**Draft Final Report**

**Final Evaluation of the UNDP ‘Adapting Population Skills to the Post-Pandemic Economy in Ferghana Valley’ project**

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| **Project Title** | Adapting Population Skills to the Post-Pandemic Economy in Ferghana Valley |
| **Quantum ID** | 00129159 |
| **Corporate Outcome and Output** | UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021, Outcome 1: Advance poverty eradication in all its forms and dimensions. Output 1.1.2: Marginalised groups, particularly the poor, women, people with disabilities and displaced are empowered to gain universal access to basic services and financial and non-financial assets to build productive capacities and benefit from sustainable livelihoods and jobs  UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025, Signature solution: Poverty & inequality |
| **Country** | Uzbekistan |
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| **Project Expenditure at the Time of Evaluation** | USD 527,246 |
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| **Implementing Agency** | UNDP |

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**Acronyms and abbreviations**

ADB – Asian Development Bank

AELM – Agency of External Labor Migration

AI – Artificial Intelligence

ALMP – Active Labor Market Programme

CO - Country Office

CPD – Center for Professional Development

CSO – Civil Society Organisations

DAC - Development Assistance Committee

EEU – Eurasian Economic Union

EQ – Evaluation Questions

ESC – Employment Support Center

ESSP – Environmental and Social Screening Procedure

EU – European Union

FAQ – Frequently Asked Question

FE - Final Evaluation

FGD – Focus Group Discussions

GIZ – German Development Agency

HS - Highly Satisfactory

HU - Highly Unsatisfactory

ILO – International Labor Organization

IT – Information Technologies

JICA – Japan International Cooperation Agency

KOICA – Korean International Cooperation Agency

L – Likely

L2CU – Listening to Citizens of Uzbekistan survey

M&E – Monitoring and Evaluation

MEL – Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

MEPR – Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction

ML - Moderately Likely

MS - Moderately Satisfactory

MU - Moderately Unsatisfactory

NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Traning

OECD - Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

PPP – Public-Private Partnership

PPR – Project Progress Report

RF – Results Framework

S - Satisfactory

SDG - Sustainable Development Goals

SEWA – Self-Employed Women’s Association (India)

SME – Small and Medium Enterprises

TDF - UNDP-Russian Trust Fund for Development

ToC - Theory of Change

ToR - Terms of Reference

TOT – Training of Trainers

UA- Unable to assess

U - Unsatisfactory

UN – United Nations

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

UNEG - United Nations Evaluation Group

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

VAT – Value Added Tax

VR – Virtual Reality

Executive Summary

The UNDP project "Adapting Population Skills to the Post-Pandemic Economy in Ferghana Valley," funded by the Government of the Russian Federation, aimed to address the economic fallout of COVID-19 by improving vocational and digital skills, fostering entrepreneurship, and enhancing government labor programs to support vulnerable populations such as women, youth, and migrants. The project included 3 components as it targets skill enhancement for vulnerable groups, entrepreneurship development for NEET youth, and improvements in government labor programs to transition workers from informal to formal employment.

The project was very relevant, effectively addressing immediate needs of the beneficiaries while aligning with national priorities. Despite ongoing implementation, significant targets have already been met or exceeded. The project in Ferghana Valley demonstrated progress by enhancing vocational and digital skills for over 2900 individuals, fostering entrepreneurial skills among NEET youth, and improving the reach and efficacy of government labor programs, collectively contributing to a more resilient and adaptable economic environment. However, some outcomes still require further verification such as the actual empowerment of beneficiaries.

The project efficiently implemented training programs and utilized technological tools to reach a broader audience, demonstrating adaptability in the face of COVID-19 challenges**.** The efficiency of the project was indeed commendable given the external disruptions. The project team managed to navigate bureaucratic delays and adapted project timelines and budgets effectively. Yet, the monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) system did not fully capture the scope of outcomes, suggesting a need for more robust frameworks to assess the long-term impact and sustainability of the project's interventions.

Long-term impact remains difficult to assess, but initial indicators show potential benefits in employment and skills development. Sustainability efforts were moderately successful, though dependent on continued stakeholder engagement and funding.

In conclusion, the project established a foundation for addressing unemployment and skill mismatches, though enduring success hinges on reinforced government roles, continued stakeholder collaboration, and robust follow-through on strategic recommendations.

The report highlights the following major recommendations:

1. Continue and Expand Holistic Development Initiatives
2. Enhance the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
3. Facilitate Sector-Specific Partnership
4. Expand Digital Transformation Initiatives
5. Act as a Connector and Convenor
6. Involve Stakeholders in Project Design
7. Promote Public-Private Partnerships in Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship

Overall project performance rating table

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Evaluation criteria** | **Rating** |
| Relevance | 6 (Highly Satisfactory) |
| Effectiveness | 5 (Satisfactory) |
| Efficiency | 4 (Moderately Satisfactory) |
| Impact | 4 (Moderately Satisfactory) |
| Sustainability | 4 (Moderately Satisfactory) |

# Introduction and overview

This document is the final evaluation report of the "Adapting Population Skills to the Post-Pandemic Economy in Ferghana Valley".

The evaluation aims to assess the project’s effectiveness in enhancing vocational and digital skills, promoting entrepreneurship, and improving government labor programs in response to the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This evaluation is crucial for understanding the project's outcomes, determining its impact on the target groups, and identifying key lessons and recommendations for future initiatives.

The evaluation was commissioned by UNDP Uzbekistan through direct contracting procedure initiated in February 2024. An International Consultant as well as a National Consultant were recruited to carry out this evaluation which is planned to be completed by May 2024.

This document commences by outlining its comprehensive evaluation framework. The introduction lays the groundwork by specifying the project's timeline, funding, and overarching goals, aimed at assessing the efficacy, impact, and sustainability of the initiatives implemented in response to COVID-19's socio-economic disruptions.

The report is structured to guide the reader through a detailed examination of the project, beginning with the context and background, which underscores the economic and social upheavals precipitated by the pandemic. It continues with a succinct project description and an elaboration of the Theory of Change, which sets the stage for the subsequent methodological exposition.

Methodological details are then articulated, outlining the evaluative criteria and methods employed to ensure a robust analysis of the project's outcomes. This section underscores the participatory and consultative approach adopted, highlighting the extensive stakeholder engagement that underpins the evaluation process.

The report proceeds to discuss potential limitations and the ethical considerations adhered to, ensuring transparency and accountability in the evaluation process. This is complemented by a concise work plan that schedules the evaluation's key phases, culminating in the presentation of findings across the core areas of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

Overall, the report aims not only to assess the project's achievements and areas for improvement but also to inform future strategies for addressing the persistent challenges in the Ferghana Valley, thereby guiding stakeholders toward sustainable economic recovery and resilience building in the post-pandemic era.

**Country context and background**

The project commenced just as the COVID-19 pandemic reached the country, causing disruptions in the supply chain and trade, restrictions on travel and tourism, along with lockdown measures implemented since March 2020, leading to small businesses halting operations temporarily. For example, at least 85% of small businesses had been temporarily closed in the first days of the pandemic. Consequently, economic growth slowed down, declining from 5.6% in 2019 to 1.6% in 2020.

The population began to witness a decline in income levels, accompanied by a decrease in direct investments to the country. Within the initial four months of the pandemic, the number of unemployed surged from 1.35 million to 2 million. Consequently, the total official unemployment rate for 2020 rose to 10.5%. Regions of Ferghana Valley were hit the hardest by the crisis, with unemployment rates soaring to 10.9% in Andijan and Ferghana, as well as 10.6% in Namangan regions.

Throughout the crisis, following groups of population were influenced the most: a) numerous people employed in the informal sector faced income loss; b) disruptions in migration posed significant challenges for households; c) the economic downturn reduced job prospects for many young people who were not in education, employment, or training (NEET); d) families, particularly women with young children, experienced job losses due to pandemic-related lockdowns.

According to the World Banks’ Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan (L2CU) survey, in April 2020, the proportion of households with at least one working member dropped by over 40 percentage points, but by June, it had bounced back by 33 percentage points. Less than half of respondents noted that any of their family members were able to continue working after the quarantine began. This led to a sharp decline in labor income, the main source of well-being of the population. Although much of the initial disruption to employment proved temporary, the rate of recovery in 2020 was slower than prequarantine levels, especially among the previously self-employed.

Informal employment, boasting the highest share of labor resources, has been a cornerstone for sustainable development in the country. As of the first half of 2019, the informal sector provided employment for approximately 7.9 million individuals, constituting 58.2 percent of total employment, dominated by youth between 8 to 25 years old.

Disruptions in labor migration also had immediate and long term effects on the economy. The number of labor migrants was about 2.5 million people, or about 19% of the total number of employed in the economy before pandemic. More than 467,000 labor migrants returned to Uzbekistan in the first 11 months of 2020. Remittances recovered lost ground in August of 2020 but remained well below 2019.

The COVID-19 pandemic also had a disproportionately adverse effect on the economic, social, and psychological well-being of women. Findings from the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment study conducted by UNDP in May-June 2020 revealed that women were the most severely affected demographic group. Female-headed households already faced economic challenges even prior to the pandemic, with their average monthly income being 17% lower than that of male-headed households.

