the need for ongoing updates⁶⁵. The high staff turnover within these agencies further complicates this situation, jeopardising the continuity of the agreements, creating the potential for lapses in adherence or the development of redundant parallel agreements.

The MTRT finds that the Project's support to the Working Group responsible for the Law on Protection from the Negative Impact of Climate Change has been critical, contributing to the drafting process and providing pivotal feedback

The stakeholders reported that the "CBIT inputs during stakeholder consultations and public discussions have been comprehensive⁶⁶".

In addition, the national partners recognized the Project's role in enhancing the functionality of the National Council for Sustainable Development's Working Groups, focusing on climate change and sustainable financial development, as strategic in shaping the country's climate and sustainable development policies. The MTRT finds that this CBIT's involvement facilitated the dissemination of its objectives on Montenegro's leading strategic platform for climate and sustainable development.

Concerning capacity development, the MTRT finds that the Project delivered targeted training and workshops in partnership with these Working Groups to bolster their expertise in adaptation, climate finance and gender. The partners stated that this targeted and professional support is "building blocks for elevating the expertise and capabilities of key agencies like the Ministry, the EPA, the Council, among others".

⁶³ The main objectives of this Law are regulating the jurisdiction, obligations, and responsibilities for mitigating and adapting to climate change, defining strategic approaches to climate change, monitoring and reporting on greenhouse gas emissions, protecting the ozone layer, financing for climate change protection, administrative and inspection supervision, and other issues related to the protection against the climate change impacts.

⁶⁴ Comments on the Law- prof.dr Gordana Đurović, CBIT project, financing of climate actions, 31.3.2023.

⁶⁵ CBIT analysis- SWOT and GAP Analysis for capacity assessment of climate change institutions of Montenegro

⁶⁶ KII notes – the reference is made to the experts' comments on the Law and conclusions from consultative meetings that the CBIT supported and facilitated

However, the MRTT could not verify progress in weaving climate considerations into these institutions' routine operations and decision-making processes.

OUTCOME 1	Indicators and benchmarks
<p>A strengthened institutional mechanism for increased transparency</p>	<p>Indicator 3: Number of recommendations made for improvement of the institutional mechanism for increased transparency including gender equality principles</p> <p>Baseline There is no in depth and participatory analysis which should provide the basic informational source for the recommendations on the current institutional and technical capacities in order to support increased transparency</p> <p>Target Set of recommendations (at least 10) recognizing existing gaps in institutional transparency mechanism, serving as a basis for MPG development</p> <p>Indicator 4: transparency MPGs for tracking NDC, adaptation actions and climate finance developed (through broad participatory process), including gender equality principles</p> <p>Baselines: No transparency MPGs exist. Staff from key government agencies and stakeholder organizations are not adequately trained in transparency methodologies, procedures, and guidelines that are specific to Montenegro.</p> <p>Target: Transparency methodologies, procedures and guidelines for tracking NDC, adaptation actions and climate finance specific to Montenegro developed and agreed with national stakeholders by month 24</p> <p>Indicator 5: Number of state institutions providing inputs/ recommendations for development of MPGs for tracking NDC, adaptation actions and climate finance</p> <p>Baseline: No transparency MPGs exist. Staff from key government agencies and stakeholder organizations are not adequately trained in transparency methodologies, procedures, and guidelines that are specific to Montenegro. While prior training relevant to the use of transparency methodologies, procedures, and guidelines have made an important impact in improving in-country technical expertise, their coverage could be significantly improved by involving more expert organizations and individuals</p> <p>Target: i) At least 10 unique state institutions provide inputs for development for MPGs and participated in the learning-by-doing workshops; ii) An equal balance of gender in the learning-by-doing workshops of Outputs 1.1 to 1.4</p> <p>Indicator 6 MRV-E related inter-agency memoranda of agreements developed through consultative and participatory process</p> <p>Baseline: No inter-agency agreements on transparent NDC tracking, adaptation actions and climate finance exist.</p>

	Target: Inter-agency memoranda of agreements developed by month 30
Comments on Outcome 1	Comments on Indicators and benchmarks
<p>Outcome 1 is pivotal in developing and refining institutional capabilities, which are fundamental to supporting and operationalizing an effective MRV-E system, being intricately linked to the overarching goal.</p> <p>The logic behind this outcome lies in its focus on bolstering the frameworks and processes within national institutions. It involves a comprehensive SWOT and gap assessment of current institutional frameworks and the development of new methodologies to understand and address existing capabilities. This foundational work is crucial for tailoring the MRV-E system to Montenegro's specific needs and conditions, ensuring accurate and transparent reporting of climate actions and progress.</p> <p>Further, the emphasis on capacity building and stakeholder involvement under Outcome 1 ensures that the necessary expertise and knowledge are embedded within these institutions. Moreover, by establishing clear guidelines, procedures, and inter-agency agreements for tracking and reporting climate actions and finance, Montenegro is advancing its ability to meet the transparency requirements of the Paris Agreement. In this context, the plan for regular assessments and continuous improvement aligns with the ethos of the Paris Agreement, which advocates for ongoing enhancement of climate reporting mechanisms.</p>	<p>The indicators are generally relevant for measuring Outcome 1; however, there could be some refinements to enhance their effectiveness:</p> <p>Indicator 3 This indicator is pertinent as it focuses on identifying gaps in the existing institutional framework and suggests improvements, which is crucial for enhancing transparency mechanisms.</p> <p>Improvement suggestion: To increase its effectiveness, consider specifying the scope of recommendations. For instance, recommendations could be categorized into short-term, medium-term, and long-term or based on specific areas like data collection, reporting, policy formulation, etc. Including specific criteria for what constitutes a 'quality' recommendation could also add value.</p> <p>Indicator 4: This indicator could be “yes/no” indicator that refers to establishing standardized procedures and guidelines, which are foundational for a robust MRV-E system and overall transparency in climate actions.</p> <p>Improvement suggestion: It might be beneficial to include milestones within the target, such as initial draft development, stakeholder consultation phases, and final approval. This approach will provide a more detailed roadmap and allow for better tracking of progress.</p> <p>Indicator 5: The involvement of state institutions is critical to ensuring that the MPGs are comprehensive, practical, and widely accepted.</p> <p>Improvement suggestion: Beyond the number of institutions involved, consider evaluating the quality and impact of their contributions. This could include assessing how these inputs have been integrated into the final MPGs and their practical applicability.</p> <p>Indicator 6: This indicator refers to inter-agency agreements as crucial for coordinated and cohesive action in tracking and reporting, aligning with the MRV-E system objectives.</p> <p>Improvement suggestion: There is a need to specify the benefits of these agreements and/ or elements these agreements should cover, such as data sharing protocols, roles and responsibilities of each agency, and conflict resolution mechanisms.</p> <p>Additionally, setting intermediate targets like draft agreement preparation, consultation rounds, and final ratification could provide a more precise implementation timeline.</p>
Progress under Outcome 1 (measured by indicators)	
F11. While the CBIT Project in Montenegro has made progress in certain areas under Outcome 1, particularly in defining initiating processes for improved transparency, it faces challenges, especially in expert recruitment. These issues have affected the timelines and progress of specific indicators.	

The Project advanced with developing a methodology for assessing the climate change institutional framework. SWOT and gap analysis prepared⁶⁷ assessed capacities in seven key categories⁶⁸, informing national authorities on priorities to advance Montenegro's ability to address climate challenges and improve transparency in climate actions. The Project organised workshops for national authorities and stakeholders, bolstering institutional competencies and educating institutions on critical aspects and priorities under the climate change actions. The desk review showed that consultations engaged a diverse group of participants through a mix of direct meetings, workshops, and online questionnaires. The outcomes of this process led to inputs and adjustments in the analysis, reflecting the dynamic nature of climate change priorities, including the actual impact on institutional frameworks. Collaboration with the national institutions led to integrating these inputs in the measures that were presented in the comprehensive SWOT and GAP analysis⁶⁹.

This document recommended to advance Montenegro's institutional capabilities in tackling climate change challenges and enhancing transparency in its climate actions, thereby contributing to a more effective and inclusive approach to climate governance and planning. In the context of the policy cycle, these recommendations could be linked with various stages, possibly influencing longer-term development. In governance, it recommended completing the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan (NAP) and finalising amendments to the Law on Protection from Negative Impacts of Climate Change and the Protection of the Ozone Layer, including related subsidiary legislation. Aligning the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) with the decarbonisation goals of the Energy Community and finalising the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) by its guidelines are also critical. Integrating the Low Carbon Development Strategy with the NECP and establishing clear mandates for all government institutions involved in climate change mitigation and adaptation are recommended. Strengthening and consistently implementing the regulatory framework is also a priority.

Developing a comprehensive strategic planning approach that integrates climate change considerations remains critical in addressing climate change impacts. Practically, the analysis recommended integrating climate change goals into national development strategies and enhancing long-term planning. Concerning financial capacity, the analysis recommended the development of sustainable and innovative financing mechanisms for climate actions. In this context, the policy decision should be to formulate a national climate finance strategy to guide resource allocation. The need remains to improve access to climate finance, including international funds, and enhance coordination between relevant institutions.

Regarding gender issues, conducting a comprehensive gender-sensitive review of institutional capacity in climate change is advised. Integrating gender considerations into all climate policies and promoting gender mainstreaming in decision-making processes related to climate change emerged as the national priority. In connection to this, there is a need for strengthening institutional capacity to collect and analyse gender-disaggregated data in climate initiatives.

For Transparency Methodologies, Procedures, and Guidelines (MPGs) related to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), adaptation actions, and climate finance (**Indicator 4**), the CBIT achieved minor progress, gathering materials and best practices influenced by regional examples and international standards. However, the recruitment challenges of key experts have slowed progress. The project has streamlined the hiring process and adapted to the local market conditions.

However, the Project did not progress under **Indicator 5**, concerning the involvement of state institutions in the development of MPGs. However, these efforts are linked with the progress of MPGs.

The development of inter-agency agreements for transparent NDC tracking, adaptation actions, and climate finance (**Indicator 6**) is at an early stage (10% completion). A significant milestone has been including the MRV-E system in the new Law on Climate Change proposal, laying the groundwork for a by-law to establish institutional responsibilities (as indicated in the previous paragraphs).

OUTCOME 2	Indicators and benchmarks
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⁶⁷ Assessment of capacity to strengthen institutional mechanisms for transparency in the field of climate change in Montenegro, Prepared by: Prof. Dr. Mira Vukčević, Đorđije Vulikić, Prof. Dr. Gordana Đurović and Sanja Elezović, Podgorica, November 12, 2023.

⁶⁸ These categories included: governance and policy capacity, leadership and organizational capacity, strategic planning capacity, data and information capacity, human resource capacity, financial capacity, and capacity for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation

⁶⁹ Ibidem, Capacity Assessment for Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms for Transparency in the Field of Climate Change in Montenegro.

<p>Strengthened national institutions to implement enhanced transparency</p>	<p>Indicator 7: Number of new/updated tools and methodologies applied in the framework of the domestic MRV-E system</p> <p>Baseline: <i>The GHG inventory and projections in both the FBUR and SBUR are based on methodologies from the 2006 IPCC Guidelines.</i></p> <p>Target: <i>New and updated models, tools, and methodologies for the GHG inventory and projections will be used to inform decision-making. Number of models, tools and methodologies will be determined after completion of MPGs</i></p> <p>Indicator 8: Inter-ministerial and inter-directorate communication, coordination, and collaboration is formalized</p> <p>Baseline: <i>The 2016 National Council for Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Integrated Coastal Zone Management serves as the mechanism to catalyze inter-ministerial and inter- directorate communication and cooperation, which is supported by the Working Group on Mitigation and Adaptation. However, both the Council and the Working Group were not operational last two years.</i></p> <p>Target <i>Climate change related developments discussed at the National Council for Sustainable Development</i></p> <p>Indicator 9: Most appropriate platform for non-state public consultative mechanisms identified and integrated into official planning and decision-making processes</p> <p>Baseline: <i>Currently there is no efficient platform allowing non-state/public sector communication</i></p> <p>Target: <i>Non-state consultative platform on implementing enhanced transparency formalized</i></p> <p>Indicator 10: Project models, scenarios and adaptation concept proposals developed</p> <p>Baseline: <i>Currently, there are few project models, scenarios and adaptation concept proposals developed</i></p> <p>Target: <i>Project models, scenarios, and adaptation project concept proposals developed as part of the learning-by doing trainings are independently determined to be of high quality</i></p> <p>Indicator 11: Number of recommendations for mainstreaming gender into tracking NDC, adaptation actions and climate finance, developed through consultative process</p> <p>Baseline: <i>Gender indicators are included in the revised NDC and NDC implementation Roadmap. However, additional data collection and planning is needed on gender in the adaptation actions and especially in climate finance</i></p> <p>Target: <i>At least 10 recommendations provided for better mainstreaming gender into NDC tracking, adaptation actions and climate finance</i></p> <p>Indicator 12: English technical training curricula developed and number of stakeholders trained</p>
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	<p>Baseline: English proficiency is a limitation to understand and adopt approaches to combat climate change.</p> <p>Target: At least six (6) sets of English technical training courses with at least 30 stakeholders participating</p>
Comments on Outcome 2	Comments on indicators and benchmarks
<p>Outcome 2's focus on strengthening institutional capacities, improving coordination, fostering inclusivity, and building technical expertise aligns with the overarching objective of enhancing Montenegro's capacity to meet its transparency obligations under the Paris Agreement. This alignment ensures a robust foundation for an effective MRV-E system, which is crucial for transparent and accurate reporting of climate actions.</p> <p>This outcome focuses on building the capacity and expertise of national institutions, which is fundamental for an effective MRV-E system. It emphasizes the importance of developing new methodologies, tools, and coordinated approaches within these institutions to ensure accurate, reliable, and comprehensive climate action reporting.</p> <p>The outcome also underscores the need to formalise communication and collaboration between government entities and integrate non-state actors into decision-making processes. This inclusive approach is vital for gathering diverse inputs and insights, which enrich the data collected and reported through the MRV-E system.</p> <p>Additionally, Outcome 2 highlights the significance of incorporating gender considerations into climate action tracking. The MRV-E system can support more informed and inclusive decision-making by acknowledging the differential impacts of climate change on various gender groups.</p> <p>Furthermore, developing technical training curricula and conducting training sessions are integral to this outcome. These efforts aim to enhance the skills and knowledge of those involved in the MRV-E process, ensuring that personnel are well-equipped to manage and operate the system effectively.</p>	<p>These indicators are well-aligned with the objectives of Outcome 2. Still, the MTRT finds that more specific targets, more precise definitions, and interim milestones could improve their effectiveness to ensure accurate measurement and tracking of progress.</p> <p>The MTRT provided more elaborated analysis:</p> <p>Indicator 7: is relevant as it directly measures the enhancement of the MRV-E system with new tools and methodologies.</p> <p>Improvement Suggestion: Specify a target number for the new models, tools, and methodologies to be developed, providing a clear and measurable goal.</p> <p>Indicator 8: Critical for measuring and ensuring effective coordination among various government entities for climate action reporting.</p> <p>Improvement Suggestion: Define specific criteria for what constitutes 'formalized' communication and collaboration. Detail expected outcomes of these enhanced interactions.</p> <p>Indicator 9: This indicator is essential for including diverse stakeholder perspectives in decision-making.</p> <p>Improvement Suggestion: Outline key features or functionalities that the consultative platform should have. Include interim milestones for its development and integration.</p> <p>Indicator 10: Important for measuring progress under the robust climate action plans.</p> <p>Improvement Suggestion: Clearly define what 'high quality' means for project models and scenarios. Consider incorporating a peer review or validation process.</p> <p>Indicator 11: Vital for ensuring gender considerations are integrated into climate action.</p> <p>Improvement Suggestion: Specify aspects of gender mainstreaming to be covered in the recommendations. Ensure these recommendations are actionable and measurable.</p> <p>Indicator 12: Addresses the barrier of language proficiency, which is crucial for understanding and adopting climate change strategies.</p> <p>Improvement Suggestion: Define the expected competency level post-training. Include a follow-up mechanism to assess the application of learned skills in stakeholders' work environments.</p>
Progress under Outcome 2 (measured by indicators)	

F12. The Project achieved some progress under Outcome 2, particularly in enhancing communication and incorporating gender perspectives, other areas are still awaiting implementation or facing challenges, particularly recruitment and scheduling.

Progress has varied across different indicators in the CBIT Project under Outcome 2, which focuses on strengthening national institutions for enhanced transparency in Montenegro.

Under **Indicator 8**, the CBIT made advancements concerning inter-ministerial and inter-directorate communication. This progress is marked by the organizational improvements within the National Council for Sustainable Development, enhancing its strategic role in sustainable development and climate change discussions. The MTRT finds that the Project organized several sessions of the Working Groups under the NCSA, providing substantive technical assistance on their core mandates. For **Indicator 9**, related to public consultative mechanisms, efforts have been directed towards establishing an effective platform for communication between civil and government sectors, mainly through the Dialogue through Development platform.

Progress has also been noted under **Indicator 11**, which focuses on mainstreaming gender in NDC, adaptation actions, and climate finance. The technical support and expertise that the Project ensured facilitated the integration of gender-sensitive approaches in climate-related methodologies and activities.

However, there are indicators where progress has not yet been observed. For example, delays in hiring a National Mitigation Expert⁷⁰ affected progress under Indicator 7, which measures the application of new tools and methodologies in the domestic MRV-E system. Similarly, **Indicator 10**, related to developing project models, scenarios, and adaptation concept proposals and **Indicator 12**, which involves developing English technical training curricula and training stakeholders, have not recorded progress, with planned activities set for the latter half of the year.

OUTCOME 3	Indicators and benchmarks
<p>Strengthened coordination and information exchange is institutionalized with an enhanced transparency framework</p>	<p>Indicator 13: The MRV-E Portal is designed and optimized within the Government IT infrastructure</p> <p>Baseline: Montenegro's MRV-E system is in its infancy, having supported the reporting on the national communications and two biennial update reports</p> <p><i>Data creation and management remains a major challenge for Montenegro</i></p> <p><i>Systems for data and information management are outdated and inadequate</i></p> <p><i>There is limited availability of funding for portal running and maintenance</i></p> <p>Target: i) The upgraded MRV-E portal is fully operational by the end of the project; ii) Feasible resource mobilization strategy developed by the end of the project</p> <p>Indicator 14: Stakeholders are trained on best practice skills and are using the MRV-E portal for planning and decision-making on the global environment</p> <p>Baseline: Decision-makers and government staff have limited technical skills and MRV-E portal still needs to be designed and optimized within the Government IT infrastructure.</p> <p>Target: Participants from at least 15 stakeholders' institutions (with at least 40% women) are trained on data management skills relevant to the MRV-E portal</p>

⁷⁰ Project Board Meeting Minutes and Progress Reports. Also, key informant interviews confirmed that the selection process was extensive and completion/ contracting took additional time.

	<p>Indicator 15: Long-term training programme institutionalized to use the MRV-E portal for planning and decision-making</p> <p>Baseline: <i>There is currently no long-term training program for use of MRV-E portal</i></p> <p>Target: <i>Long-term training programme institutionalized to use the MRV-E portal</i></p>
Comments on Outcome 3	Comments on indicators and benchmarks
<p>Outcome 3's focus on institutionalizing strengthened coordination and information exchange is a key component in achieving the CBIT objective of enhancing Montenegro's MRV-E system. This outcome ensures that different entities involved in climate action communicate effectively and share data seamlessly, which is critical for the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the MRV-E system. It enables a systematic approach to collecting, verifying, and reporting climate-related data, which is essential for meeting the transparency requirements under Article 13 of the Paris Agreement.</p> <p>By having an enhanced transparency framework, Montenegro can not only track its climate actions and support but also demonstrate progress and build trust internationally. This systematic coordination facilitates the identification of trends, gaps, and areas for improvement in climate reporting and action, aligning national efforts with global climate objectives.</p>	<p>While these indicators are well-suited for measuring the progress of Outcome 3, adding specificity to the targets and implementing mechanisms for continuous assessment and improvement would enhance their effectiveness in tracking the Project's success.</p> <p>However, there are areas for improvement:</p> <p>Indicator 13 : This indicator is critical as it focuses on measuring the development of a vital tool for Montenegro's MRV-E system. The portal's optimization is essential for effective data management and aligning with European standards of transparency.</p> <p><u>Improvement Suggestion:</u> Consider setting interim milestones for the portal's development phases, such as design completion, beta testing, stakeholder feedback, and final deployment. This would provide more granular tracking of progress.</p> <p>Indicator 14: Training stakeholders is vital for successfully implementing and using the MRV-E portal. This indicator measures whether the users have the necessary skills to utilize the portal effectively.</p> <p><u>Improvement Suggestion:</u> Define the specific skill sets or competencies the training program aims to impart. Additionally, establishing a feedback mechanism to assess the effectiveness of the training could be beneficial.</p> <p>Indicator 15: This indicator focuses on a long-term training program, which is commendable as it addresses the sustainability of the MRV-E system's utilization, which is especially important given staff turnover.</p> <p><u>Improvement Suggestion:</u> Outline the components of the long-term training program, including how it will be updated over time. It could enhance its long-term viability by detailing how this program will be institutionalized and maintained post-project.</p>
Progress under Outcome 3 (measured by indicators)	
<p>F13. Progress has varied under CBIT's Outcome 3- with the main results in the conceptual design of the MRV-E System's data flows, inputs, and outputs.</p> <p>For example, Indicator 13 reflected some progress with the conceptual design of the MRV-E System's data flows, inputs, and outputs. This part of the Project is mainly focused on establishing an MRV-E portal, envisioned as a comprehensive repository for various climate-related data and tools, aligning with enhanced transparency requirements. The finalization of this portal's design needs to reflect findings from the SWOT</p>	

and gap analysis (as components of the institutional framework assessment) and the Methodologies, Procedures, and Guidelines (MPGs) under Outcome 1.

However, no progress has been recorded under Indicators 14 and 15, which involve assessing progress in training stakeholders using the MRV-E portal and establishing a long-term training program. The aim is to develop comprehensive training resources, including literature, manuals, and online courses, to facilitate the continuous and competent management of the system beyond the Project's completion.

The achievement of targets linked with these indicators is closely tied to the development and operationalization of the MRV-E portal. These training initiatives are crucial for ensuring effective use of the MRV-E system, particularly considering the high staff turnover in Montenegrin civil services .

OUTCOME 4	Indicators and benchmarks
<p>A technical roadmap on low-carbon and climate-resilient development is formulated and adopted</p>	<p>Indicator 16: Awareness raising programme implemented focusing on the contribution of global environmental values to socio-economic development</p> <p>Baseline: Awareness of best practices for combating climate change limited, and stakeholders do not fully appreciate the value of conserving the global environment</p> <p>Target: Three sets of private sector and media sensitization panel discussions held, one each year by the end of months 12, 24, and 36. At least two (2) national and three (3) sub-national awareness workshops held, spread out in years 2, 3, and 4</p> <p>Indicator 17: Technical roadmap for the cost-effective and efficient pursuit of a low carbon economy developed</p> <p>Baseline: A number of strategies and action plans have been recently developed to address important policy directions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pursue green development.</p> <p>Target: Technical roadmap developed by the end of the project</p>
Comments on Outcome 4	Comments on Indicators
<p>Outcome 4 is designed to facilitate the actual country's transition towards a greener economy by building a shared understanding of the benefits and developing a unified strategic approach.</p> <p>The awareness programs will prepare the ground by building stakeholder engagement and consensus. The technical roadmap should act as the strategic blueprint that will outline the steps needed to achieve the set targets in a unified, cost-effective manner. This systematic approach ensures all stakeholders cooperate towards the shared vision of a low-carbon, climate-resilient future.</p>	<p>These indicators could be revised, for example: Indicator 16: Increase in the percentage of key stakeholders demonstrating understanding and application of MRV-E data in socio-economic development planning as a result of the awareness-raising program."</p> <p>This revision maintains the focus on raising awareness but shifts the emphasis from the mere implementation of a program to the tangible outcomes that reflect enhanced capacity and application of MRV-E in socio-economic development. It also implies a before-and-after comparison, providing a clear measure of the program's effectiveness.</p>
<p>Progress under Outcome 4 (measured by indicators)</p>	
<p>F14. The status of Indicators 16 and 17 reflects that no progress has been recorded to date, with both indicators at 0% completion. This lack of progress is not due to inaction but rather a planned schedule within the project's timeline.</p>	

F15. The combination of the delayed start, recruitment challenges, political changes and challenges and the cyber-attack led to a substantial slowdown in the Project's progress, emphasising the need for adaptive and resilient management strategies.

The CBIT project experienced implementation delays, beginning with a six-month postponement from its planned start date (ref to the Findings 18). A notable contributing factor to the delays was the recruitment process, where the Project needed help in attracting qualified candidates, resulting in prolonged and repeated recruitment efforts. This delayed the formation of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and other technical experts, thus hindered the progress and pace of project activities.

Compounding these challenges was an unexpected and severe cyber-attack on government servers, leading to a four-month disruption in implementation (affecting, for example, critical recruitment and procurement processes). This incident also disrupted communication and data management, highlighting the Project's vulnerability to external factors and adding further complexity to the implementation process. Moreover, the broader political landscape in Montenegro marked by instability and frequent changes in government influenced the Project, especially in the transition to a national execution. The Project had to adjust the financial strategy in response to the evolving situation: two budget revisions were conducted, one in July-August 2022 and another in December 2022. Despite these measures, the Project suffered from operational setbacks, achieving relatively low financial targets, as it delivered only 9,63% (09/2023) of its financial targets.

The MRTT finds that implementation challenges and hurdles significantly affected the CBIT implementation, while some substantial risks remain evident, as indicated in the follow-up paragraphs of this report. Despite some encouraging signals, such as the high PIU/ PM commitment and the involvement of the PMB members in adapting and overcoming these obstacles and proceeding with CBIT implementation, there is a need for a kind of "crisis management", with a well-planned approach and established short- and mid-term milestones under broader strategic targets.

Key Question 4: Has the CBIT Project considered gender equality and followed the principle of LNOB during its design and implementation?

The MRTT assessed if the stakeholders considered and implemented human rights and gender equality under the CBIT. The team collected evidence and opinions to determine the integration and mainstreaming of gender in the Project's design, implementation, and monitoring. It also included the analysis of the Project's effects on stakeholders' capacity development.

F16. The CBIT Project design has incorporated gender equality and the LNOB principle through targeted strategies and actions, reflecting a commitment to ensuring that the Project includes these considerations during the implementation and under its outcomes.

Montenegro has actively created and initiated the implementation of the Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality, with legislative and institutional frameworks in place to enhance gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities. Despite these achievements, the problem analysis under the CBIT recognized various challenges. For example, there is generally scarce political commitment and will, symbolic resource allocation, and the persistence of stereotypical gender norms (including among the higher echelons of bureaucracy). The most pressing problem remains with its practical implementation.

To address these challenges, the CBIT established long and short-term plans to integrate gender into climate change related considerations. The Project envisages activities such as building technical skills for gender data differentiation and improving statistical infrastructure to manage sex-disaggregated data. The intention is to ensure high-quality, robust gender-disaggregated data for the Working Group on Mitigation and Adaptation (WGMA) to enable them to make informed policy decisions that account for gender differences and inform climate action effectively. Additionally, the Project outlined other specific activities to reinforce the integration of gender considerations into climate change work. For example, the Project plans to nominate a gender representative to the Working Group on Climate Change, a concrete step towards including gender perspectives in climate change discussions and policy-making.

Furthermore, the Project emphasises the priority to improve sex-disaggregated data in the context of climate change. The Project, in the initial stage, analysed the existing data to identify gaps and collect relevant information related to specific mitigation and adaptation measures. These collected inputs could be instrumental in informing relevant policy-making, ensuring that national strategies and plans are aware of and responsive to gender-differentiated impacts of climate change.