Despite the Government's efforts to implement virtual learning alternatives, children's and students' access to formal and informal education also suffered significantly due to the lockdown. More than 8.3 million children and students in preschool, secondary school, specialized and professional institutions and higher education encountered substantial disruptions in the education process.

With a total population estimated at 14 million across all three countries, the portion of Ferghana Valley located in Uzbekistan is the largest, with approximately 9.3 million people, comprising 28% of Uzbekistan’s total population. Despite being well endowed development challenges are abundant and include social (growing labour pool); economic (structural transition to a market led economic model, uneven growth leading to development gaps between districts), political (cross-border disputes emanating from sharing natural resources, trade disruptions, etc.) and environmental (climate change induced weather variability, water scarcity, limited power generation capacity) challenges.

The Ferghana Valley, stretching across three countries, is home to an estimated total population of 14 million. Within Uzbekistan, it stands as the largest portion, accommodating approximately 9.3 million people, constituting 28% of the country's total population. Despite its considerable size, the region grapples with numerous development challenges. These include managing a growing labor force, transitioning to a market-led economic model, and encountering disparities in growth among districts. Additionally, political tensions arise from cross-border disputes over natural resources and disruptions in trade and value chains. Environmental concerns such as climate change-induced weather fluctuations, water scarcity, and limited power generation capacity further compound the challenges faced by the region.

The COVID-19 crisis has dealt a severe blow to the Fergana Valley, exacerbating existing inequalities within the country. The region has experienced high levels of both formal and informal unemployment, along with a loss of income opportunities, all against the backdrop of the pandemic. Key challenges facing the region include a lack of productive employment and entrepreneurship prospects for a significant portion of the workforce, especially among youth and women. Additionally, there's a mismatch between available skills and job requirements, as well as a substantial presence of seasonal migrant workers.

According to the findings of the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment conducted by UNDP, low-income families and returning labor migrants in the Fergana Valley have been hit particularly hard compared to the national average impact. For example, the issue of low-income families is notably prevalent in the Andijan and Namangan regions, with more than 50% of responses identifying it as a major problem. Labor migrants were also more frequently cited as the most negatively affected group in these regions compared to others, with 42% to 43% of responses highlighting their plight.

Uzbek government responded swiftly and comprehensively to the health crisis and economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This response included the establishment of a $1 billion Anti-crisis Fund aimed at addressing the threats of the pandemic and mitigating its adverse effects. This proactive approach aimed to safeguard the well-being, incomes, livelihoods, and long-term economic potential of the country.

Furthermore the government adopted a substantial post-crisis Economic Recovery program, which outlined key reform directions focused on ensuring economic sustainability and growth in the aftermath of the pandemic. Priority areas included reforming the banking sector, stimulating domestic demand through employment, income growth, and poverty reduction, as well as improving the business environment and investment climate.

Crucially, job creation was highlighted as one of the primary objectives of the Economic Recovery program. This involved strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem and enhancing the managerial skills of the population to initiate, expand, and scale up businesses, with particular emphasis on rural communities, women, and youth. Additionally, the program laid the groundwork for the development of technical and future-oriented professions as essential measures to enhance employment opportunities for the population.

# Description of the intervention

**Project description**

The "Adapting Population Skills to the Post-Pandemic Economy in Ferghana Valley" project, aims to address the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 in Uzbekistan's Ferghana Valley by enhancing the skills and employability of the local population.

This UNDP-led initiative, funded by UNDP-Russian Trust Fund for Development (TDF), focuses on technical and digital skill development, entrepreneurship, and labor market integration, particularly targeting vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and returning migrants.

The project seeks to mitigate the pandemic's negative effects on the economy and labor market, leveraging a comprehensive approach that includes partnerships with governmental and non-governmental entities to foster sustainable economic recovery and growth.

The project "Adapting Population Skills to the Post-Pandemic Economy in Ferghana Valley" focuses on three core areas:

1. **Creating Decent Employment Opportunities**: This area aims to enhance technical and digital skills among the unemployed, self-employed, returning migrants, youth, and other vulnerable groups to ensure their skills are adaptable, sustainable, and resilient to future economic changes.
2. **Economic Engagement of NEET Young People**: The project seeks to foster an enabling environment for NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) young individuals, with a particular focus on young women. It aims to equip them with entrepreneurship skills and establish a supportive start-up ecosystem.
3. **Supporting the Redesign of Government Labor Market Programs**: The objective is to improve the design, impact, and reach of government labor market programs to better serve those employed in the informal economy, enhancing their opportunities in the formal sector.

**Theory of change of the project**

This evaluation took a Theory of Change (TOC) based approach, by reviewing the existing TOC presented in the project document and, to the extent possible, reconstructing it so as to determine whether:

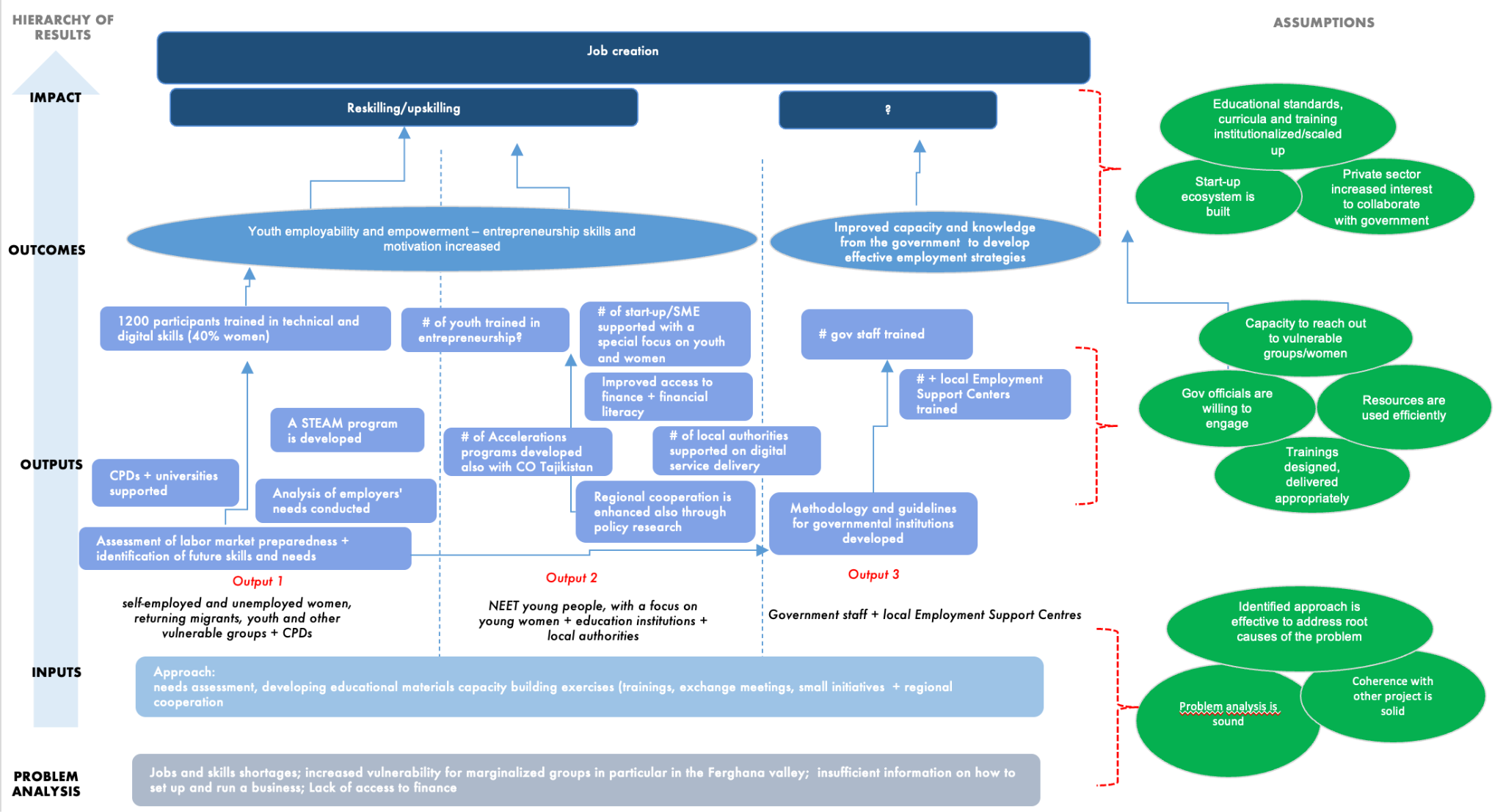
* + the envisaged changes identified at project design stage have taken place;
  + the possible contribution of the project to bring about those changes can be confirmed;
  + the assumptions that the project identified were realized or not.

In this sense, the evaluation included a contribution analysis that, on the basis of the TOC, will analyse the 3 elements mentioned above.

The TOC also served as the basis for the evaluation team to develop the main evaluation questions that will be addressed through a series of data collection and analysis tools (further described below in this report).

The project document includes a brief of the TOC and also a table summarizing the main problems, strategies, target constituencies. However, the evaluation reconstructed the TOC so as to better articulate the different pathways for change as well as the assumptions underpinning those pathways. The TOC was visualized (see figure below).