F17. The CBIT Project in Montenegro has been proactive in embedding gender equality into its climate change-related initiatives.

Despite implementation challenges during the first years, the CBIT has proactively considered and pursued gender mainstreaming. These efforts started with mobilising technical support⁷¹ for developing gender-sensitive methodologies, such as a SWOT and gap analysis, delving into women's unique needs and capacities within Montenegro's institutional climate change framework⁷². This process included crafting detailed questionnaires targeting gender equality concerns within the relevant institutions. In addition, the Project underscored its educational commitment by hosting a training session on gender equality fundamentals for the Climate Change Working Group of the National Council for Sustainable Development⁷³ (on 8th May 2023). Through the collaboration with the Directorate for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), the CBIT assisted in editing their relevant documents to ensure alignment with gender equality considerations.

Furthering its gender-responsive strategy, the CBIT PT updated the gender action plan during the second year that included a detailed monitoring system to track female participation in project events, ensuring gender balance and inclusivity. Still, the MTRT finds that the participative aspects are important, but there is a need to apply gender-transformative approaches. For example, ensuring that these events appropriately and adequately consider the specific needs of women and girls in the context of climate change. The MTRT finds that the Project's important step at this initial stage has been advocating for gender-inclusive amendments to the Law on Climate Change.

The MTRT also finds the Project's proactive approach in the field of gender statistics in Montenegro, proposing integrating it into the National Determined Contributions monitoring framework. The informants recognised that "these actions demonstrate the Project's dedication to collecting and utilising high-quality data to inform gender-sensitive climate policy-making". Operationally, the MTRT finds a critical collaboration with the Fourth National Communication and First Biennial Transparency project, whereby these two GEF-funded initiatives have been actively working to identify and fill data gaps at the intersection of climate change and gender. These activities resulted in inputs for data collection and analysis methodologies and training initiatives within the Montenegrin Statistical Office to enhance understanding and analysis of gender-differentiated impacts of climate change.

Although at an early stage, the MTRT finds that these results highlight the CBIT effort to foster gender equality and women's empowerment. The authorities recognised that the Project must ensure its activities and results are inclusive and attuned to the diverse impacts of climate change across society (aligned with leave no-one behind) and continue advancing gender equality and resilience of environmental outcomes in Montenegro.

6.3 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Key question 5: Has the implementation of the CBIT Project so far been efficient concerning adherence to the work plans (timely implementation), flexibility and responsiveness?

The MTRT analysed the CBIT Project's implementation and adaptive management by evaluating the timeliness and effectiveness of activity implementation, the favorability of the National Implementation Modality (NIM) towards achieving results, the Project's steering and management practices, and the logical consistency of its activities and the overall intervention.

The MTRT also examined the influence of external factors on the Project and its ability to adapt to and mitigate these challenges. This comprehensive review aimed to assess the project's ability to deliver on its objectives efficiently and adaptively in the face of variable external conditions.

⁷¹ Through the engagement of the National Expert for Gender Equality for Climate Change

⁷² More details available at: SWOT and GAP analysis methodology for institutional development of mechanisms for transparency in climate change area.

⁷³ <https://www.ncsds.org/index.php/sustainable-development-councils/country-profiles/85-country-profiles/167-montenegro.html>

F18. The CBIT efforts to establish management and operational systems under the NIM have been extensive and time-consuming, affecting the delivery of results.

The MTRT recognises that the CBIT was a multifaceted and managerially demanding initiative, striving to create a comprehensive approach to improving transparency and capacity in climate action initiatives⁷⁴. This extensive working demand accentuated the robust management and coordination requirement.

Under the National Implementation Modality, the MTESDNRD (former MESPU)⁷⁵, as the Implementing Partner, had been vested with the comprehensive responsibility of executing CBIT with full accountability for effectively using resources and achieving stipulated outputs. This role was extensive and complex, involving strategic project planning, coordination, management, data collection and results reporting. On the operational side, this role included follow-up with the work plans, procurement of goods and services, financial management to align with project budgets, and the follow-up on work plans and financial reports⁷⁶. Thus, following the project document provisions, the Ministry appointed the National Project Director (NPD) to chair the Project Board (PB), as instrumental in the Project's governance and decision-making process⁷⁷. UNDP also played a critical role in the Project Board through the Project Assurance role.

The PB, which meets at least biannually⁷⁸, includes members nominated by participating government bodies and is responsible for providing direction, addressing project issues, managing risks, ensuring coordination among various agencies, tracking co-financing, and reviewing project progress and reports. Its role is critical in maintaining transparency, avoiding conflicts of interest, and ensuring that project deliverables are satisfactorily produced.

However, PB functioning has been associated with various issues. The Ministry involved in the PB Department in charge of ecology and climate change and the Department for Nature Protection. However, these departments are critical in shaping policies, legislation, and strategies for climate change and biodiversity. Still, the MTRT finds that challenges emerged when a specific department within the Directorate for Ecology and Climate Change, led by the UNFCCC focal point, dominated decision-making concerning CBIT⁷⁹. The review finds that this department's approach opposed established consultative management principles through the PB with the involvement of other national stakeholders. This misunderstanding of ownership and roles within the CBIT framework led to issues, including breaches in confidentiality and impartiality, creating challenges in implementation. For example, there was a need to repeat some of the recruitment processes and introduce changes in the PB representation. These problems have affected timely implementation, involving extensive discussions at various levels, including with the Minister, the PMB, and the General Directors of specific Directorates. The stakeholders highlighted that this process was "tough, complex and at times challenging" but essential to clarify roles, responsibilities, and the management hierarchy, leading to valuable learning experiences for all involved.

In addition, the political challenges affected this CBIT's strategic and decision-making structures: three ministers and ministerial administration changed since the start of the Project, showing various, often limited, commitments to the Project. Initially, the Secretary of the Ministry was appointed as the NPD but

⁷⁴ For reference, the Project aimed to strengthen stakeholder engagement and embed MRV of climate action within sectoral functions related to SDG, leading to the establishment of the institutional mechanism for increased transparency. In parallel, the Project focused on enhancing technical capacities to serve this institutional mechanism, strengthening national institutions, institutionalising coordination and information exchange within this framework, and formulating and adopting a technical roadmap for low-carbon and climate-resilient development.

⁷⁵ In the context of National Implementation Modality (NIM) projects, the primary responsibility lies with the government, pursuant to the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement (SBAA) signed with the UNDP, assigning the MTESDNRD (former MESPU) the "implementing partner" role

⁷⁶ FRM- Financial Management and Execution Modalities for National Implementation document

⁷⁷ Responsible for making consensus-based management decisions, the PB guides the Project Manager, especially in project planning and revisions. It is tasked with ensuring that the project meets its desired results while adhering to standards of results-driven management, value for money, fairness, integrity, transparency, and effective competition. In cases where consensus is not reached, the UNDP Resident Representative mediates or makes the final decision. Ref to the SBAA and the Project document

⁷⁸ During the first years, the PB was meeting more frequently to respond to plethora of problems that emerged during the implementation.

⁷⁹ As much as for other climate change-related projects, like the Development of the Fourth National Communication and the First Biennial Transparency Report of Montenegro to the UNFCCC – 4NC/1BTR. Details in the PIR, NIM lessons learned and key informants meetings

was soon replaced following the results of the 2023 general elections. The new Ministry (the MTESDNRD) was established with the extended mandate, and the (new) Secretary took over the NPD role. The MTRT finds evidence that the new leadership and the NPD showed undoubted commitment to the CBIT's objectives and obligations under the GEF-supported framework. Operationally, several meetings with the Project Manager and UNDP Management were organised to present achievements and discuss challenges and plans to deliver results. Still, the MTRT finds it will require some period and action for the NPD and the new PB members to become fully acquainted with the CBIT, especially to understand the importance of the MRV-E and other critical Project elements and define realistic plans for the forthcoming period. These facts suggest it will be challenging to complete all the planned activities within the remaining implementation period (August 2025).

The Project Management Unit (PIU) was responsible for implementing CBIT, adhering to defined roles and ensuring specialised skills. However, the PIU within the Ministry was established in February 2022, meaning that the processes were six months delayed from the formal Project's approval (25 August 2021), causing a belated start of activities. The small PIU included a highly skilled and knowledgeable project manager (PM) with proven expertise in climate change and a project assistant (PA) as the main operational and administrative support point. However, the PA resigned (October 2023), leaving the PM to deal with technical and managerial issues and administrative and operational matters. The MTRT finds that due to the slow administration of recruitment processes and external challenges, such as prolonged institutional set-up after political changes, the Ministry has yet to engage another PA, and this process will take additional time. These changes in the project team put additional pressure on PM⁸⁰.

The Ministry mobilised its Operations Unit (OU) to deliver financial and administrative support services to the PIU. However, the MTRT finds the OU- especially the financial department- has often been a bottleneck in project implementation. For example, the analysis showed OU's perception of projects as additional burdens, especially considering that the OU's staff cannot be compensated from the projects' budgets; this situation led to an unprofessional attitude⁸¹ in processing documentation and delays in CBIT-related payments, causing subsequent low delivery. The Ministry committed to strengthening the OU/ financial department and ensuring swift payments in the remaining period of the Project. This issue would require rigorous monitoring and prompt reaction if the situation with payment delays and financial processing repeats.

On the positive side, the MTRT finds valuable experience from the GEF-funded Biodiversity Mainstreaming into Sectoral Policies and Practices and Strengthened Protection of Biodiversity Hot-Spots in Montenegro through the engagement of a project associate to assist with procurement and recruitment processes (and supplement the actions of the Project Manager and Project Assistant). This strategic expansion of the PIU alleviated the administrative challenges and streamlined the project implementation process; the NPD and the Ministry perceived this approach as a viable option for the CBIT project.

UNDP, on the other hand, holds accountability for the effective and efficient use of resources to achieve program results. This includes general oversight of the Project, including project design, capacity assessments, partner selection, financing, and evaluation. UNDP ensures resource availability, monitors output progression, conducts regular assurance activities such as visits and financial 'spot checks,' and maintains critical project information. They are also responsible for timely financial reporting, risk management with regular updates to the Quantum risk log, review of government reports to inform assurance processes, and ensuring that implementing partners address any corrective actions identified in NIM audit reports. Ongoing monitoring by UNDP covers operational, financial, and programmatic aspects to ensure project integrity.

F19. The CBIT encountered various challenges, ranging from political instability and operational hurdles to financial management constraints, technical capacity limitations, accountability issues, and the need for robust risk prevention measures. Each challenge required specific strategies and adjustments, reflecting the complex reality of implementing large-scale projects in a dynamic and often unpredictable environment.

MTRT finds that the CBIT experienced various challenges, each presenting the obstacles that affected implementation and required strategic solutions. The Project commenced in an unstable political

⁸⁰ Still, the partners stated that the PM had a critical role in "contributing to collaboration, planning, and strategic alignment".

⁸¹ KII notes

environment, marked by governmental changes and restructuring of ministries. This political turbulence led to frequent replacements of public officials (directly or indirectly) involved in the implementation, decreasing the momentum and political support for the project's objectives. For example, the State Secretary for Environment position and the General Director for International Cooperation, where the GEF Operational Focal Point sits, were vacant for a long time. These positions were re-established by a recent vote by the new government. This frequent and constant shift in the political landscape and the need for more stable governance structures posed a substantial challenge in maintaining consistent support for CBIT's direction, also affecting timely decision-making and effective follow-up.

The MTRT finds that Ministries normally do not need to set up structures or establish project implementation capacities; hence, the MTESDNRD/ previous MESPU faced difficulties adapting to the GEF project management requirements⁸². The challenge here was the difference between the regular operational modes of the Ministry and project implementation structures. Furthermore, the requirement for the Project to comply with national rules and auditing processes led to a cumbersome approval process, creating delays in administrative procedures. The limited technical capacities within institutions- frequent personnel changes and a general shortage of technical expertise in Montenegro- deepened this risk. The Project adopted a mitigation strategy, combining international and national knowledge and strong capacity-building components to mitigate this challenge. However, developing capacities is a long-lasting process that requires commitment and a clear human resource development strategy to achieve sustainable results. In addition, explaining the management structure and the exact roles and responsibilities to all units within the Implementing Partner was time-consuming and challenging.

Financially, the Project had to navigate the establishment of separate bank accounts and coordinate with the Ministry of Finance. The challenge was exacerbated by the understaffed Operations Unit within the Ministry, which resulted in delayed payments and financial bottlenecks (comments on this are under Finding 18). Thus, these challenges, among others, influenced the Project's capacity to deliver.

6.4 SUSTAINABILITY

Key Question 6: Does the CBIT Project contribute to partnerships, policies and capacities of stakeholders to ensure sustainability of achieved results?

The MTRT assessed the sustainability of the CBIT Project's results by examining various critical factors. This included evaluating the extent to which financial and human capacities are in place to achieve and sustain Project results and the effectiveness of policy and regulatory frameworks in supporting the continuation of benefits for both men and women. Additionally, the assessment looked into opportunities to continue and enhance the Project's climate change-related results and activities. Another key aspect was the thorough analysis of risks, focusing on their significance and management strategies. Lastly, the review also considered the extent to which the Project is building individual and institutional capacities, which is crucial for ensuring the sustainability of its benefits. This holistic approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the Project's potential for long-term success and impact.

F20. While the CBIT project faced numerous challenges, its approach towards building national ownership, establishing robust institutional and legal frameworks for the MRV-E system, and applying adaptive management measures demonstrate a commitment to sustainability. These efforts suggest that the Ministry is focused on achieving the Project's immediate objectives and ensuring that the results and improvements made in the area of climate transparency and MRV-E systems are sustained in the long term.

The likelihood of sustainability of the CBIT's results after completion appears positive, although not without challenges, as various factors could jeopardise the longevity of the Project's effects and achievements.

The MTRT finds additional positive and "optimistic" indicators of possible sustainability. The Montenegrin's government's commitment to international and EU-accession-related standards could boost a supportive environment for ongoing efforts in climate change and environmental stewardship. In this context, the CBIT had a supporting role, especially at the institutional and systemic levels, demonstrating a positive trajectory in assisting national partners to understand and "nationalise" EU Climate Change practices and align with

⁸² <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/497c3769-17b1-4c03-85e8-afb406ea4067>

international obligations. For example, The CBIT's approach to sustainability focuses on strengthening institutional capacity and national ownership as crucial components in confirming stakeholders' investment in maintaining and expanding upon the Project's attainments. In this context, the MTRT finds that developing and formalising institutional and legal frameworks for the national MRV-E system has been a critical milestone that is being integrated into national policy while fulfilling enhanced transparency requirements. In addition, the SWOT and gap analysis of existing institutional and technical capacities identified and recommended the most suitable approaches to allow decision-makers to implement and sustain relevant actions more effectively. These deliverables will bolster the capacity of existing institutions, setting the ground for sustainability by embedding the enhanced transparency framework within the existing institutional setup and fostering full ownership and institutionalisation of the improved MRV-E system.

Still, the slow progress in executing policies and legal frameworks on climate change, delays in establishing the MRV-E system, and ad-hoc dominance over strategic and longer-term planning could affect these efforts and results. For example, the recent EU Progress Report highlighted challenges that Montenegro is facing in the area of climate change, particularly in aligning its national legislation with the EU acquis. The existing climate-change strategy requires substantial enhancement to match the EU's 2030 climate and energy policy framework. Key challenges include limited legislative alignment with crucial EU regulations like the Emissions Trading System and the Governance Regulation, a need to strengthen administrative capacity for effective implementation and enforcement of EU standards, and the development of efficient monitoring and reporting systems for greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, Montenegro must expedite formulating its national climate-change adaptation plan and a comprehensive energy and climate plan targeting decarbonisation by 2050.

On assessing the results and feedback from stakeholders, the MTRT finds positive signs about the sustainability of these results. The authorities have recognised the Project's work on the MRV-E, carving a unified method to address climate change challenges. The CBIT project team has fostered strong national ownership of the project results among partners and beneficiaries. This sense of ownership is crucial for sustainability, as it ensures that stakeholders are invested in maintaining and building upon the Project's achievements. They have shown an unwavering determination to continue implementing similar activities and continue with capacity development activities. However, the MTRT has concerns that despite this progress, the positive CBIT experience, and the use of MRV-E, it could be challenging to expand further without the adoption of appropriate legal provisions.

Additionally, appropriate funding is essential to ensure the implementation of the national program for climate change. Establishing genuine partnership relationships between the Ministry, academia, think tanks, CSOs and other institutions could be a pressing problem.

Still, the MTRT expects that the Project's results concerning Montenegro's policy and strategic alignment in the area of climate change combined with capacity-building initiatives could ensure that improvements in climate transparency and MRV systems are sustained and built upon in the future.

F21. Pronounced ownership remains a prerequisite and critical for the CBIT's sustainability and confirms that national partners leadership in tailoring the CBIT reflected priorities and needs concerning climate action⁸³.

Despite implementation delays, the Project implementation thus far is linked with functional partnerships, focusing on aligning priorities with organisational needs and national climate strategies all activities were designed in line with these strategic priorities and national policies. For instance, the CBIT Project has organised broad consultative processes and needs assessment concerning transparency requirements that involved 20 critical institutions and more than three hundred participants. This approach to capacity building allowed beneficiaries to prioritise actions and enforce various policy and legal provisions, with the main focus on climate mitigation and adaptation, climate finance and gender and climate change.

The partners perceive Project deliverables as critical resources- such as functional MRV-E system- aligned with operational priorities and service delivery objectives. In parallel, investment in "soft" resources— capacity development, advocacy and awareness— contributes to a conducive environment for climate

⁸³ The MTRT examined ownership of processes (planning and execution of activities), resources (use and allocation of funds and materials), results (project benefits), and decisions (guiding the Project's course and execution).

action and effective management of resources. For example, the stakeholders recognised UNDP’s “critical role in improving the capacity of the Ministry concerning project implementation and financial management⁸⁴”. These efforts have created capacities and enhanced commitment to climate change organisational framework development and sustainability of results⁸⁵, ensuring financial resources for co-financing and follow-up implementation. In this context, the management and technical staff recognised that the Project is critical in integrating its results into national operational services and expanding the initiated results and activities.

The CBIT Project has worked collaboratively with key partners, such as other institutions involved in environmental stewardship and climate change and has exerted considerable ownership over decisions. In this context, the Project Board is critical in providing strategic decisions. Such comprehensive ownership over decisions ensures that institutional mandates and long-term strategic directions are aligned with the Project's objectives and stakeholder interests.

F22. The CBIT initiated the delivery of capacity development programs, but the sustainability of these capacities is closely tied to effectively implementing a professional development system.

The MTRT assessed the CBIT's capacity development programs in the context of the likelihood of improving the performance and efficiency of the participants, primarily public administration professionals and stakeholders involved in climate change initiatives⁸⁶- and the initial findings are generally positive.

The CBIT increased training activities the previous year, reflecting a growing demand for individual capacity building and broader organisational development within the realm of climate action. Content relevance is ensured through a needs assessment and involvement of the central institutions, enabling them to set priorities that respond to current capacity gaps and challenges in the climate sector.

On the implementation side, the MTRT finds that the Project considered building and sustaining longer-term capacities, effectively engaging stakeholders in all activities. This engagement led to collaborative training sessions that included various and interlinked aspects of climate change⁸⁷. In parallel, the Project also engaged expertise to train national professionals on transparency and MRV-E under UNFCCC, intending to widen its reach through available tools (like the Transparency Platform of the CBIT Global Support Programme⁸⁸). The CBIT Project opted for in-person training delivery modality, and the participants feedback has been generally positive. At the same time, the Project did not ensure full benefit from online learning opportunities to complement these in-person efforts: balancing traditional and innovative teaching methods proved to be highly effective in maximising knowledge acquisition and application⁸⁹.

The available documents and desk review indicate a commendable increase in training attendees. For example, the Project sources indicated direct capacity development support for effective climate change planning and decision-making to more than four hundred participants from various national institutions. However, there is a need to integrate these training programs into broader human resource development strategies at the institutional level and clear career progression pathways for participating individuals⁹⁰. The

⁸⁴ KII notes- the comment is that UNDP assisted with preparation of the NIM Manual outlining applicable rules and procedures as per GEF and UNDP guidelines.

⁸⁵ For example, UNDP CO delivered training on procurement, financial management and reporting under this transition from DIM to NIM implementation.

⁸⁶ To understand the effect of the CBIT capacity development efforts, the MTRT conducted a detailed review of already implemented activities and their effectiveness, supplementing these findings with the analysis of planned training programs. This research offered insight into if and how the training programs will enhance competencies related to climate transparency, mitigation, adaptation, and gender integration in climate policy.

⁸⁷ Directly benefiting at least 420 stakeholders, including a significant proportion of women, the Project's activities aimed to enhance institutional and technical capacities crucial for effective climate change planning and decision-making.

⁸⁸ <https://climate-transparency-platform.org/the-platform>

⁸⁹ For example, some of the recent research from the National Academy for Public Administration in Serbia confirmed this. More details available at <https://www.undp.org/serbia/projects/civil-service-training-21st-century-republic-serbia> and <https://www.napa.gov.rs/tekst/en/137/programme-evaluation.php>

⁹⁰ Montenegro's legal framework recognises the importance of capacity development, but actual practices reveal a gap where incentives and rewards for training are not effectively tied to career advancement. The MTRT finds the need to align training more closely with specific job roles concerning climate change and its various aspects, incorporating practical exercises and integrating global best practices. Emphasising custom content, expanding specialised training sessions, and

informants highlight the necessity of creating explicit connections between training achievements and career advancement opportunities, such as promotions and tangible incentives.

This issue is further complicated by the high turnover of qualified staff within these institutions, which resulted in a loss of institutional knowledge and disrupted the continuity of climate change-related services. The key informants highlighted that the CBIT Project should continue addressing capacity development priorities while also “advocating for policies that stabilise the workforce, reduce turnover, and encourage a culture of continuous professional development⁹¹”.

7 Conclusions and lessons learned

7.1 CONCLUSIONS

The Evaluation Consultant examined the findings, employing diverse judgment criteria, and arrived at the subsequent comprehensive conclusions:

7.1.1 Conclusions on Project Strategy

C1. The CBIT Project effectively addresses Montenegro's specific needs in combating climate change by establishing a more transparent and robust system for climate action in line with global standards and commitments (F1). Despite facing challenges, the Project has made strides in establishing institutional frameworks and delivering priority capacity development support. The CBIT's targeted efforts to enhance methodologies and tools for increased transparency directly align with the requirements of Article 13 of the Paris Agreement, showcasing its commitment to improving national climate change actions and policies, mainly through the development of a comprehensive MRV-E system and NAP (F1).

Furthermore, the Project's relevance is bolstered by key national partners' extensive and strategic involvement in its design and conceptualisation, reflecting a deep collaborative effort (F2). The MTESDNRD, as the lead entity and National Focal Point of the UNFCCC, has played a central role in ensuring that the Project's design is based on need and priorities, rooted in national climate change policy and sustainable development strategies.

C2. The Project remained relevant, particularly in strengthening institutional capacities and technical skills, which are crucial for aligning with EU environmental policies and fulfilling international reporting obligations (F3). The Project's focus on gender-sensitive approaches and broader developmental impacts further reflects Montenegro's commitment to inclusive and sustainable development, underscoring its importance in the nation's climate action efforts.

C3. The CBIT Project has demonstrated internal solid coherence, logically connecting its activities, outputs, and outcomes to support Montenegro's climate action capacities, aligned with the Paris Agreement (F4). The strategic framework, grounded in a Theory of Change, has directed the Project's focus on enhancing institutional mechanisms for increased transparency and bolstering technical capacities to implement a robust transparency framework. This approach will be instrumental in systematically developing Montenegro's capabilities to address climate change effectively and fulfil international commitments.

C4. Externally, the CBIT Project aligns well with Montenegro's policy directives, legislative enactments, and EU environmental standards that inform national accession objectives (F5). It supports the National Climate Change Strategy (NCCS) and the National Strategy of Sustainable Development (NSSD), enhancing the country's proficiency in climate policy formulation and integrating climate action into broader development goals. Moreover, the Project is strategically positioned and will aid Montenegro's compliance with the Paris Agreement and EU benchmarks, especially in developing a formal MRV-E system critical for data management and reporting on climate action (F6). The Project also aligns with the UN and UNDP's strategic programmes for Montenegro, contributing to inclusive economic development and environmental sustainability (F7). The CBIT's alignment with Agenda 2030 and SDGs underscores its contribution to climate

employing innovative online platforms can enhance the training's effectiveness. Moreover, flexibility in scheduling and involving experienced professionals as trainers are crucial for maximising the relevance and impact of these training programs.

⁹¹ KII notes

action, gender equality, strong institutions, and international cooperation, reflecting the interconnectedness of Montenegro's climate initiatives with broader sustainable development goals (F9).

7.1.2 Conclusions on Progress Towards Results

C5. The CBIT Project is making some strides towards improving coordination and establishing formal mechanisms, particularly through advocating for the MRV-E system's reflection in Montenegro's climate legislation (F10). The Project has suggested legal revisions to integrate the MRV-E system into higher-level frameworks and laws, also suggesting and defining clear responsibilities for climate data provision. Still, inefficiencies in existing inter-agency agreements and high staff turnover pose challenges to the continuity of efforts, timely establishment, and MRV-E system's operationalization.

While the CBIT Project has advanced in defining processes for improved transparency, it faces challenges in mobilizing technical inputs, which affects progress under specific outcomes (F11). Despite these hurdles, the Project has conducted SWOT and gap analyses, informing national authorities on critical priorities for improving climate action transparency. The Project's role in enhancing the functionality of the National Council for Sustainable Development's Working Groups is noted as strategic in shaping national climate policies. However, integrating climate considerations into routine operations and decision-making processes still needs to be verified.

The Project has enhanced communication and initiated efforts to incorporate gender perspectives into climate change policies and practices (F12). The Project has seen progress in conceptualising the MRV-E System's data flows, inputs, and outputs. Still, progress has yet to be ensured in training stakeholders and establishing a long-term capacity development program on the MRV-E portal as crucial for the effective use of the MRV-E system, especially in the context of high staff turnover (F13).

C6. The MTRT recognises that delays in the Project's start, recruitment difficulties, political and institutional changes, and a cyber-attack have led to a slowdown, emphasising the need for adaptive and resilient management strategies (F15). Despite these challenges, the Project's commitment and the involvement of the Project Implementation Unit and Project Board members in overcoming obstacles are seen as positive signs. However, there is a need to consider short- and mid-term milestones to navigate the Project through its strategic targets effectively.

C7. The CBIT Project has integrated gender equality and the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle within its framework, recognizing Montenegro's ongoing efforts in gender mainstreaming and equal opportunity legislation (F16). Despite these efforts, challenges such as limited political commitment, minimal resource allocation, and entrenched gender norms hinder practical implementation. The CBIT's proactive measures, including plans for technical skill development for gender data differentiation and sex-disaggregated data management, demonstrate a strategic approach to addressing these issues. Nominating a gender representative to the Working Group on Climate Change signifies concrete action towards incorporating gender perspectives into climate policy discussions (F16).

The Project has embedded gender equality into its climate change initiatives by developing gender-sensitive methodologies and training programs. (F17). Moreover, the CBIT Project advocated for gender-inclusive legislative amendments and took a proactive stance in gender statistics, proposing integration into the National Determined Contributions monitoring framework.