**Figure 1 – TOC of the project**



The TOC of the "Adapting Population Skills to the Post-Pandemic Economy in Ferghana Valley" project is the following:

**Problem Analysis**: The economic disruption caused by the pandemic led to high unemployment, skill mismatches, and a significant impact on vulnerable populations in the Ferghana Valley. Traditional labor market programs were insufficient to address the new economic challenges and opportunities.

**Inputs/approach**:

* Funding from TDF.
* Technical expertise and partnerships facilitated by UNDP.
* Local governmental and non-governmental cooperation.
* Training materials and digital platforms for skill development.

**Related assumptions:**

* A proper analysis has been conducted so as to identify the root causes of the challenges around digital skills development;
* The approach envisaged by the project can effectively address some of the major challenges of digital skills development.

**Short to Medium Results**:

* **Outputs**: Enhanced skills training programs, developed startup support programs and improved access to labor market information.
* **Outcomes**: Increased employability of vulnerable groups, improved job placement rates, and enhanced capacity of local institutions to support the labor market.

**Related assumptions**

* Government is willing to collaborate and engage.
* The project is able to effectively reach out to vulnerable groups/women
* Trainings are properly designed and delivered
* Project resources are used efficiently

**Long-term Results (Impact)**:

* Reduced unemployment in the Ferghana Valley.
* A resilient and adaptable workforce capable of meeting the demands of a post-pandemic economy.

**Related assumptions**

* Enhanced skills will lead directly to improved employability as private sector can absorb the demand of work and training participants can find jobs
* Entrepreneurs can develop their startups as a startup ecosystem is built
* Training programs are made sustainable

This ToC outlines how strategic inputs and targeted actions are expected to lead to both immediate and lasting changes in the Ferghana Valley's economic and social landscape, ultimately contributing to a more robust and equitable post-pandemic recovery.

# 3. Evaluation scope and objectives

**Objectives and scope of the evaluation**

The objectives of the evaluation as per the TORs are as follows:

a) To develop an evaluation report that must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable, and useful by assessing project performance against expectations set out in the project’s Results Framework ;

b) To review all relevant sources of information including the Project Document, ESSP, Project Inception Report, PPRs, Project Board meeting minutes, Financial and Administration guidelines, project budget revisions, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the evaluator considers useful for evidence-based evaluation.

c) To review the baseline, targets and indicators, and annual reports submitted to the project’s donors;

d) To follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the MEPR, local authorities), national partner agencies, the UNDP Country Office(s), direct beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

e) To assess the programme’s achievement of all specific gender objectives set out in the planning document and other programme documents. To take into account criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, to review the final results and progress of the project.

The evaluation scope for the "Adapting Population Skills to the Post-Pandemic Economy in Ferghana Valley" project encompasses a comprehensive assessment of its effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability, and impact. This scope includes analyzing how well the project met its objectives of improving vocational and digital skills, fostering entrepreneurship, and enhancing government labor programs targeted at vulnerable populations in response to COVID-19. The evaluation also aims to identify successful strategies and areas for improvement to inform future initiatives and policy recommendations.

# Evaluation criteria and questions

This evaluation was carried out in accordance with the OECD DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance, namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact[[1]](#footnote-2):

* **Relevance**: this criterion assesses the extent to which the project objectives address the real problems and the needs of its target groups, country priorities, associated policies, and donor priorities. For this evaluation, this criterion will allow the evaluation team to evaluate whether the project goals approaches, and targeting are positioned to be relevant to the needs and priorities of the target groups/beneficiaries;
* **Effectiveness:** this criterion assesses the extent to which the objectives of the intervention have been achieved or are expected to be achieved and whether the intervention has contributed to addressing the key challenges of implementing digital skills;
* **Efficiency**: this criterion assesses the extent to which the project delivered results in an economic and timely way (i.e. by looking at how human and financial resources have been managed);
* **Sustainabilit**y this criterion assesses the extent to which the results of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue, as well as the financial and contextual catalytic effects. In particular, this criterion will look at the commitment of the Government and other stakeholders to sustaining the results of the project
* **Impact:** this criterion analyzes the project's wider, long-term effects on its beneficiaries and the community, encompassing societal, economic, and environmental benefits, like improved employability and policy influence, ensuring contributions towards sustainable development goals.

The evaluation looked at two cross-cutting themes[[2]](#footnote-3): gender and equity/human rights. Concerning gender, the evaluation will assess the extent to which the project mainstreamed gender in all its activities, whether women and girls benefited equally from the project activities. The evaluation also assessed whether the project integrated equity/human rights principles into its outputs. The evaluation framework was specifically designed to include these as cross-cutting themes such as Gender Mainstreaming and Human Right the evaluation assessed how gender considerations were incorporated across all project activities. This included an analysis of the project’s design and implementation processes to determine if they were structured to address gender-specific needs and barriers (the evaluation added a sub-question for each evaluation criterion). We specifically looked at whether the project's activities facilitated equal benefits for women and girls, which involved reviewing participant data disaggregated by gender to evaluate access, participation rates, and outcomes.

Methodologically, our evaluation employed measures to gather data, as follows:

• Qualitative Interviews: Conducted with project beneficiaries, staff, and stakeholders to gather direct insights on the project's impact on women and underrepresented groups.

• Document Analysis: Reviewed project documents, reports, and communication to trace the integration of GEEW and HR principles from inception through completion.

• Observations: In some cases, site visits provided additional context on how gender and human rights considerations were manifested in day-to-day project operations.

The evaluation developed 5 main evaluation questions and a series of sub-questions per each evaluation question. It should be noted that those questions cover both the ‘hierarchy of results’ and the ‘main assumptions’ of the project depicted in the TOC. The evaluation questions were developed on the basis of the TOC and on the basis of the suggestions made in the TORs[[3]](#footnote-4).

A more detailed evaluation matrix (Annex 2) has been prepared in order to specify the main questions and to relate the key evaluation questions to the approaches and sources of information to be used in answering them.

# Evaluation approach and methodology

This evaluation is a summative, utilisation-focused, and equity-oriented evaluation using a theory-based design. Overall, this evaluation used a mixed-method approach.[[4]](#footnote-5) It followed the UNEG norms and standards as well as the guidance, rules, and procedures established by UNDP as reflected in the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines. This section aims to describe in depth the methodology proposed by the evaluation team by first listing the main evaluation questions and by then identifying the data collection and analysis tools.

**Sampling**

Sampling was utilized in this evaluation to delve deeper into the evaluation questions while ensuring that the findings maintain representativeness.

The project targeted three regions in Ferghana Valley: Andijan, Ferghana, and Namangan, which were hit the hardest during the pandemic.

The project evaluation team proposed to sample 2 out of those 3 regions, in line with what was envisaged in the TORs. A specific set of criteria was developed to sample these regions, as follows:

· Balancing geographical coverage of the project: based on the project documents, the project activities were almost identical in all three regions.

· Representativeness of the type of beneficiaries: Although activities were almost the same, only two universities in Ferghana and Namangan regions had career centres established in the framework of the project. Also, only the Monocenter in Ferghana was capacitated with “Situational room” with the support of this project.

· The level of coverage by the project services/activities, CSOs, as well as by international stakeholders.

· Balancing in the presence of women and youth among beneficiaries.

For the reasons mentioned above, the evaluation team proposed to conduct field trips in the *Ferghana and Namangan* regions. Also, the team visited Ferghana and Uchkurgan districts in respective regions.

# Data collection and analysis

**Data collection**

Data for this evaluation was gathered through a mix of qualitative and quantitative tools, which will complement each other for the sake of triangulation in order to increase the credibility of the findings.

However, given that each tool has a different purpose, the evaluation used those tools following the sequence described here:

1. *Desk review*: the team first undertook a desk review with the main purpose of providing an overview of:

○ how the project was designed and its relevance towards national plans and strategies and youth needs

○ the cooperation between UN agencies as well as with external stakeholders at design and implementation stage

○ whether results pathways of the project and its assumptions have been realized and whether there are indications for the results to be sustained over time

○ the budget and financial data of the project

1. *Semi-Structured Interviews and Focus group discussions (FGDs)*: the evaluation team conducted a series of interviews and FGDs with the project stakeholders identified and validated with UNDP to gather additional information from key people who have been involved in the design or the implementation of the project to start verifying the information gathered during the desk review.

The team then discussed with the final project beneficiaries the project results and their perception of the possible changes they have experienced.

The stakeholders and beneficiaries to be interviewed were selected through ‘purposeful sampling’ - the team will gather feedback from the implementing agencies on the key people to be interviewed who have enough knowledge about the project.

The table below provides an overview of the main stakeholders interviewed.