7.1.3 Conclusions on Project implementation and adaptive management

C8. Several challenges impacted the CBIT Project implementation efficiency despite the efforts to adhere to the approved work plans. The extensive actions to set up management and operational systems under the national execution (NIM) were time-consuming, affecting the delivery of results (F18). These problems, combined with a high turnover in the ministry staff and changes in the government and ministerial administration caused by frequent political changes, have resulted in delays and the need for strategic clarifications of roles and responsibilities (F18). Furthermore, the MTRT noted that the Project Management Unit (PIU) faced delays in establishment and operational challenges due to personnel changes, followed by unacceptably slow recruitment process, which added pressure to the project manager, who had to represent multiple roles (F18).

However, the frequent political changes and fluctuating political support, the adaptation challenges of the Ministry to GEF project management requirements, and the understaffed Operations Unit of the Implementing Partner, particularly the financial department within the Ministry, posed significant hurdles to the project's capacity to implementation, leading to delays in payments and causing low delivery (F19).

The remaining time for the CBIT Project implementation is limited, which will pose additional challenges to the PIU and the Ministry in implementing all planned activities (F19).

7.1.4 Conclusions on Sustainability

C9. The sustainability of the CBIT Project's results is promising with the Montenegrin government's commitment to international and EU standards, fostering a conducive environment for continued efforts in climate action (F20). The Project's focus on strengthening institutional capacity and ensuring national ownership is crucial for maintaining and furthering the Project's achievements, as highlighted by the development of institutional and legal frameworks for the national MRV-E system (F20). However, challenges such as slow policy execution, delays in establishing the MRV-E system, and the need for consistent legislative alignment with EU regulations pose risks to sustainable results (F20).

C10. The national partners' pronounced ownership and their alignment of the CBIT with strategic priorities and national policies underpin the Project's sustainability (F21). The Project has fostered functional partnerships and capacity-building initiatives, which are seen as critical resources for ongoing climate action (F21). Despite these strengths, the sustainability of the capacity development programs depends on effective integration with professional development systems and the mitigation of high staff turnover within institutions, emphasising the need for a stable workforce and continuous professional development (F22).

7.2 LESSONS LEARNED

The MTRT identified the following lessons learned:

The evolution from national execution is a multi-faceted process, demanding a holistic and adaptable approach for successful implementation. The shift to national execution in project implementation signifies a profound transformation, necessitating a comprehensive and strategic approach that extends far beyond the scope of standard HACT micro-assessments. This transition requires the development of a detailed strategy to serve as a roadmap outlining the phased integration of critical elements into the national execution framework. This approach should include assessing financial risks and capacities and emphasising broader institutional, administrative, and technical dimensions. Essential to this process is the establishment of a dedicated Project Implementation Unit that adheres to GEF guidelines and national procedures. This unit is critical in managing the project according to the agreed work plan and ensuring the transition is smooth and aligned with the project's objectives.

The transition strategy must be flexible enough to adapt to external challenges (in case of Montenegro, it included political changes or operational issues like cyber-attacks). A phased implementation approach is beneficial, starting with specific outcomes and gradually expanding. This method allows for real-time assessment and adjustment, ensuring the transition is practical and efficient.

The Government of Montenegro and its ministries are responsible for policy formulation and execution and fulfilling specific mandates, ensuring a coherent approach towards policy-making and its implementation across different sectors. However, a clear distinction exists in managing development assistance and project execution, as these tasks do not align with the core responsibilities of any single ministry. This distinction sets the stage for a notable challenge, particularly about the Project Implementation Unit (PIU).

The "PIU dilemma"⁹² underscores a critical concern within the development project management and implementation framework. Uniquely positioned outside the traditional ministerial structure, the PIU is essentially a transient entity bound to the duration of the projects it manages. This temporary setup leads to the PIU's dissolution upon project completion, raising questions about the effectiveness of the national execution. Rather than fostering ownership and building national capacities, this modality might inadvertently establish unsustainable infrastructures. This scenario highlights the need for a strategic

⁹² <https://www.oecd.org/derec/adb/35249987.pdf>

reassessment of development assistance and project implementation practices to foster sustainable development and enhance national capabilities in a more integrated manner.

Substantial ownership and commitment of the national stakeholders is required from the planning to implementation and completion of development initiatives: the transition to national execution highlighted the need to establish unambiguous project ownership and secure a firm commitment from the Implementing Partner and other critical national institutions. This aspect is vital as it ensures that each party is fully aware of and engaged in their roles and responsibilities while fostering a sense of accountability and driving the project towards success. Understanding the dynamics of ownership and commitment can guide future projects in setting the stage for effective collaboration and shared responsibility.

The Implementing Partner needs to maintain high implementation standards and ensure transparency throughout the project management cycle. Maintaining the proper standards in project management is a critical success factor. This process should include developing and adhering to stringent quality benchmarks and guidelines throughout the project. In addition to procedural requirements, high standards are integral to achieving the project's goals and ensuring its sustainability and effectiveness. This lesson underscores the need for continuous quality assurance and establishing a robust monitoring mechanism with clear milestones and targets.

The importance of transparency in all project management and implementation aspects was starkly evident. This encompasses open communication channels, accurate and timely reporting, and making project information accessible to all stakeholders. Transparency builds trust, facilitates stakeholder engagement, and enhances the project's credibility. Future projects can benefit from integrating transparency as a core value, fostering a culture of openness and accountability.

Successful implementation of (NIM) projects requires establishing procedures and clarifications that are in compliance with regulatory frameworks. Creating well-defined procedures and clarifying the obligations and rights of all participants in the NIM implementation efforts are foundational tasks in transitioning from a direct to national implementation modality. This process is critical in setting expectations, avoiding misunderstandings, and ensuring alignment with the project's objectives. It involves meticulous planning and clear communication, serving as a blueprint for managing changes and guiding participants through the transition.

Navigating and complying with national and international regulations is a complex yet essential aspect of project implementation. This aspect of project management requires a comprehensive understanding of the legal environment and a proactive approach to align project activities within these frameworks. Adapting to regulatory changes and ensuring compliance are ongoing processes crucial for the smooth progression of the project and for mitigating legal and operational risks.

Research and data gathering and analysis played a key role in the CBIT Project, underlining the value of informed decision-making in public policymaking, especially concerning climate change (as part of the broader environmental stewardship). The Project initiated this process through an improved MRV-E digital system to meet transparency-related requirements under Article 13 of the Paris Agreement (PA). The MRV-E, through detailed research and thorough data analysis, will enable stakeholders to gain insights into the complexities of the climate change sector and guide strategic decisions. Future projects should continue to prioritise robust research and data collection as they provide a strong foundation for strategy development, help navigate challenges, and measure the effectiveness of interventions.

8 Recommendations

The analysis of primary and secondary data served to define findings and form conclusions. Considering these inputs, the MRTT recommendations have been defined as a framework for further analysis and follow-up actions.

The evaluation consultant has formulated the following main recommendations:

<p>Recommendation 1:</p> <p>For: MTESDNRD</p>	<p>Extension with Enhanced National Co-financing:</p> <p>The MRTT recommends the extension of at least 12 months for the CBIT Project to complete its planned activities effectively and establish enduring</p>
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<p>(Implementing partner) Government of Montenegro</p>	<p>institutional capacities. Given the delayed start and consequent savings in management costs (which are pretty limited), this extension is financially viable.</p> <p>Alongside this, the MTRT suggests exploring opportunities to increase national co-financing to support the management costs for this extended implementation period. This dual approach of extending the Project timeline and bolstering it with additional national funding would provide a more robust framework to achieve its objectives and ensure sustainable knowledge transfer and national ownership of results. (C8 and also C5 and C6)</p>
<p>Recommendation 2:</p> <p>For: MTESDNRD (Implementing partner) Government of Montenegro</p>	<p>Comprehensive Team Engagement and Support:</p> <p>The MTRT recommends accelerating Project implementation by urgently completing the pending/vacant positions within the Project Implementation Unit/ Project Team. Practically, it is highly demanding to engage a project assistant and a procurement specialist promptly. The addition of these roles is critical for efficient operational management and effective procurement processes. The MTESDNRD leadership needs to take the lead and complete this process as an urgent priority.</p> <p>Furthermore, the MTRT recommends that the Ministry urgently strengthen the finance unit, one of the main obstacles to swift and timely implementation. The Project could explore opportunities- through additional national co-financing- to support the Ministry's finance unit, which would help optimise financial management and address any existing bottlenecks in the Project's financial operations. This capacitated, transparent and accountable finance unit will respond to the need for tracking, recording and reporting on co-financing as one of the reported challenges (C8 and C6)</p>
<p>Recommendation 3:</p> <p>For: MTESDNRD (Implementing partner)</p>	<p>Revision of Work Plans and Indicators:</p> <p>The MTRT recommends that the PIU in close cooperation with the NPD and PB prepares new Project's work plans to include new, realistic annual targets and periodic milestones.</p> <p>This revision will provide a clearer framework for tracking progress and facilitate timely adjustments. Additionally, the indicators must be updated to reflect these changes, ensuring they are aligned with the Project's revised timelines and objectives. (C6, C7 and C8)</p>
<p>Recommendation 4:</p> <p>For: MTESDNRD (Implementing partner)</p>	<p>Improved Results Reporting:</p> <p>The MTRT recommends enhancing results reporting by focusing more deeply on documenting changes and improvements relative to the Project's indicators.</p> <p>This improved reporting should clearly articulate the Project's effects, capture the nuances of progress, and identify areas needing additional focus. A systematic approach to reporting will aid in evaluating the Project's effectiveness and guide necessary adjustments for ongoing and future initiatives. (C6, C7 and C8)</p>
<p>Recommendation 5:</p> <p>For: MTESDNRD (Implementing partner)</p>	<p>Enhance awareness and capacities concerning the MRV-E system specifically and the climate change broadly and support sound capacity development efforts</p> <p>Communication and awareness-raising remain important elements of the CBIT Project. The MTRT recommends working on educating stakeholders, particularly civil servants and public administration professionals within the</p>

	<p>environmental and climate change system, strengthening their understanding of operational practices and innovative methods, such as the MRV-E system.</p> <p>This increased awareness contributes to a more informed and skilled workforce capable of driving effective and efficient assigned roles and services. Thus, future projects should focus on comprehensive communication strategies and awareness to ensure all stakeholders are well-informed, engaged, and empowered to contribute to modernising and improving the MRV-E system in the context of transparency-related requirements under Article 13 of the Paris Agreement (PA). The MTRT suggests including innovative and creative tools for capacity development, education and awareness raising, that would benefit from new technologies and contemporary approaches to learning.</p> <p>In addition, the MTRT recommends defining a sound capacity development support, using hybrid approach that combines the flexibility and accessibility of online learning with the engagement and interactivity of in-person training. The goal is to leverage the strengths of both modalities to create a more effective and holistic learning experience.</p> <p>The CBIT Project should design training methods to maximize engagement and interaction among participants. This process could involve interactive sessions, group discussions, and practical exercises encouraging active participation and collaboration among trainees (C5, C6, C7, C9).</p>
<p>Recommendation 6:</p> <p>For: MTESDNRD (Implementing partner) UNDP (Oversight role)</p>	<p>Regular High-Level Meetings and Discussions on Progress:</p> <p>To ensure consistent oversight and effective resolution of challenges, regular monthly progress meetings are recommended between the National Project Director (NPD), the Director of the respective directorate, and UNDP representatives. These meetings should serve as a platform to review the Project's progress, address any emerging challenges, and agree on follow-up actions.</p> <p>In addition, the MTRT recommends organizing high-level quarterly or six-monthly meetings between UNDP (represented by the Resident Representative) and the MTESDNRD (represented by the Minister or State Secretary) to enhance political support and ensure continuity in all project-related efforts, fostering a more cohesive approach to advancing the Project's goals.</p> <p>The MTRT suggests a six-month period to recover implementation- until September 2024: if the progress is unsatisfactory, the MTRT recommends considering changing implementation modality from NIM to UNDP Country Office support to NIM.</p>

9 Annexes

[Annex 1 Terms of Reference](#)

[Annex 2: Evaluation matrix](#)

[Annex 3: Interview guides](#)

[Annex 4: Ratings scale](#)

[Annex 5 List of interviewed stakeholders](#)

[Annex 6: List of consulted documents](#)

[Annex 7: Co-financing table](#)

[Annex 8: Signed Code of Conduct form](#)

[Annex 9: MTR Report Clearance Form](#)

ANNEX 1 TERMS OF REFERENCE

BASIC CONTRACT INFORMATION

Location: Home-based, with the mission to Podgorica, Montenegro

Category: Climate Change – Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT) Type of Contract: Individual Contract

Assignment Type: International Consultant Languages Required: English

Starting Date: November 22nd, 2023 Duration of Initial Contract: 30 working days

Expected Duration of the Assignment: until February 29th, 2024.

BACKGROUND

Project Title

Strengthening Montenegro's Nationally Determined Contribution and Adaptation Activities Transparency Framework (PIMS#6225)

Project Description

This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the UNDP-GEF Midterm Review (MTR) of the medium-sized project titled *Strengthening Montenegro's Nationally Determined Contribution and Adaptation Activities Transparency Framework* (PIMS#6225) implemented through the Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism as an Implementing Partner, which is to be undertaken in the period between November 2023 and February 2024. The project started on August 25th, 2021, and is in its second year of implementation. In line with the UNDP-GEF Guidance on MTRs, this MTR process was initiated before the submission of the second Project Implementation Report (PIR). This ToR sets out the expectations for this MTR. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document [Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects](#).

The project was designed to enhance the efficiency of national climate change actions and the synergies with other related national actions, policies, and measures in order to achieve climate-resilient and low-carbon development. The project aims to strengthen national capacities, institutional and technical, pursuing more efficient articulation to allow an enhanced enabling environment for transparency-related activities, as well as adopting or improving methodologies and tools to enhance transparency as requested in Article 13 of the Paris Agreement. Through this strengthening, Montenegro will be more efficient in the definition, development, and implementation of policies and measures, based on more timely and accurate information, monitoring, and assessment of the instruments applied to face climate change. A gender-sensitive approach is planned to be included in methodologies for assessing the adequacy, effectiveness and effects of adaptation actions and mitigation actions and policies effects. The expected results are a strengthened institutional mechanism to track nationally determined contributions and the development of a more robust transparency framework.

Through the process of preparing the Second Biennial Update Report, Montenegro developed a conceptual framework and pilot information system for monitoring and reporting on climate challenges, associated actions, their benefits, costs, and associated financial and capacity-building support, as well as links to the wider impacts of these actions on SDGs. This system provides a backbone for Montenegro to start the process of collecting and processing data to inform its decision-makers on climate change-related actions, as well as to report on the progress. Notwithstanding the expertise currently resident in Montenegro, there is still a lack of a coordinated team of support and climate finance expertise. A strategic approach by the project is to use the MRV-E portal as a means by which to catalyze a more coordinated team of experts from the MESPU.

Formalizing national processes to capitalize on existing expertise and experience gained through other related initiatives will help maintain the momentum needed to enable the development of data flows, analysis,

and provision of useful data for decision-making and reporting associated with Montenegro's NDC and adaptation actions.

This Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT) project is structured as a set of outputs and activities organized in two (2) complementary components, but with four (4) expected outcomes:

Component 1: Strengthening active stakeholder engagement and embedding MRV-E of climate action within existing sectoral functions and sustainable development goals

Outcome 1: A strengthened institutional mechanism for increased transparency

Component 2: Enhancing technical capacities to implement an ambitious enhanced transparency framework

Outcome 2: Strengthened national institutions to implement enhanced transparency

Outcome 3: Strengthened coordination and information exchange is institutionalized with an enhanced transparency framework

Outcome 4: A technical roadmap on low-carbon and climate-resilient development is formulated and adopted

The project is implemented under National Implementation Modality (NIM), with the Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism (MESPU) as the Implementing Partner.

The Implementing Partner is responsible and accountable for managing the project, including the monitoring and evaluation of project interventions, achieving project outcomes, and the effective use of the resources. The MESPU nominated a high-level official who served as the National Project Director (NPD) for the project implementation. The NPD chairs the Project Board and other relevant stakeholder, sectoral, and working groups under the project and is responsible for providing government oversight and guidance to the project implementation.

UNDP is accountable to GEF for the implementation of this project. This includes oversight of project execution to ensure that the project is carried out in accordance with agreed standards and provisions. UNDP is responsible for delivering GEF project cycle management services, comprising project approval and start-up, project supervision and oversight, and project completion and evaluation. UNDP has the Project Assurance role within the Project Board/Steering Committee.

The project operates out of Podgorica, specifically, the Directorate of Ecology and Climate Change in the Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism (MESPU), working with other key directorates/institutions such as the Institute of Hydrometeorology and Seismology and Environment Protection Agency. As a NIM project, the physical office for the project is based at MESPU.

The project duration continues until August 31st, 2025, with a total budget of \$1,390,000 out of which \$1,100,000 has been provided through GEF Trust Fund grant, \$40,000 has been provided by UNDP, while \$250,000 of in-kind support has been provided by the MESPU.

The Working Group has ensured coordination with other projects and initiatives on Mitigation and Adaptation of the National Council for Sustainable Development, which was established specifically to ensure inter-institutional coordination. Operationally, this coordination works through the Project Boards of each project, whose members are by and large the same focal points in the various government bodies.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Scope of Work and Key Tasks

The Mid-Term Review (MTR) will assess progress toward the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document and will assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made in order to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will also review the project's strategy and its risks to sustainability.

The MTR must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable, and useful. The MTR team, consisting of **one international and one national expert**, will review all relevant sources of information, including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e., PIF, Project Document, project

implementation report - PIR, project budget revisions, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based review) provided by the Project Team and Commissioning Unit. Then, they will participate in an MTR inception workshop to clarify their understanding of the objectives and methods of the MTR, producing the MTR inception report thereafter. The MTR mission will then consist of interviews and site visits to Podgorica. The MTR team will review the baseline GEF focal area Tracking Tool, which was submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Tracking Tool that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

The MTR team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach, ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office, the UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Adviser, and other key stakeholders.

The engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR. Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to the Directorate for Ecology and Climate Change within MESPU, the Secretariat of the National Council for Sustainable Development, Environment Protection Agency, State Statistical Office etc., as well as component leaders, key experts, and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, project stakeholders, academia, CSOs, etc. Additionally, the MTR team is expected to conduct field missions to Podgorica.

The final MTR report should describe the entire MTR approach used and the rationale for the approach, making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths, and weaknesses of the methods and approach of the review.

The MTR team will assess the following four categories of project progress and produce a draft and final MTR report. See the *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for rating requirements. No overall rating is required.

Project Strategy

Project design:

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route toward expected/intended results.
- Review how the project addresses country priorities.
- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process taken into account during project design processes?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design.
- If there are significant areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

Results Framework/Logframe:

- Undertake a critical analysis of the project's logframe indicators and targets, assess how "SMART" the midterm and end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound), and suggest specific amendments/revisions to the targets and indicators as necessary.
- Examine if progress so far has led to, or could in the future catalyse beneficial development effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality and women's empowerment, improved governance etc...) that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis.
- Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART 'development' indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits.

Progress Towards Results

- Review the logframe indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the Progress Towards Results Matrix and following the Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF- Financed Projects; colour code progress in a “traffic light system” based on the level of progress achieved; assign a rating on progress for each outcome; make recommendations from the areas marked as “Not on target to be achieved” (red).
- Compare and analyse the GEF Tracking Tool at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review.
- Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project.
- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

- Using the Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects assess the following categories of project progress:
 - Management Arrangements
 - Work Planning
 - Finance and co-finance
 - Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems
 - Stakeholder Engagement
 - Reporting
 - Communications.

Sustainability

- Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, PIRs and the Quantum Risk Management Module are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why.
- Assess overall risks to sustainability factors of the project in terms of the following four criteria:
 - Financial risks to sustainability.
 - Socio-economic risks to sustainability.
 - Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability.
 - Environmental risks to sustainability.

The MTR team will include a section of the report setting out the MTR’s evidence-based **conclusions**, in light of the findings.

Additionally, the MTR team is expected to make **recommendations** to the Project Team. Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. A recommendation table should be put in the report’s executive summary.

See the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for guidance on a recommendation table. The MTR team should make no more than 15 recommendations in total.

Expected Outputs and Deliverables

The MTR consultant shall prepare and submit:

- MTR Inception Report: MTR team clarifies the objectives and methods of the Midterm Review no later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission. To be sent to the Commissioning Unit and project management. Approximate due date: November 15th
- Presentation: Initial Findings presented to project management and Commissioning Unit at the end of the MTR mission. Approximate due date: December 15th

- Draft Final Report: Full report with annexes within three weeks of the MTR mission. Approximate due date: January 10th
- Final Report: Revised report with annexed audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report. To be sent to the Commissioning Unit within one week of receiving UNDP comments on the draft. Approximate due date: February 15th.

Note: The final MTR report must be in English.

Institutional Arrangement

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit, i.e., UNDP in Montenegro.

The Commissioning Unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the MTR team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

Duration of the Work

The MTR consultancy will be for 30 working days over a time period of approximately 10 weeks, starting November 1st 2023, and shall not exceed four months from when the consultant is hired. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

TIMEFRAME	ACTIVITY
November 5 th	Application closes
November 22 nd	Select MTR Team
November 25 th , 2 days	Prep the MTR Team (handover of Project Documents)
November 30 th , 5 days	Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report
December 7 th , 2 days	Finalization and Validation of MTR Inception Report- latest start of MTR mission
December 15 th , 7 days	MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits
	Mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings- earliest end of MTR mission
December 30 th , 8 days	Preparing draft report
January 20 th , 2 days	Incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report/Finalization of MTR report
January 30 th , 2 days	Preparation & Issue of Management Response
February 8 th , 2 days	Concluding Stakeholder Workshop
February 29 th 2024.	Expected date of full MTR completion

The date start of contract is November 15th 2023.

Duty Station

The location of the assignment is home-based and Podgorica, Montenegro.

- International travel is required to Montenegro during the MTR mission.
- The Basic Security in the Field II and Advanced Security in the Field courses must be completed prior to commencement of travel.
- Consultants are required to comply with the UN security directives set forth under <https://dss.un.org/dssweb/>
- All related travel expenses will be covered and will be reimbursed as per UNDP rules and regulations upon submission of an F-10 claim form and supporting documents.

REQUIRED SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

Qualifications of the Successful Applicants

The selection of consultants will be aimed at maximizing the overall “team” qualities in the following areas:

- Recent experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies.
- Experience applying SMART targets and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios.
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to the climate change related projects.
- Experience working with the GEF or GEF-evaluations.
- Experience working in the Western Balkans region.
- Work experience in relevant technical areas, for at least 10 years.
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and climate change, experience in gendersensitive evaluation and analysis.
- Excellent communication skills.
- Demonstrable analytical skills.
- Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset.
- A Master’s degree in environment, climate change, ecology, engineering or other closely related field.

Consultant Independence: The consultants cannot have participated in the project preparation, formulation, and/or implementation (including the writing of the Project Document) and should not have a conflict of interest with project’s related activities.

ANNEX 2: EVALUATION MATRIX

Relevant sub-question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data analysis	Data Sources and collection tools
Relevant evaluation category: PROJECT STRATEGY				
Key Question 1: Has the CBIT Project been relevant in responding to the needs of the country, national institutions and beneficiaries?				
<p><i>SQ 1.1. To what extent was the design of the intervention, including the formulation of its planned results, relevant to the needs and priorities of the intended beneficiaries and key stakeholders?</i></p>	<p>JC 1.1.1. The extent to which the Project considered and addressed the needs and situation of the beneficiaries and priorities of stakeholders</p> <p>JC1.1.2. The extent to which the CBIT is relevant to the specific environmental and developmental reality in Montenegro (in the perception of the stakeholders and partners)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence that the Project analyzed the situation of beneficiaries and addressed their needs and the stakeholders' priorities - Opinions of the stakeholders about the CBIT's relevance to the specific environmental sector and developmental reality in Montenegro 	<p>Desk based research</p> <p>Assessment of the strength of the ToC designed for the Project (explicit or implicit).</p> <p>Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders from CBIT</p>	<p>Programming documents: Project documents, Annual Progress Reports</p> <p>Stakeholders from the implementing partners, public institutions, policy-making bodies, other government institutions, and development partners in the respective fields</p>
<p><i>SQ1.2. To what extent were key national partners involved in the Project conceptualization and design process?</i></p>	<p>JC1.1.2. The extent to which the partners were involved in the Project conceptualization and their views incorporated</p> <p>JC1.2.2. The extent to which the results of the in-depth situation assessment served for the formulation of the intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence that the partners were involved in the Project conceptualization and prioritization and opinions if their views and comments have been considered and reflected - Evidence that the inputs from partners and stakeholders have been incorporated into the Project design 		
<p><i>EQ1.3. To what extent has the CBIT project relevance been considered and examined during its implementation?</i></p>	<p>JC1.3.1. The degree of lasting relevance of the CBIT Project and its activities (Existence of changes in the CBIT's environment that required changes and adjustments of the intervention)</p> <p>JC1.3.2. The extent to which the underlying assumptions are held (in the context of achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence (including opinions) about the changes in the CBIT Project environment and the need to adjust activities and implementation approach - Justification for modifying and adjusting the CBIT Project's implementation approach and evidence of the Project's flexibility - Evidence (including opinions and desk examples) that the Project's underlying assumptions held during the implementation 		
Key Question 2: Has the CBIT Project aligned its intervention with Montenegro's reform priorities and development goals?				

<p><i>SQ 2.1. Are the objectives, activities, and expected outcomes of the CBIT logically connected and consistent with each other?</i></p>	<p>JC2.1. The extent to which the objectives, activities, and expected outcomes of the CBIT Project are logically connected and consistent with each other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence and the analysis that the objectives, activities, and expected outcomes of the CBIT are logically connected and consistent with each other - Evidence (desk review examples and opinions) that the Project adheres to UNDP strategic priorities and mandate and established synergies with other initiatives 	<p>Desk based research</p> <p>Analysis of national and sector-specific priorities that the CBIT Project addressed</p> <p>Analysis of Montenegro's International benchmarks- and the EU accession framework</p>	<p>Programming documents: The Project, Annual Progress Reports. Other project deliverables</p> <p>Stakeholders from the CBIT, public institutions, policy-making bodies and other government institutions, and development partners in the respective fields</p>
<p><i>SQ2.2. To what extent is the intervention consistent with the national development strategies, priorities and commitments on environmental protection and climate change?</i></p>	<p>JC2.2.1. The extent to which the CBIT aligns with international agreements and conventions on environment and climate change</p> <p>JC2.2.2. The extent to which the CBIT Project considered the UN Development Cooperation Framework, UNDP strategic plan, and relevant SDGs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence and examples that the CBIT contributed to international agreements/ conventions on climate change and environmental protection - Evidence- opinions and examples- that the CBIT Project aligns with national strategies and priorities related to environment and climate change - Evidence that the CBIT Project aligns with the UN Development Cooperation Framework - Evidence that the CBIT Project addressed SDGs and contributed to its targets 	<p>Interviews with key informants, including development partners</p>	

Relevant evaluation category: **PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS**

Key question 3: Have the CBIT Project and its approaches and activities delivered its outputs as planned?