*Table 4. List of interviewees for semi-structured interviews*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Stakeholders | Description |
| UN implementing agencies: UNDP Project management unit, Accelerator Lab | The main purpose is to inform the evaluation of the theory of change of the project and its potential evolutions, the drafting and implementing of the project, the main results, and the challenges and adaptations in the course of the project. |
| Government at the central level: Ministry of Employment and Poverty reduction, Ministry of Economy and finance, Ministry of Higher education, science and innovation, Ministry of Digital technologies, Ministry of Investment and Foreign trade, Committee on Family and Women Affairs, Agency on working mahallabai and supporting entrepreneurship, Agency for Labour Migration, Agency on Youth Affairs, IT Park, Public Services center | The main purpose is to gather insight into the political will regarding peacebuilding actions, the potential changes induced by the project regarding youth participation, civic engagement, and education, perception of capacity-building measures provided by the project |
| Government at local level: Regional divisions of Ministry of employment and poverty reduction, Ishga Marhamat Monocenters, Employment Support Centers, Centers for Professional Development | The main purpose is to appreciate the level of engagement with youth but also appreciate the perception and results of capacity building measures |
| Professional colleges in regions, Career centers in Ferghana and Namangan State universities | The main purpose is to appreciate their perception of the project and better understand the changes observed as a results of the project implementation |
| Think tanks: Institute for Macroeconomic and Regional Studies, Republican Scientific institute for Employment and Labour Protection | The main purpose is to appreciate their perception of the project and better understand the changes observed as a results of the project implementation |
| Implementing CSOs and funds: Businesswomen’s Association, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, “Yoshlar kelajagimiz” fund, Tumo, SEWA | The main purpose is to appreciate the perception of the CSOs on the project, its results (changes observed), its implementation challenges, and the cooperation with the UN agencies |
| Donor: Embassy of Russian Federation in Uzbekistan | The main purpose is to appreciate their perception of the project and and its results |
| Partners: World Bank, ADB, JICA, ILO, UNICEF, KOICA, GIZ, EU, Skolkovo Innovation Center, Digital SGD Accelerator, School of Young leaders under EEU, Russian University of people’s Friendship | The main purpose is to appreciate their perception of the project and and its main results as well as the cooperation with UNDP |
| Women-entrepreneurs | The main purpose is to appreciate their perception of the project, their participation in its activities and the changes observed as a result of project implementation including the improved capacity, confidence etc |
| Migrant-workers |
| Youth |
| Participants of business accelerator and digital marketing programs |

The evaluation prepared an interview guide for each group of stakeholders, which served as a basis to conduct the interviews (see Annex 3). Some of the questions were contextualized depending on which activity the interviewees participated in.

Confidentiality was ensured, so as to preserve anonymity interviewees will be informed and asked for consent.

**Data analysis**

Concerning data analysis, the evaluation used the following tools:

● **Analysis of TOC and contribution analysis**: as mentioned above, the evaluation team analysed the existing TOC and produced a reconstructed TOC, which will be used to verify the ‘hierarchy of results’ as well as the ‘assumptions’. To do so the team used a contribution analysis to help unpack the pathways for change and the underpinning assumptions. In particular, the contribution analysis

o identified the expected changes that the project wanted to have (TOC)

o gathered existing evidence to test the theory of change and

o checked whether the changes the project has brought about can be considered as a contribution from the project activities by developing a contribution narrative.

● **Content and qualitative analysis:** this analysis was applied to the review of the documentation related to the project (i.e. documents on M&E, and finance) as well as to the interview, and FGD responses. The evaluation team collected qualitative information from both the review of the documentation related[2] to the project and the interviews and FGDs responses and stored the data in a shared folder[3]. Finally, it reviewed and coded information by developing categories and subcategories (the approach will be to first collect enough information from interviews and FGD and then develop categories and subcategories, which will be aligned with the evaluation criteria and questions).

● **Quantitative analysis:** quantitative analysis was conducted on the documents that were shared by UNDP CO.

● **Triangulation and complementarity:** as mentioned above, quantitative and qualitative analysis were combined to triangulate information and sources of information and to discover emergent themes and key patterns. Data triangulation will provide a more complete analysis of the data and it will ensure a higher credibility of the evaluation findings.

The evaluation team has introduced a performance rating table to systematically assess the project's performance across several key criteria: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability. The methodology utilizes a numeric scale ranging from 1 to 6, where each rating corresponds to a specific level of satisfaction—1 being Highly Unsatisfactory and 6 being Highly Satisfactory, with a rating of UA for Unable to Assess. This structured approach allows for a clear and quantifiable assessment of each criterion, providing a comprehensive overview of the project's outcomes and areas for improvement.

**Evaluation management and its function**

The Consultant fulfilled the task of this evaluation under the leadership and guidance of the Commissioning Unit within the UNDP Country Office.

The Commissioning Unit contracted the evaluators. The Project Team was responsible for liaising with the evaluators to provide all relevant documents, and set up online stakeholder interviews.

**Limitations to the evaluation and mitigation strategy**

The table below illustrates specific limitations that have been highlighted in the TORs and others that have been added by the evaluation team. The table also proposes related mitigation measures to address those limitations.

**Table 2. Limitations and Mitigation Strategies**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| · **Limitations** | **Mitigation strategy** |
| Difficulty to measure the results in the terms of effectiveness and impact as the evaluation is being conducted soon after the project's completion.  The documentation on all the results of all the activities is not sufficient for the evaluation to show results at the outcome/impact level | The evaluation has reconstructed a TOC that clearly lays out several levels of effectiveness that will allow the evaluation to gather some evidence at the outcome level especially through interviews and focus groups.  The evaluation will analyse results data against project logframe and triangulate this with data from semi-structured interviews and FGDs. It will also use a contribution analysis to try to investigate the project’s contribution to quantitative results captured through the surveys.  The evaluation team will request documentation for the results of each activity under each output so as to be able to ascertain the results of them. The evaluation will ask for pre and post questionnaires for all the training and workshops that have been conducted |
| The time allocated to the evaluation is not sufficient to cover all the activities and to do an in-depth analysis of all the evaluation questions | The evaluation will build a solid evaluation framework and data collection and analysis methodology so as to appropriately address the EQs. The team will also consider focusing on the activities where the project invested more resources so as to prioritize the focus of this assignment – i.e. conducting interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries for the activities that have received more budget and attention from the project.  It should be noted that the evaluation matrix specifies the extent to which the consultant will be able to answer the breadth of the EQs – i.e. for instance, concerning efficiency the evaluation will not be able to conduct an in-depth assessment of the financial and human resources of the project (which will take more time than the one allocated for the evaluation), rather it will focus on the perception of the main stakeholders of those issues. |

To address the limitations identified in the initial evaluation of the UNDP project, it's crucial to consider how these might affect the interpretation of the evaluation results and to offer targeted recommendations for future evaluations:

Difficulty in Measuring Effectiveness and Impact Shortly After Completion:

* Impact on Interpretation: This limitation may lead to underestimating long-term outcomes and impacts due to insufficient post-project data.
* Recommendation: Future evaluations should be scheduled to allow more time post-completion for assessing long-term impacts. Implementing follow-up studies or longitudinal tracking could provide more comprehensive data on the project's effectiveness and sustainability.

Insufficient Documentation of Results:

* Impact on Interpretation: The lack of detailed documentation can result in an incomplete understanding of the project's success and areas needing improvement, potentially skewing the evaluation towards superficial findings.
* Recommendation: Enhance documentation processes in future projects by establishing more rigorous data collection protocols. Ensure that all activities and outcomes are thoroughly documented and accessible for evaluation purposes.

Limited Time for Comprehensive Evaluation:

* Impact on Interpretation: Restricted evaluation periods may lead to prioritizing certain aspects of the project over others, possibly overlooking critical insights.
* Recommendation: Design future evaluations with adequate time to cover all project aspects. Planning for extended evaluation periods or phased evaluations can help in conducting more in-depth analysis and comprehensive assessments.

# Findings and conclusions

This section is organized around a chapter for each evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability/impact.

Relevance

**Main question 1: To what extent were the project results relevant to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries, as well as the national and donor priorities in Uzbekistan?**

This section addresses the main question and sub-questions related to the relevance criterion. It demonstrates how the project was designed with a well-founded understanding of the digital skill development challenges (Finding 1), leading to a robust educational approach incorporating both formal and informal training methods (Finding 2). Furthermore, the project was developed with a strong grasp of the youth's needs (Finding 3), ensuring that the strategies employed were aptly targeted. Lastly, it aligned seamlessly with essential UN and government strategic documents (Finding 4), which helped reinforce its foundational goals and enhance its implementation efficacy.

**Finding 1. The project was critically relevant in its response to the socio-economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, particularly addressing the immediate impacts on employment and skill mismatches in the labor market, focusing significantly on youth and women.**

The rationale behind the project's design was grounded in an analysis of the national socio-economic context, which revealed significant employment challenges exacerbated by the pandemic, particularly the alignment between existing educational outputs and the new market demands. indeed, The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing vulnerabilities among informal workers and significantly disrupted the labor market, especially harming youth and women’s employment opportunities…This mismatch highlighted the urgent need for developing digital and technical skills.

The project built upon prior initiatives focused on youth employment, enhancing its scope to include vulnerable populations and extending its interventions to more systematically address these mismatches.

The project's interventions were also designed to improve employability through skills enhancement, specifically targeting digital skills that align with emerging market needs.

The interviews in the field confirm the high satisfaction among beneficiaries and donors regarding the project's relevance and its alignment with government priorities.