<p><i>EQ 3.1. To what degree has the Project achieved its mid-term targets and progressed towards outputs (as per ToC)?</i></p>	<p>JC3.1.1. The extent to which the CBIT Project met its mid-term targets and achieved progress under its outputs</p> <p>JC3.1.2. The extent to which the CBIT management and staff, national institutions and beneficiaries have been satisfied with the Project implementation and achieved results thus far</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence and examples of progress concerning the improvement of governance, procedures, and technical capacities to respond to emerging transparency requirements under the Paris Agreement - Evidence and examples that progress has been achieved in adopting Transparency Methodologies, Procedures and Guidelines (MPGs) for tracking NDCs, adaptation activities and climate finance - Evidence that there was progress in improving GHG inventory and projections - Evidence about progress in developing the capacities of the selected public authorities and scientific institutions for applying MPGs in the first reporting period on national adaptation actions under article 15 of the MMR - Evidence, including opinions, that national institutions understand and are capacitated to 	<p>Desk-based research including national and sectoral statistics.</p> <p>Third parties' reports on environmental sector in Montenegro</p> <p>National statistics and international performance indicators on the priority areas</p> <p>Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders from CBIT and the Ministry.</p> <p>Review the log frame indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the</p>	<p>Programming documents: The Project, Annual Progress Reports. Other project deliverables</p> <p>Stakeholders from the CBIT, public institutions, policy-making bodies and other government institutions, and development partners in the respective fields</p>
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		<p>mainstream gender into the enhanced transparency framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence that the transparency portal is strengthened and examples that the capacities of decision-makers improved to ensure its operations - Evidence including opinions of the progress in drafting a technical roadmap for a National LCDS (in line with the enhanced transparency framework) - Evidence that the CBIT management and staff, national institutions and beneficiaries have been satisfied with the Project implementation and achieved results thus far 	<p>Progress Towards Results Matrix and following the Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects; colour code progress in a “traffic light system” based on the level of progress achieved; assign a rating on progress for each outcome; make recommendations from the areas marked as “Not on target to be achieved” (red).</p>	
<p><i>EQ3.2. Is there evidence that the CBIT Project is progressing towards outcomes?</i></p>	<p>JC3.2. The extent to which the CBIT Project’s outputs could contribute to progress under outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence of progress to strengthen the institutional mechanism for increased transparency - Evidence and examples of progress in strengthening national institutions to implement enhanced transparency - Evidence that progress has been achieved in strengthened coordination and information exchange with an enhanced transparency framework - Evidence that the Project achieved progress in the formulation of a technical roadmap for low-carbon and climate-resilient development 	<p>The intention is to validate or refuting lines of inquiry - collecting perceptions about results (outputs) achieved with the reference to outputs and progress towards outcomes.</p>	
<p><i>EQ3.3. In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? What barriers remain in achieving the project objective, and how can the CBIT improve effectiveness?</i></p>	<p>JC3.3.1. The existence of areas that the CBIT Project has shown the greatest achievement (or underperformed).</p> <p>JC3.3.2. The extent to which external and internal factors to the CBIT Project affected (supported or constrained) the effectiveness</p> <p>JC3.3.3. Existence of strategies to expand the CBIT results (based on the successful aspects of the project)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of external situations that have affected the implementation of the Project • Opinions of stakeholders if the Project has achieved more progress and examples • Examples of adverse and unplanned internal and external developments that have affected the achievement of the outputs of the Project • Proposals for strategies to expand the CBIT results 		

Key Question 4: Has the CBIT Project considered gender equality and followed the principle of LNOB during its design and implementation?

EQ4.1. To what extent have gender equality and leave no-one behind principles been considered in the project design and how?	JC4.1. The degree to which partners considered gender equality and LNOB during the design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples that the stakeholders considered gender equality and LNOB during the design (including the existence of gender-sensitive indicators and targets) 	Desk-based research, including national and sectoral statistics.	Programming documents: The Project, Annual Progress Reports. Other project deliverables
EQ4.2. To what extent has gender and LNOB been addressed during the implementation and monitoring of the CBIT Project?	<p>JC4.2.1. The extent to which gender mainstreaming was considered and implemented under the CBIT Project</p> <p>JC4.2.2. The extent to which national partners are capacitated to mainstream gender and LNOB in its activities</p> <p>JC4.2.3. The extent to which CBIT promoted gender equality LNOB and positive changes for all groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence and opinions that gender was considered and mainstreamed during the CBIT Project implementation Evidence and examples- including opinions that national partners understand and implement gender mainstreaming and LNOB practices in their performance Evidence that partners and the Project enhanced capacities for LNOB and implemented it during the implementation 	<p>Third parties' reports on environmental sector in Montenegro</p> <p>National statistics and international performance indicators on the priority areas</p> <p>Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders from CBIT and the Ministry.</p>	Stakeholders from the CBIT, public institutions, policy-making bodies and other government institutions, and development partners in the respective fields
Relevant evaluation criteria: PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT				
Key question 5: Has the implementation of the CBIT Project so far been efficient concerning adherence to the work plans (timely implementation), flexibility and responsiveness?				
SQ5.1. Have the CBIT Project's activities been implemented on time and delivered results?	<p>JC4.1.1. The degree of timely implementation of the CBIT Project in a logical sequence and availability of inputs in a timely fashion</p> <p>JC4.1.2. The extent to which the implementation modality- NIM- has been favourable to efficiency and effectiveness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of timely implementation of activities (without delays)- analysis of planned vs implemented activities and delivery of outputs or delays and changes in the implementation of plans Opinions and evidence that the NIM implementation contributed to or prevented the efficient delivery – e.g., procurement processes, HR, payments signed and done on time; other examples of timely implementation of this project 	<p>Desk-based research, including national and organizational statistics and third parties reports</p> <p>Analysis of the CBIT Project budget and management/ organizational structure</p> <p>Analysis of the steering mechanisms and minutes from the meetings- to verify decision-making approaches</p>	<p>Programming documents: The Project Document and annual Progress Reports.</p> <p>Steering Committee meeting minutes</p> <p>Contractual arrangements, including analysis of the approved budget</p>
SQ5.2. Has the CBIT Project established effective leadership and management practices to maximize results?	<p>JC4.2.1. The extent to which implementation modality, leadership and management of the CBIT Project contributed to the delivery of results</p> <p>JC4.2.2. The extent to which management systems, including monitoring mechanisms, facilitated efficient implementation</p> <p>JC4.2.3. The extent to which the objectives, activities, and expected outcomes of the CBIT Project are</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence that the Project's management structure has been optimized to ensure efficient delivery Evidence that the steering structure was timely established and provided strategic guidance during the implementation Evidence that management processes- HR, procurement, financial management, risk management, and communication have been suitable for effective and efficient implementation 	<p>Interviews with key informants – focus groups with beneficiaries and experts</p>	Stakeholders from the implementing partners- CBIT, other ministries and governmental structures,

	logically connected and consistent with each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence and the analysis that the objectives, activities, and expected outcomes of the CBIT are logically connected and consistent with each other/ evidence that the indicators are "SMART" (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) and target realistic - Evidence that the monitoring data were objectively used for the management of risks, actions and decision-making 		
<i>EQ4.3. What external factors affected the project, and to what extent was the project able to adapt and mitigate the effects of such factors?</i>	<p>JC4.3.1. Existence of external factors and the extent to which they affected the Project implementation</p> <p>JC4.3.2. The extent to which the Project responded to these challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of external factors and forms that affected the implementation of the Project • Examples of the Project adjusted and responded to these challenges 		
Relevant evaluation criteria: SUSTAINABILITY				
Key Question 6: Does the CBIT Project contribute to partnerships, policies, and capacities of stakeholders, thus contributing to ensuring ownership and sustainability of achieved results?				
<i>SQ6.1. What is the likelihood that the Project will ensure the sustainability of its results?</i>	<p>JV6.1.1. The extent to which the CBIT is working to ensure the achievement of results (and the extent to which financial and human capacities are in place)</p> <p>JC6.1.2. The extent to which policy and regulatory frameworks are in place that will support the continuation of benefits for men and women in the future</p> <p>JC6.1.3. Opportunities for continuation and improvements in the achievement of the CBIT results and activities in the area of climate change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of national mechanisms/ structures to maintain the results achieved • Evidence that financial resources are assigned to the CBIT for the delivery of services that are being developed • The extent to which partners are committed to providing continuing support • Evidence that policy and regulatory frameworks are in place to support the continuation of benefits for men and women in the future • Proof of the opportunities for continuation and improvements in the delivery of results 	<p>Desk-based research, including national and organizational statistics and third-party reports</p> <p>Analysis of the project budget and management/ organizational structure</p> <p>Interviews with key informants -</p> <p>Group interviews, if possible (to discuss achievements and validate findings)</p>	<p>Programming documents: The Project Document and annual Progress Reports.</p> <p>Contractual arrangements</p> <p>Stakeholders from the implementing partners- CBIT, MTESDNRD, other ministries and governmental structures,</p>
<i>SQ6.2. To what extent are the risks identified in the Project Document, PIRs and the Quantum Risk Management Module the most important?</i>	<i>SQ6.2.1. To what extent are the risks identified in the Project Document, PIRs, and the Quantum Risk Management Module the most important?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The analysis of the project's overall risks to sustainability factors in terms of the following four criteria: i) Financial risks to sustainability; ii) Socio-economic risks to sustainability; iii) Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability; and Environmental risks to sustainability. 		

<p><i>SQ6.3. To what extent is the intervention building individual and institutional capacities to ensure the sustainability of benefits?</i></p>	<p>JC6.3. The extent to which stakeholders' capacities (individual and institutional) have been supported to enhance sustainability prospects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence that institutional systems (legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes) and individual capacities are in place for sustaining benefits		
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ANNEX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDES

CBIT Project Team

Project Strategy

Relevance

EQ 1.1.1. To what extent did the CBIT Project consider and address your needs? Has it reflected the situation of the beneficiaries and priorities of Montenegro?

EQ1.1.2. To what extent has the CBIT been relevant to the specific environmental and developmental reality in Montenegro?

SQ1.2. To what extent have you been involved in the Project conceptualisation and design process?

EQ1.2.1. How was the Project formulated- to what extent has it reflected the in-depth situation assessment?

SQ1.3. To what extent has the CBIT project relevance been considered and examined during its implementation?

EQ1.3.1. Is this intervention still relevant to the country's needs? Have there been changes in the CBIT's environment that required changes and adjustments of the intervention?

Coherence

SQ2.2. To what extent is the intervention consistent with the national development strategies and priorities and commitments on environmental protection and climate change?

EQ2.2.1. To what extent does the CBIT align with international agreements and conventions on environment and climate change?

For UNDP EQ2.2.2. To what extent has which the CBIT Project considered UN Development Cooperation Framework, UNDP strategic plan, and relevant SDGs?

Progress Towards Results

Effectiveness

SQ 3.1. To what degree has the Project achieved its mid-term targets and progressed towards outputs?

- *Can you provide evidence and examples of progress concerning improving governance, procedures, and technical capacities to respond to emerging transparency requirements under the Paris Agreement?*
- *Can you provide evidence or examples about the progress in adopting Transparency Methodologies, Procedures and Guidelines (MPGs) for tracking NDCs, adaptation activities and climate finance?*
- *Can you provide evidence about the progress in improving GHG inventory and projections?*
- *Can you provide evidence about progress in developing the capacities of the selected public authorities and scientific institutions for applying MPGs in reporting national adaptation actions under Article 15 of the MMR?*
- *To what extent do the national institutions understand and have capacities to mainstream gender into the enhanced transparency framework?*
- *To what extent has the transparency portal been strengthened, and can you provide examples that decision-makers' capacities improved to ensure its operations?*
- *To what extent has there been progress in drafting a technical roadmap for a National LCDS (in line with the enhanced transparency framework)*

EQ 3.1.2. To what degree have you been satisfied with the Project implementation and achieved results thus far?

SQ3.2. Is there evidence that the CBIT Project is progressing towards outcomes?

EQ 3.2.1. To what extent have there been progress in strengthening institutional mechanism for increased transparency?

EQ3.2.2. To what extent has progress been achieved in strengthened coordination and information exchange with an enhanced transparency framework?

EQ3.2.3. Has there been progress in formulating a technical roadmap for low-carbon and climate-resilient development?

SQ3.3. In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? What barriers remain in achieving the project objective, and how can the CBIT improve effectiveness?

Gender and leave no-one behind

SQ4.1. To what extent have gender equality and leave no-one behind principles been considered in the project design, and how?

EQ 4.2.2. To what extent have you been capacitated to mainstream gender and LNOB in its activities?

EQ 4.2.3. To what extent has the CBIT promoted gender equality, LNOB and positive changes for all groups, and how?

Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

SQ5.1. Have the CBIT Project's activities been implemented on time and delivered results?

EQ5.1.2. To what extent has the implementation modality- NIM- been favourable to efficiency and effectiveness?

SQ5.2. Has the CBIT Project established effective leadership and management practices to maximise results?

EQ5.2.1. To what extent has this implementation modality, leadership and management of the CBIT Project contributed to the delivery of results?

EQ5.2.2. To what extent have the management systems, including monitoring mechanisms, facilitated efficient implementation?

SQ 5.3. What external factors affected the project, and to what extent was the project able to adapt and/or mitigate the effects of such factors?

Sustainability

SQ6.1. What is the likelihood that the Project will ensure the sustainability of its results?

SQ6.2. To what extent are the risks identified in the Project Document, PIRs and the Quantum Risk Management Module the most important? To what extent are the risk ratings applied appropriate and up to date?

SQ6.3. To what extent is the intervention building individual and institutional capacities to ensure the sustainability of benefits?

UNDP Country Office

PROJECT STRATEGY

Relevance

SQ 1.1. To what extent was the design of the intervention, including the formulation of its planned results, relevant to the needs and priorities of the intended beneficiaries and key stakeholders?

SQ1.2. To what extent were key national partners involved in the Project conceptualization and design process?

EQ1.3. To what extent has the CBIT project relevance been considered and examined during its implementation?

EQ1.3.1. Is this intervention still relevant to the country's needs? Have there been changes in the CBIT's environment that required changes and adjustments of the intervention?

Coherence

SQ2.2. To what extent is the intervention consistent with the national development strategies and priorities? and commitments on environmental protection and climate change?

EQ2.2.1. To what extent does the CBIT align with international agreements and conventions on environment and climate change?

EQ2.2.2. To what extent has which the CBIT Project considered UN Development Cooperation Framework, UNDP strategic plan, and relevant SDGs?

PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS

Effectiveness

SQ 3.1. To what degree has the Project achieved its mid-term targets and progressed towards outputs (as per ToC)? The following questions could be relevant:

- Can you provide evidence and examples of progress concerning improving governance, procedures, and technical capacities to respond to emerging transparency requirements under the Paris Agreement?
- Can you provide evidence or examples about the progress in adopting Transparency Methodologies, Procedures and Guidelines (MPGs) for tracking NDCs, adaptation activities and climate finance?
- Can you provide evidence about the progress in improving GHG inventory and projections?
- Can you provide evidence about progress in developing the capacities of the selected public authorities and scientific institutions for applying MPGs in reporting national adaptation actions under Article 15 of the MMR?
- To what extent do the national institutions understand and have capacities to mainstream gender into the enhanced transparency framework?
- To what extent has the transparency portal been strengthened, and can you provide examples that decision-makers' capacities improved to ensure its operations?
- To what extent has there been progress in drafting a technical roadmap for a National LCDS (in line with the enhanced transparency framework)

EQ 3.1.2. To what degree have you been satisfied with the Project implementation and achieved results thus far?

SQ3.2. Is there evidence that the CBIT Project is progressing towards outcomes?

EQ 3.2.1. To what extent have there been progress in strengthening institutional mechanism for increased transparency?

EQ3.2.2. To what extent has progress been achieved in strengthened coordination and information exchange with an enhanced transparency framework?

EQ3.2.3. Has there been progress in formulating a technical roadmap for low-carbon and climate-resilient development?

SQ3.3. In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? What barriers remain in achieving the project objective, and how can the CBIT improve effectiveness?

Gender and leave no-one behind

SQ4.1. To what extent have gender equality and leave no-one behind principles been considered in the project design, and how?

EQ4.2. To what extent has gender and LNOB been addressed during the monitoring of the CBIT Project?

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

SQ5.1. Have the CBIT Project's activities been implemented on time and delivered results?

EQ5.1.2. To what extent has the implementation modality- NIM- been favourable to efficiency and effectiveness?

SQ5.2. Has the CBIT Project established effective leadership and management practices to maximise results?

EQ5.2.2. To what extent have the management systems, including monitoring mechanisms, facilitated efficient implementation?

SQ 5.3. What external factors affected the project, and to what extent was the project able to adapt and/or mitigate the effects of such factors?

SUSTAINABILITY

SQ6.1. What is the likelihood that the Project will ensure the sustainability of its results?

SQ6.2. To what extent are the risks identified in the Project Document, PIRs and the Quantum Risk Management Module the most important? To what extent are the risk ratings applied appropriate and up to date?

SQ6.3. To what extent is the intervention building individual and institutional capacities to ensure the sustainability of benefits?

National partners

The "Strengthening Montenegro's Nationally Determined Contribution and Adaptation Activities Transparency Framework" Project (PIMS#6225-CBIT) aims to improve national climate change responses and align them with other national policies. It seeks to build institutional and technical capacities for better transparency in line with the Paris Agreement's Article 13.

The Project focuses on enhancing Montenegro's climate policy formulation and implementation, incorporating gender-sensitive approaches and improving transparency standards through methodologies and tools. It addresses gaps in climate finance expertise and coordinates support using the MRV portal.

The Project's goals include establishing a robust tracking mechanism for contributions and a comprehensive transparency framework, essential for informed decision-making and SDG impact assessment.

Project Strategy

Relevance

EQ 1.1.1. To what extent did the CBIT Project consider and address your needs? Has it reflected the situation of the beneficiaries and priorities of Montenegro?

EQ1.1.2. To what extent has the CBIT been relevant to the specific environmental and developmental reality in Montenegro?

EQ1.2.1. How was the Project formulated- to what extent has it reflected the in-depth situation assessment?

EQ1.3.1. Is this intervention still relevant to the country's needs? Have there been changes in the CBIT's environment that required changes and adjustments of the intervention?

Coherence

SQ2.2. To what extent is the intervention consistent with the national development strategies and priorities? and commitments on environmental protection and climate change?

Progress Towards Results

Effectiveness

What are the main results of the Project, from what you know?

EQ 3.1.2. To what degree have you been satisfied with the Project implementation and achieved results thus far?

SQ3.3. In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? What barriers remain in achieving the project objective, and how can the CBIT improve effectiveness?

Gender and leave no-one behind

EQ 4.2.2. To what extent have you been capacitated to mainstream gender and LNOB in its activities?

EQ 4.2.3. To what extent has the CBIT promoted gender equality, LNOB and positive changes for all groups, and how?

Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

SQ5.2. Has the CBIT Project established effective leadership and management practices to maximise results?

EQ5.2.1. To what extent has this implementation modality, leadership and management of the CBIT Project contributed to the delivery of results?

EQ5.2.2. To what extent have the management systems, including monitoring mechanisms, facilitated efficient implementation?

SQ 5.3. What external factors affected the project, and to what extent was the project able to adapt and/or mitigate the effects of such factors?

Sustainability

SQ6.1. What is the likelihood that the Project will ensure the sustainability of its results?

SQ6.3. To what extent is the intervention building individual and institutional capacities to ensure the sustainability of benefits?

ANNEX 4: RATINGS SCALE

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievements Description
Project Strategy	Highly Satisfactory	The Project is tailored to meet Montenegro's distinct needs in combating climate change by fostering national institutional and technical capacities, aligning climate action with international standards, and directly addressing methodological and monitoring challenges under the climate change.
Progress Towards Results	CBIT Project's overall objective- moderately satisfactory	Positive steps taken towards enhancing transparency frameworks and policy alignment, but sustainability and comprehensive capacity building remain areas for improvement.
	Outcome 1: Moderately satisfactory	project made headway in MRV system institutionalization and legal framework integration, though progress is tempered by recruitment challenges and incomplete implementation of methodologies, procedures, and guidelines
	Outcome 2: Moderately satisfactory	Some improvements in inter-ministerial communication and gender mainstreaming, yet offset by recruitment delays and unfulfilled development of technical training and stakeholder engagement activities.
	Outcome 3: Moderately satisfactory	Development of the MRV System's conceptual design, but the lack of advancement in stakeholder training programs and the MRV portal's operationalization highlights areas needing further attention.
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	Moderately unsatisfactory	Due to extensive and time-consuming efforts to establish management and operational systems, which, along with political instability and operational challenges, have significantly affected the project's timely execution and efficiency.
Sustainability	Satisfactory	The sustainability of the CBIT Project is rated as satisfactory because, despite facing various implementation challenges, the project has successfully built national ownership and robust institutional and legal frameworks, particularly for the MRV system, which demonstrates a strong commitment to maintaining long-term results in climate action transparency and capacity building.

ANNEX 5 LIST OF INTERVIEWED STAKEHOLDERS

Institution/body/ agency	Title
Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Development	Secretary of the Ministry, National Project Director, Chairman of the Project Board
Office for Sustainable Development, General Secretariat of the Government,	Head, Member of the Project Board
Directorate for Statistics	Deputy director, alternate Member of the Project Board
Environmental Protection Agency	Director, Member of the Project Board
Institute for Hydrometeorology and Seismology	Director, Member of the Project Board
UNDP	Programme manager, alternate Member of the Project Board
Ministry of Energy and Mining	Senior Advisor, Member of the Project Board
Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Development	GEF operational focal point
Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Development	Project manager, Member of the Project Board

ANNEX 6: LIST OF CONSULTED DOCUMENTS

Project document

Project title: Strengthening Montenegro's Nationally Determined Contribution and Adaptation Activities Transparency Framework (signed on 25 August 2021)

Progress Reports:

2023 Project Implementation Report (PIR)

Deliverables by indicators

Indicator 1 Agenda of WG for CC Law.doc

Indicator 1 Comments on the Draft Law on Climate Change- dr Gordana Djurovic (31.3.2023)

Indicator 1 Comments on the Draft Law on CC_ Đorđije Vulikić (28.03.2023)

Indicator 1 Law on Climate Change- draft text

Indicator 1 List of participants meeting of WG for CC Law

Indicator 1 PPP draft CC Law.ppt

Indicator 2 List of participants Inception workshop

Indicator 3 PPP for WGMACC Methodology for Institutional Capacity Assessment

Indicator 3 CBIT - CLIMATE FINANCING Methodology for assessment of institutional capacities

Indicator 3 Content of SWOT and gap analysis

Indicator 3 Instructions for the Capacity Assessment Questionnaire

Indicator 3 Meeting minutes MONSTAT

Indicator 3 Meeting minutes SI

Indicator 3 Meetings minutes Ministry of Capital Investments

Indicator 3 SWOT and gap analysis MNE

Indicator 3 Methodology for assessing the capacity of institutions in the area of climate change

Indicator 3 SWOT and gap analysis

Indicator 3 Tabular presentation of capacity and needs assessment in the area of climate change

Indicator 8 Decision on establishing a working group for mitigation and adaptation to climate change

Indicator 8 PPP WG FSD (April 2023)

Indicator 8 Decision on the appointment of members of the Project Board

Indicator 8 List of participants WGFSD (April 2023)

Indicator 8 Agenda WG Climate Change (May 2023)

Indicator 8 Initial meeting of the Working Group for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation of the National Council for Sustainable Development February 2023- presentation CBIFNC

Indicator 8 List of participants Working Group for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation of the National Council for Sustainable Development (February 2023)

Indicator 8 List of participants WGCC (May 2023)

Indicator 8 Meeting minutes and Agenda WGCC (February 2023)

Indicator 8 Meeting minutes and Agenda WGFSD (April 2023)

Indicator 8 Meeting minutes WGCC (May 2023)

Indicator 8 PPP WGCC (May 2023)

Indicator 8 Agenda WGFSD (June 2023)

Indicator 8 Decision on establishing working group on finance for sustainable development

Indicator 8 List of participants WGFSD (June 2023)

Indicator 8 Meeting minutes WGFSD (June 2023)

Indicator 8 PPP WGFSD (June 2023)

Indicator 10 Process of development of project concept proposals in the area of adaptation

Indicator 11 Annex I Application Form MNE- 13.2.2023. (gender)

Indicator 11 PPP training on gender

Indicator 11 SWOT analysis, gender equality, with evaluation criteria

Indicator 13 Conceptual design of the data flows, inputs and outputs for the MRV System in Montenegro (Aether, 2019)

Indicator 14 International NDC Training

Modules and materials for 1,2 and 3 training day

Bazicni modul MRV

Bazicni modul o klimatskom finansiranju

Bazični modul o mitigaciji

Modul o rodnim aspektima u okviru u okviru seminara o adaptaciji i mitigaciji

Mission report from Kazakhstan

Steering Committee Meetings minutes

- First Steering Committee Meeting- 08 April 2022
- Second Steering Committee Meeting- 03 August 2022
- Third Steering Committee Meeting- 28 September 2022
- Fourth Steering Committee Meeting- 11 November 2022
- Fifth Steering Committee Meeting- 26 December 2022

ANNEX 7: CO-FINANCING TABLE**CONFIRMED SOURCES OF CO-FINANCING FOR THE PROJECT STRENGTHENING MONTENEGRO'S NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTION AND ADAPTATION****ACTIVITIES TRANSPARENCY FRAMEWORK**

Please include evidence for co-financing for the project with this form (please add rows as necessary)

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Cofinancing	Investment Mobilized	Amount \$ (at CEO approval)	Amount \$ (at MTR stage)
Recipient Country Government	MTESDNRD	In-kind	Investment Mobilized	250,000	93,500
GEF Agency	UNDP	In-kind	Investment Mobilized	40,000	0
Total Co-financing			93500	290,000	93,500



Crna Gora
Ministarstvo ekologije,
prostornog planiranja i urbanizma

Adresa: IV proleterske brigade broj 19
81000 Podgorica, Crna Gora
tel: +382 20 446 200
fax: +382 20 446 215

Broj: 04-322/23-6158/1
godine

Podgorica, 4. 8. 2023.

Ministarstvo ekologije, prostornog planiranja i urbanizma
IV proleterske brigade 19, 81000 Podgorica
n/r Jovani Drobnjak, projektoj menadžerki

Predmet: Izvještaj o realizovanom kofinansiranju za projekat „Stvaranje transparentnog okvira za praćenje nacionalnog utvrđenog doprinosa i akcija prilagođavanja u Crnoj Gori - CBIT“

Poštovana g-đo Drobnjak,

U skladu sa Vašim zahtjevom dostavljamo Vam informaciju o ukupnom iznosu kofinansiranju za projekat „Stvaranje transparentnog okvira za praćenje nacionalnog utvrđenog doprinosa i akcija prilagođavanja u Crnoj Gori - CBIT“, u periodu od početka realizacije projekata do 01. juna 2023. godine.

Ukupan iznos kofinansiranje je za navedeni period je 93750,00 dolara. Kofinansiranje je ostvareno kroz in kind kontribuciju Ministarstva ekologije, prostornog planiranja i urbanizma.

Ukoliko su Vam potrebne dodatne informacije stojimo Vam na raspolaganju.

S poštovanjem,

mr Kemal Grbović

Direktor direktorata za ekologiju i klimatske promjene
Ministarstvo ekologije, prostornog planiranja i urbanizma

ANNEX 8: SIGNED CODE OF CONDUCT FORM

Evaluators/Consultants:

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

MTR Consultant Agreement Form

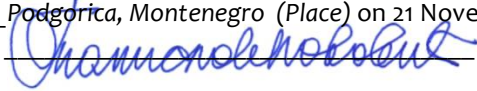
Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:

Name of International Consultant:

Tomislav Novovic

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

Signed at Podgorica, Montenegro (Place) on 21 November 2023 (Date)

Signature: 

Name of National Consultant: Ana Simonovic

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

Signed at Podgorica, Montenegro (Place) on 21 November 2023 (Date)

Signature: 

ANNEX 9: MTR REPORT CLEARANCE FORM

Mid-term Review Report Reviewed and Cleared By:

Commissioning Unit

Name: Bojan Tenjovic
Data, Monitoring and Evaluation Analyst

Signature

DocuSigned by:
Bojan Tenjovic
691773F4FCC7467...

Date: 23/04/2024

UNDP- GEF Regional Technical Advisor

Name: Snezana Dragojevic

Signature

DocuSigned by:
Snezana Dragojevic
9A8161FB80AF47F...

Date: 26/04/2024