*Quote : this is a very important - it is very much needed*

**Finding 2. The project's structure, with its three interlinked components, was highly relevant in creating a comprehensive approach to addressing both immediate and long-term needs.**

The project included 3 components as follows:

* Component 1 focused on creating employment opportunities by improving relevant skills, which directly responds to the high unemployment rates and the skills gap highlighted by the pandemic’s impact.
* Component 2 aimed at engaging NEET youth through entrepreneurship, which is crucial given the economic downturn and the need for new economic drivers.
* Component 3 supported the redesign of government labor market programs to increase their reach and effectiveness, particularly for informal sector workers who were severely impacted.

These components were synergistic, collectively enhancing the labor market's responsiveness to the post-pandemic economy and increasing the resilience of vulnerable populations.

The project core is about skill development and job-creation for youth - major focus on vocational training. However, it is commendable that the project focuses also on entrepreneurship, and directly responded to the market's inability to absorb job demands, although it revealed an over-ambition considering the resources available.

*Quote: ‘ the government thinks entrepreneurship is very important as the market cannot absorb the demand for jobs’*

It is also commendable that the project approach includes activities under the 3rd component on institutional strengthening (see suitability section). Indeed, the comprehensive approach not only aimed at quick wins in terms of employability but also at robust, systemic changes to the educational and regulatory frameworks to foster long-term resilience and inclusivity.

While the project successfully targeted key areas for development, its engagement with the private sector was less pronounced, which is a critical area for enhancing the impact of employment and entrepreneurship-focused initiatives. Additionally, the project documentation suggested an aim to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem but lacked a detailed analysis of its current state and the specific interventions needed. This oversight suggests room for incorporating more rigorous ecosystem assessments and private-sector collaboration strategies in future projects.

**Finding 3. The project demonstrated a strong and relevant focus on addressing the specific needs of women and vulnerable populations, particularly in how it designed its interventions to accommodate and support their unique socio-economic conditions.**

This focus was evident in the structuring of its accelerator programs and the selection of sectors for entrepreneurial development, which were directly responsive to the barriers that women face in the labor market.The project's accelerator programs were particularly notable for their inclusivity and effectiveness in empowering women:

* First Cycle: Exclusively involved women, achieving 100% participation, which underscores the project’s commitment to addressing gender disparities.
* Second Cycle: Continued strong female participation, with women comprising 67% of the recipients, highlighting consistent support for women’s involvement in entrepreneurship.

The choice of sectors for these programs, such as hairdressing and nursing, was strategically made to attract more women, acknowledging the sectors where women could not only find employment but also potentially lead businesses. This sector-specific focus aimed to leverage women's existing skills and areas of economic activity where they are traditionally more active, thereby ensuring higher impacts in terms of job creation and economic empowerment.

The program's design considered the cultural and social dynamics that influence women's participation in the workforce. In Uzbekistan, many women are homebound due to societal norms or family responsibilities, especially those with migrating spouses, making flexible and home-based business opportunities ideal. The project effectively tapped into this demographic by providing training and resources that supported home-based enterprises.

These efforts reflect a nuanced understanding of the local context and the barriers women face, aligning the project’s objectives with the need for practical and sustainable women’s empowerment strategies. The substantial participation rates and the tailored approach in sector selection not only reinforced the project's relevance but also its potential to make a significant impact on women's roles in the economy.

**Finding 4. The project aligns with national strategies that prioritize economic recovery, job creation, and digital transformation, as outlined by the Uzbek government’s comprehensive anti-crisis measures and the subsequent Economic Recovery program. It supports key government objectives to boost employment through skill development and entrepreneurship, particularly in rural areas and among vulnerable demographics.**

The project is in strong alignment with Uzbekistan’s national policies that prioritize economic recovery, job creation, and digital transformation, specifically underpinning the government's comprehensive anti-crisis measures and the Economic Recovery program post-COVID-19. These strategies aim to mitigate the pandemic's impacts through innovation, digitalization, and inclusive growth, particularly focusing on:

* Economic Recovery and Growth: The project supports the government's initiatives to stimulate economic stability and growth through enhanced employment opportunities and skill development, as outlined in Uzbekistan’s strategy for economic sustainability and digital competence enhancement.
* Job Creation and Skill Development: Aligning with policies that boost employment, the project emphasizes vocational training and entrepreneurship to address job shortages, particularly in rural and economically lagging regions.
* Inclusive Growth and Gender Equality: It contributes to national efforts aimed at promoting inclusive growth by targeting skill enhancement in vulnerable demographics, including women and youth, thereby helping to reduce economic inequalities.
* Digital Transformation: By fostering digital skills and supporting the establishment of digital and entrepreneurial ecosystems, the project aligns with the government’s push towards a digital economy.
* Regional Stability and Integration: The project's focus on cross-border collaboration, especially in the Ferghana Valley, supports regional economic integration initiatives, which are part of broader efforts by the government to stabilize and integrate the regional economy with neighboring countries.

In particular, the project is in line with the following national documents:

* Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers “On measures to restore economic growth in 2020-2021 and to continue systemic structural reforms in sectors of the economy” №526 from August 29, 2020. One of the measures the decree focused was on providing vocational training workshops to 42,000 unemployed in high-demand occupations.
* Strategy of Development of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026, which identified the following as one of the many goals: supporting entrepreneurship, improving the capacity of institutions in the regions to reduce unemployment and poverty, increasing the scale of vocational skills training, providing vocational training for 1 million unemployed citizens, providing vocation skills and training to women, supporting women’s entrepreneurship.
* National Strategy “Uzbekistan 2030”, which sets the creation of decent conditions for the realisation of each person’s potential as one of the priority areas. Goals of this strategy include ensuring employment of the population with income-generating labour, professional development of instructors of vocational training centres, providing skills training for returning migrants and stimulating entrepreneurial initiatives.
* Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On employment” signed by the President on October 20, 2020. The revised version of the law formalized the status of vocational training centres and introduced a national system of qualification assessment and skills development and a unified national labour system.
* Presidential decree “On additional measures to ensure employment of the population, vocational training, involvement in entrepreneurship and increasing the labor activity of the poor and unemployed” from August 11, 2020, which implied the creation of Monocenters and vocational training centres in all the regions of Uzbekistan. It also ensured that the competencies of graduates of monocenters and vocational training centres were assessed on the basis of WorldSkills standards, as well as issuing passports of qualifications - Skills Passports - recognized abroad.

● Decree №287 of Cabinet of Ministers “On the measures to organize the activities of the National System for the development of Professional qualifications, knowledge and skills in the Republic of Uzbekistan” from May 2020. In March 2024 Cabinet of Ministers adopted amendments to this decree, updating aiming to improve the level of qualification in professions and positions, Decree №144.

*Quote*

*As mentioned in the minutes of project related meeting, a representative of the government stated that this project fully corresponded to the ministry vision (interview with the government )*

The project is also in line with regional strategies such as:

* “Treaty on Friendship, Good-Neighborliness and Cooperation for the Development of Central Asia in the XXI Century” (IV Consultative summit of the heads of Central Asian states, July 21, 2020)
* “Roadmap for the development of regional cooperation for 2022-2024” (IV Consultative summit of the heads of Central Asian states, July 21, 2020)

These alignments not only demonstrate the project’s relevance to national priorities but also enhance its potential impact on Uzbekistan’s socio-economic development in the post-pandemic era. The strategic focus on integrating digital skills development with entrepreneurial support ensures that the project contributes effectively to the nation’s long-term goals of building a resilient and inclusive economy.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Evaluation criteria** | **Rating** |
| Relevance | 6 (Highly Satisfactory)  The project aligns well with national priorities and the specific needs of the target groups, focusing on enhancing digital and vocational skills. |

## Effectiveness

**Main question 2: To what extent did the project achieve its intended objectives and contribute to the project’s strategic vision?**

This section addresses the main questionand sub-questions related to the effectiveness criterion.

The section below is, therefore, structured as follows:

· Finding 5: Despite still under implementation, the project has already been able to achieve very concrete results as some indicators have been met - even overachieved – however, some still need to be measured to verify their progress.

· Finding 6. While the project achieved important results, it is difficult for this evaluation to quantify the ‘empowerment’ of beneficiaries

· Finding 7. The project demonstrated considerable flexibility during its implementation, effectively leveraging the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance its impact.

**Finding 5. Despite still under implementation, the project has already been able to achieve very concrete results as some indicators have been met - even overachieved – however, some still need to be measured to verify their progress.**

The evaluation found solid evidence that the outputs of the projects were achieved, as shown in the table below.

**Results framework of Skills development project**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Expected outputs** | **Output indicators** | **Data source** | **Baseline** | | **Targets (by frequency of data collection)** | | | | | **Data collection methods and risks** |
| **Value** | **Year 2020** | **Year 2021** | **Year 2022** | **Year 2023** | **Final** | **Status for 2024** |
| Output 1. Women, youth and people from remote rural areas benefit from better skills, sustainable jobs and strengthened livelihoods | 1.1 Number of youth (disaggregated by gender) graduated LCPD training courses per year | Dedicated studies conducted by UNDP | Number | - | 600 | 900 | 1200 | 1200 | 1848 youth (1245 women and 613 men) graduated LCPD training courses. Also, 2883 participated in the master classes organized by the engagement of international experts | The numbers are cumulative across years; project reports to the donor; minutes of PBMs; terminal evaluation report |
| 1.2 Percentage of LCPD graduates (disaggregated by gender), who are employed or self-employed six months after program completion | Dedicated studies conducted by UNDP | Number | - | 25% | 40% | 50% | 50% | At least 50% of LCPD graduates (305 men and 650 women), were employed/self-employed six months after program completion.  Random sampling was carried out where 50% respondents were employed | Project reports; project reports to the donor; minutes of PBMs; terminal evaluation report |
| 1.3 At least 40% of program beneficiaries are women | Dedicated studies conducted by UNDP | Number | - | Baseline established | 20% | 30% | 40% | 67% of program beneficiaries are women  Number of all graduates of courses is 1848 people out of which women (1245) account for almost 67% | Project report; project reports to the donor; minutes of PBMs; terminal evaluation report; The numbers are cumulative across years |
| 1.4 Availability of methodology and guidelines for governmental institutions to formulate effective employment strategies, programmes and initiatives | Dedicated studies conducted by UNDP | Availability | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes. 11 methodologies and guidelines for governmental institutions to formulate effective employment strategies, programmes and initiatives.  They are: 1. Methodology on client centricity;  2. Manual on FAQs in the sphere of employment;  3. Methodological manual on Women's hairdressing;  4. Methodological manual on Sewing;  5. Methodological manual on Gas welding,  6.Methodological manual on Electric fitting; 7. Methodological manual on Plumbing;  8. Methodological manual on Plastering  9. Manual on social and psychological support for migrants  10. Methodological manual on adapted to the local context “AfloYouth”  11. Methodology on implementing occupational barometer based on the experience of Finland  12. Manual on harmonization of the national professional standards with ISCO-08 | Project report; printed versions; uploaded to the website of the national partner; |
| 1.5 Number of labour migrants (disaggregated by gender) benefitted from employment generation, reskilling activities | Dedicated studies conducted by UNDP | Number | - | Baseline established | 700 | 1000 | 1000 | 1420 labour migrants (469 men and 951women) benefitted from employment generation, and reskilling activities.  1) Participants in the training on increasing the financial literacy of the population (192);  2) Participants in the training for women in the Fergana Valley on gender equality, social support, etc. (167)  3) Participants in the 6-day training on soft skills and financial literacy (169);  4) Participants in the World Skills National Championship in 2022 (115)  5) Participants in the World Skills National Championship in 2023 (115)  6) Participants in the World Skills International Championship (10)  7) Participants of the women's startup projects acceleration program (166);  8) Participants in the training on the development of digital entrepreneurship skills (194);  9) Participants in the acceleration projects for youth "Startup Chaykhana" and "Janyration Imak" (90);  10) Participants in the training on microloans (49);  11) Participants in the training on financial literacy (64)  12) Participants in the trainings on e-commerce (89). | Project report; project reports to the donor; minutes of PBMs; terminal evaluation report; The numbers are cumulative across years |
| 1.6 Number of start-ups supported with a special focus on youth and women | Dedicated studies conducted by UNDP | Number | - | 2 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 33 start-ups supported with a special focus on youth and women | Project report; The numbers are cumulative across years; Ministry report |
| 1.7 Number of staff (disaggregated by gender) improved their knowledge on formulation of effective employment strategies, programmes and initiatives | Dedicated studies conducted by UNDP | Number | - | Baseline established | 20 | 30 | 30 | 308 staff (102 men and 206 women) improved their knowledge of the formulation of effective employment strategies, programmes and initiatives.  1) Participants in the training on adapting "AflaYouth" training materials, conducted for the Monocenter representatives (36);  2) Participants in the 5-day training on job counselling and professional guidance (36)  3) Participants in the launching "Situational room" (50) 4) Participants in the training on capacity building for the ministry staff (42)  5) Participants of the Regional Forum for labor inspectors (110);  6) Participants of ToT training on installing solar panels (34) | Project reports; training reports; project reports to the donor; minutes of PBMs; terminal evaluation report |

**Component 1** focused on improving technical and digital skills for vulnerable groups including women, returning migrants, and youth in the Fergana Valley, enhancing their employment prospects and adaptability to economic changes post-pandemic. The strategic initiatives the project developed under this component have collectively strengthened the vocational training landscape in Fergana Valley, significantly improving employment opportunities for over 2900 individuals directly involved in these programs. The integration of advanced technologies and adherence to international standards has markedly increased the competitiveness and future-readiness of the workforce in the Fergana Valley.

*Key Achievements Organized into Categories:*

1. Vocational Training Enhancements:

* Comprehensive Training Programs: Delivered extensive vocational training in high-demand fields such as welding, electrical engineering, and baking, reaching 1848 participants including significant female participation.
* Trainer Development: Implemented a 'Training of Trainers' program to ensure sustainability and broaden impact within local communities, enhancing the capabilities of 308 trainers.

2. Skills Competitions and Standards Promotion:

* WorldSkills Championships: Facilitated participation in national and international skills competitions, helping to raise the profile of Uzbek skills on the world stage and benchmark against international standards.

3. Digital and Entrepreneurial Skill Integration:

* Innovative Technology Use: Introduced cutting-edge technologies including a VR-based vocational guidance tool and 'Imo Ishora', a web-based application for sign language interpretation, to enhance accessibility and service delivery.
* Digital Skills Workshops: Conducted workshops to bolster digital skills and support digital entrepreneurship, reflecting a strategic push towards modernizing the local economy[[5]](#footnote-6).

4. Policy Development and Capacity Building:

* Curriculum Development and Standardization: Collaborated on integrating modern standards into local curricula, with a focus on construction standards and vocational training that align with international benchmarks (ISCO-08).
* Professional Development Initiatives: Enhanced skills in financial literacy, digital entrepreneurship, and gender equality through targeted training sessions, which included substantial participation from women and ministry specialists.

5. Infrastructure and Resource Enhancement:

* Support Infrastructure: Improved training facilities and provided necessary equipment to Monocenters, facilitating effective skill development programs.
* Resource Allocation: Utilized grants to equip beneficiaries with tools and materials needed to implement training effectively and ensure the sustainability of skill enhancement initiatives.

The field visits allow the evaluation team to confirm those results, in particular, on the following elements:

* Skills Acquisition and Confidence Building:
  + Beneficiaries reported significant improvements in both hard and soft skills. Training sessions not only covered technical domains like welding and engineering but also bolstered confidence, empowering participants to apply these skills effectively.
  + Example: Entrepreneurs in the Fergana Valley, such as a woman running a handbag manufacturing business, highlighted the acquisition of new equipment and skills as transformative, enabling them to expand their businesses and hire more staff.

*Quotes: "One of the greatest benefits of the project was the comprehensive skill set we acquired, which wasn't just about technical skills but also included crucial entrepreneurial training like business management and marketing strategies. These skills have really motivated us to push our ventures further," "Additionally, the support didn't stop at training. We received essential equipment and financial assistance, which were critical in practically applying our new skills and expanding our businesses"*

* Quality of Training and Resource Provision:
  + The training programs were highly praised for their relevance and the practicality of skills taught, which were directly applicable to current market needs.
  + Beneficiaries appreciated the comprehensive nature of training which included aspects of business management, sales, and marketing, crucial for running a successful enterprise.
* Impact on Employment:
  + The practical training provided through the project directly led to new employment opportunities, as reported by beneficiaries who were able to recruit additional staff due to the enhanced operations of their businesses.

**Component 2** aimed at supporting the economic engagement of NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) young people, particularly focusing on young women in the Fergana Valley by fostering an entrepreneurial ecosystem and enhancing digital entrepreneurship skills. This component was important in contributing to enhancing the entrepreneurial skills of NEET youth, particularly women, and partly fostered a supportive start-up ecosystem in the Fergana Valley. Through training programs, cross-border collaborations, and the development of digital innovation hubs, the project has partly contributed to the economic empowerment of vulnerable groups and the broader goal of sustainable economic development.

Key Achievements Organized into Categories:

1. Development of Digital Innovation Hubs:

* Concept Establishment: The project started the work to build a Digital Innovation Hub, which would serve as comprehensive support centers for enhancing business processes through digital technology, particularly aiding SMEs and startups.
* Needs Assessment: Conducted initial assessments with regional business representatives to integrate the 'Digital Pulse' tool for 2022, facilitating rapid digitalization assessments and recommendations.

2. Regional Conferences and Cross-border Cooperation:

* Business Dialogue Platforms: Facilitated a regional conference in collaboration with UNDP offices in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, enhancing cross-border economic trade and cooperation.
* Capacity Building: Organized sessions for entrepreneurs and decision-makers to boost regional economic integration and cooperative ventures.

3. Business Acceleration and Entrepreneurial Support:

* Women’s Business Acceleration Program: Launched to support women entrepreneurs by identifying key business areas including confectionery and garment production, and providing extensive training and resources to foster successful start-ups.[[6]](#footnote-7)
* Study Tour: Included international learning experiences, such as visiting the Self-Employed Women’s Association in India, to integrate best practices into local cooperative efforts and entrepreneurship.

4. Enhancement of Entrepreneurial and Digital Skills:

* Training Programs: Implemented a series of training sessions focused on digital entrepreneurship to enhance local capacities in utilizing modern IT and digital resources effectively.[[7]](#footnote-8)
* Digital Skill Assessments and Training: Utilized the 'Digital Pulse' tool to evaluate and subsequently train entrepreneurs in digital skills, aiming to improve their competitive edge in the digital marketplace.

5. Financial Literacy Improvement:

* Microloan Accessibility: Analyzed and improved the microloan process to enhance access to financial resources for entrepreneurs, through developing brochures and conducting workshops on financial literacy.
* Educational Workshops: Conducted workshops to raise financial literacy among the local population, particularly focusing on managing family finances and understanding microloans.[[8]](#footnote-9)

The field visits allow the evaluation team to confirm those results, in particular, on the following elements:

* Entrepreneurial Skills Enhancement:
  + Targeted initiatives for NEET youth and women included developing business acumen and entrepreneurial skills, which were crucial amid the economic downturn.
  + Example: A participant of the Women’s Business Acceleration Program expressed that the insights gained from the training notably improved her business’s operational efficiency and market reach.
* Support Infrastructure and Equipment:
  + The provision of modern equipment under the project was a critical factor that enabled businesses to enhance their production capabilities and adopt more sophisticated techniques.

**Component 3** focused on enhancing the effectiveness and reach of government labor market programs to better support individuals in the informal economy. in that sense, the project has partly contributed to the modernization and increased efficacy of labor market programs in Uzbekistan. Through strategic training initiatives, the development of forecasting tools, and the integration of advanced digital resources, the project has improved the government's capacity to support employment in the informal sector effectively.

*Key Achievements Organized into Categories:*

1. Capacity Building and Training Initiatives:

* Monocenter Employee Training: Improved the service delivery of 50 Monocenter employees through targeted training sessions in partnership with the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations (MELR), enhancing their capabilities in career and professional development services.
* Public Servant Development: Conducted capacity-building training for 65 MELR public servants, focusing on the effective delivery of public employment services and the implementation of Active Labour Market Programs (ALMPs).

2. Development and Implementation of Analytical Tools:

* Occupational Barometer Methodology: Introduced a methodology for short-term and periodic forecasting of labor demand, which helps to predict employer behavior and expectations more accurately.
* International Collaborations: Engaged an international expert from Finland to adapt the "Occupational Barometer" to local needs, facilitating better integration of market demand forecasting in labor policies.

3. Forums and Collaborative Platforms:

* International Forum on Labor Migration: Organized forums to discuss trends in labor migration, providing a platform for international and regional exchange on employment strategies and cooperative efforts.
* Regional Forum of State Labor Inspectors: Supported the exchange of best practices and knowledge among labor inspectors from Central Asia and the Russian Federation, enhancing regional collaboration.

4. Integration of Digital Tools and Platforms:

* Situational Room Launch: Established a 'Situational Room' at Fergana Monocenter, equipped with VR simulations for professional orientation and vocational guidance, modernizing the approach to career counselling.
* AI Chatbot for Employment Services: Developed an AI-driven chatbot to enhance the user experience in navigating employment services, improving the efficiency and accessibility of information related to job vacancies and career guidance.

5. Educational and Supportive Materials Development:

* Training Manuals and FAQs: Created comprehensive manuals and FAQs to assist job seekers and employers by providing detailed information on employment services, rights, and obligations within the labor market. Additionally, the project developed video instructions on the development of digital entrepreneurship skills among beneficiaries of the project in the Ferghana Valley.

6. Standardization and Policy Support:

* Harmonization with International Standards: Supported the alignment of national vacancy positions and professional standards with the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08), which will facilitate better job matching and skill recognition on an international scale.

The field visits allow the evaluation team to confirm those results, in particular, on the following elements:

* Improvement in Service Delivery:
  + Monocenter heads noted a significant enhancement in the quality of career counseling and job placement services due to the new training methodologies and digital tools implemented, such as VR and AI-based systems.
  + Example: The introduction of a 'Situational Room' equipped with VR tools dramatically improved the vocational guidance provided, making the services more interactive and effective.
* Capacity Building of Institutional Staff:
  + The project significantly contributed to building the capacities of Monocenter staff and public servants, who are now better equipped to support the local workforce and implement labor market programs.

**Finding 6. While the project achieved important results, it is difficult for this evaluation to quantify the ‘empowerment’ of beneficiaries**

The ToC anticipated effective learning outcomes for both youth (including women) and government officials, with the former expected to become more employable and the latter to develop improved labor policies. However, the evaluation revealed limitations in substantiating these outcomes due to insufficient evidence. This shortfall was primarily because:

* Application of Skills Unverified: There was a lack of follow-up to determine how beneficiaries applied their new skills or knowledge in practical settings, whether 3 or 6 months post-training, which is crucial for validating empowerment claims.

**Finding 7. The project demonstrated considerable flexibility during its implementation, effectively leveraging the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance its impact.**

The onset of the pandemic coincided with critical phases of project execution, leading to significant adaptations in project activities:

* Rapid Adjustment to New Realities: Faced with unprecedented global disruptions, the project team promptly revised several operational aspects to align with the new constraints and opportunities presented by the pandemic. This included modifying activity plans and delivery methods to comply with health guidelines and shifting societal needs.
* Digital Transition of Project Activities:
  + The project capitalized on digital platforms to continue its activities, significantly broadening its reach and inclusivity. This strategic pivot not only maintained continuity during disruptions but also expanded the project’s scope and accessibility.
  + Training and Support for Digital Tools: Recognizing the challenges posed by a sudden shift to digital platforms, the project provided targeted training for participants, particularly educators, to effectively utilize digital tools like Zoom, ensuring that the transition was as smooth as possible for all stakeholders.

Qu*otes*

* *"Overall, I think the project was very successful taking into consideration the covid which has started early 2020... the project team was able to quickly adapt to the new covid situation..."*
* *"While some other projects had lots of problems due to covid and partners meaning they were not very flexible and adaptive to virtual models of working..."*

These adaptations not only mitigated the adverse effects of the pandemic but also positioned the project to emerge stronger, with enhanced capabilities to handle similar challenges in the future. The proactive and responsive measures taken by the project team were crucial in ensuring the continued success and relevance of the project amidst global instability.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Evaluation criteria** | **Rating** |
| Effectiveness | 5 (Satisfactory)  The project achieved many output-level goals such as training programs and the establishment of educational standards, with only some evidence still needed for broader outcomes such as the ‘empowerment’ of beneficiaries |

## Efficiency

**3. Main questions: To what extent did the project achieve its objectives with optimized resources?**

This section addresses the main questionand sub-questions related to the efficiency criterion. It shows: how efficiency of the project was overall solid despite the COVID-19 (finding 8); that, the governance set up of the project was appropriate and appreciated by the stakeholders (finding 9): and that there was willingness to properly follow the progress of the project and measure its results, yet, this did not translate into an effective monitoring and evaluation system (finding 10).

**Finding 8. Despite the pandemic, the funds were delivered in resource appropriate manner.**

As a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, a large number of the activities of the project had to be extended. Also, the country suffered from political instability and government frequent turnover during project implementation. In this sense, the project board approved an extension 6-months no cost extension, taking into consideration those aspects. Moreover, there were many delays because of the government heavy bureaucracy and procedures. The frequent turnover within the government also complicated continuity and handover processes, necessitating repeated orientation and training for new officials.

*Quote: ‘"We experienced significant delays in obtaining necessary approvals; for instance, the Terms of Reference for the accelerator program we designed in February 2023 were only signed off in August 2023. Additionally, the frequent turnover within the government posed challenges, as there was no effective handover process, which further complicated project continuity"*

However, this evaluation found the project managed its resources properly and implemented all its activities while achieving most of its objectives. The project partly amended the objectives identified in the results framework.

As of the end of 2023, the project adapted its financial strategies to ensure continuity and efficiency, as illustrated by the fund distribution across different components:

* Component 1: Achieved an 87.3% delivery rate with $ $221,560 spent against a budget of $253,853.
* Component 2: Reached a 68.3% delivery rate, spending $ $145,008 of the allocated $212,339.
* Component 3: Utilized $ $102,980 of its $117,949 budget, reflecting a 87% delivery rate.
* Project Management: Exceeded the budget allocation with $ $57,698 spent against $72,915, a 79% delivery rate, reflecting the additional administrative efforts required to manage the complexities introduced by the pandemic and political changes.

**Finding 9. The governance structure set up for the project functioned appropriately**

The evaluation found that the perception of the project governance setup was rather positive. The interviews with the main stakeholders and the analysis of the documentation showed that the project Board provided clear guidance from the beginning of the project. Some stakeholders interviewed highlighted, however, that project board meetings could have been also useful to discuss more in-depth subjects.

*Quotes*

*Project Board meetings worked well. However, we could have perhaps used the project board more effectively. We were evaluating risks, sustainability issues ourselves at UNDP but we should have used the project Board to think about these issues. I later understood, that the board meetings are not only for reporting etc, but also for finding solutions (interview with UNDP staff)*

*“Every year for the Project Board meetings all the departments of ministry gave their suggestions and we developed annual work plans on the needs and areas of cooperation, which turned out to be effective”. (interview with Project Management Unit of the Ministry of Employment)*

Overall, there was a strong willingness and commitment from the main stakeholders to design and implement this project, which was considered by all the stakeholders a strategic one. The evaluation found, in particular, that UNDP set up a clear division of roles and responsibilities among its staff ensuring that there would be constant project management, oversight and that the project would comply with the organization procedures.

The project team had dedicated task managers working on each component, one of them being based in the Fergana valley, which helped the coordination with the stakeholders on the field.At the same time, administrative reforms that resulted in the change of focal point for the project as well as key national partners caused challenges for the Project team, which managed such challenges thanks to the clear planning.

*Quotes*

*We worked as a team to ensure that activities would run smoothly Also, the project manager was quick to identify challenges – I then worked with him to find quick solutions to those challenges (interview with UNDP staff)*

*“Due to the lack of a handover process, every time the person representing national implementing partner changed we had to inform new person about the project from the beginning. In such cases Annual Planning documents saved us.” (interview with UNDP staff)*

Finally, both donors and government partners expressed satisfaction with UNDP's flexible and responsive engagement strategy. This positive feedback underscores the project's alignment with partner expectations and its ability to maintain constructive relationships.

The project's cooperation with UNICEF on training initiatives and entrepreneurship programs further exemplified its effective governance and capacity to leverage partnerships for enhanced impact.

**Finding 10. While there was an intention to monitor and evaluate the project's progress (such as the logframe and TOC), the actual implementation of these systems fell short of establishing an effective monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) system.**

The project team developed a M&E results framework and TOC and incorporated them into the project document. The project also complied with all the reporting procedures and duly filled in all the progress reports.

However, the evaluation found the following obstacles for the project to effectively monitor the progress of the project and to learn from it:

● The M&E framework placed strong emphasis on outputs (and activities) rather than on outcomes. Most indicators were primarily at the output level such as “number of students participated in the training programmes’” (indicator 1.1,). The framework only included 1 indicator on improving learning outcomes (Number of staff improved their knowledge on formulation of effective employment strategies, programmes and initiatives - indicator 1.3) - however, there is no information available on how the project actually measured it. The framework also merged indicators that measure short and long term results that should have been kept separate – for instance, ‘1.2. Percentage of LCPD graduates who are employed or self-employed six months after program completion (indicator 1.2) is a longer term result and should not be placed in the same category as others output indicator.

● The project TOC is quite detailed and incorporated in the project document. However, it did not specify the assumptions nor beneficiaries for each results level (inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact) and is quite complex to understand.

● Even if the project team collected some M&E information that contain important information about the progress, the evaluation found the following weaknesses in the M&E/reporting, as follows:

* there is no comprehensive table that shows the progress against all the indicators included in the logframe (i.e. indicator 1.2)
* while the Progress reports are quite comprehensive they represent more a list of many activities that the project rather than being a useful tool to measure against the logframe (i.e. is the project contributing to empowering beneficiaries? how is this being measured? how is the TOC being monitored?)

This evaluation does not consider those limitations to be major. However, given that the project achieved some important results, it could have provided even more evidence about them if those challenges were to be addressed.

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| **Evaluation criteria** | **Rating** |
| Efficiency | 4 (Moderately Satisfactory)  The project managed its resources effectively, adapting well to challenges by adjusting timelines and budget allocations. However, the implementation of these adjustments exposed shortcomings in the monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) system. |

**Impact**

**Main question 4. To what extent is the impact of project's actions conducive to a better match between labor supply and demand?**

**Finding 11. While it is too early for this evaluation to verify the project’s long-term results that are illustrated in the reconstructed TOC, the project had some positive impact at the institutional level and on the labor market**

The reconstructed Theory of Change (TOC) outlines several ambitious impact-level results, which include:

* Reducing Unemployment: The project aims to significantly decrease the unemployment rate in the Ferghana Valley by equipping the local workforce with relevant skills and competencies that meet the demands of a post-pandemic economy.
* Building a Resilient Workforce: Another key impact goal is to develop a workforce that is not only resilient but also adaptable to the economic fluctuations and new realities of a post-pandemic world. This involves comprehensive training and upskilling programs tailored to the evolving market needs.

While verifying the full scope of the project’s impacts on unemployment and workforce resilience in the Ferghana Valley will require more time and a detailed follow-up evaluation (see recommendations), the project contributed to some changes in how employment services are delivered within the region. Despite the project's recent conclusion, early indicators suggest potential for significant systemic effects on Active Labor Market Programs (ALMPs). For instance, the project supported the government in conducting reforms across labor market institutes at all levels by providing methodological support, innovative solutions for service delivery, and necessary equipment and training. Among those reforms, it is possible to mention

* Institutional Strengthening: Methodological support to employment centers has improved service delivery, making them more effective and user-friendly.
* Technology Integration: The introduction of technologies like virtual reality in career centers and the development of AI-driven tools like the "Imo-Ishora" sign language app has modernized the approach to vocational guidance and employment services.
* Capacity Building: Training initiatives have not only upgraded the skills of local government staff but also ensured that these enhancements are rooted in the current needs of the labor market, contributing to a more skilled and responsive workforce.

While direct causal links to the project’s interventions and broad employment trends cannot be definitively established without further longitudinal studies, initial data suggests an encouraging trend in the regions targeted by the project.

There is, indeed, an observed slight increase in employment rates in regions where project activities were concentrated. Particularly, in the Ferghana valley region, where the activities of the project were directed at boosting employability skills of the population, Andijan and Ferghana regions also witnessed slight growth in employment rates. Employment rate in Andijan region increased from 66,5% in 2020 to 69,5% in 2022, while in Ferghana region it grew from 65,1% in 2020 to 67,1% in 2022.

Similarly, the number of economically active individuals has risen, suggesting a positive movement in labor market engagement among the target populations.

Overall, the project’s multifaceted approach, which extended beyond entrepreneurship and digital skills training to include robust institutional support, has demonstrated potential for significant positive impacts. During field visits, evaluators noted that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) benefiting from the digital skills training reported increases in sales and customer demand, compelling them to expand their workforce. This enhancement of entrepreneurial capabilities among local businesses is a testament to the project's broad impact on economic activity.

Moreover, the project's comprehensive strategy involved strengthening institutional capacities within government entities. This support has been pivotal in improving the delivery of government services related to employment and labor market programs. By providing methodological assistance, training, and technological tools, the project has equipped government agencies with the means to implement more effective and sustainable labor policies and programs.

These efforts are designed not only to foster immediate economic benefits but also to lay the groundwork for long-term improvements in the economic landscape of the region. While it is premature to fully gauge the long-term effects shortly after the project’s conclusion, the initial indications are promising.

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| **Evaluation criteria** | **Rating** |
| Impact | 4 (Moderately Satisfactory)  The initial signs suggest progress toward intended impacts, such as enhanced employment prospects and skills development in the Ferghana Valley. However, the definitive long-term impacts remain unclear due to the short time frame since project completion. Continued monitoring and longitudinal studies are recommended to more accurately assess sustained outcomes. |

## Sustainability

**5 Main question: To what extent the project results are likely to be sustained over time?**

This section addresses the main questionand sub-questions related to sustainability. It shows: that the government has shown some commitment to develop and implement the project (Finding 12) yet while some results are already sustainable, for others to be sustainable there should be both a follow-up to support the government and the main project’s stakeholders (finding 13)

**Finding 12: The government has shown some commitment to develop and implement the project**

The evaluation has found some instances of plans and strategies developed by the government that integrate the training material development. The project in Ferghana Valley, Uzbekistan, has indeed generated some national ownership and capabilities for sustained implementation. This is evidenced by the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction's participation and engagement in designing and executing labor market programs that incorporate the training materials developed through the project. The Ministry's involvement ensures that the programs are tailored to the local context and needs, which is crucial for their sustainability​

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The project's reports also indicate a foundation of trained local professionals and developed infrastructure, such as the Monocenters in Andijan, Namangan, and Fergana, which are equipped to continue the training programs autonomously. The training of trainers, which has been a significant component of the project, ensures that local capacities are built to carry on the project's initiatives without external support​. The governmental commitment is also reflected in the integration of project standards into national frameworks, such as the adaptation of Uzbekistan's professional standards with the ISCO-08 international standards, which further demonstrates the national counterpart's readiness and capability to sustain project activities​

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**Finding 13. While some results are already sustainable, for others to be sustainable there should be both a follow-up to support the government and the main project’s stakeholders**

The evaluation has found some encouraging signs of sustainability as follows:

* Improved skills training modules (based on the guidebooks and video lessons UNDP created for monocenters) that have been integrated into the curriculum
* Capacitated trainers at monocenters who can now provide better skills trainings (thanks to TOTs provided by international trainers)
* Making services provided by Employment support centres in regions accessible for people with disabilities (with the help of tablets as IT solution )
* Updated National legislation for the development of professional qualifications and skills (based on what the representative of Ministry of Employment said, that in March 2024, they have adopted new decree of Cabinet of Ministers on professional standards. It is also mentioned in the Progress report for 2023, which states: “harmonization of national vacancy position descriptions and professional standards with ISCO-08” )
* Some interventions are continuing without direct project support includes the autonomous operation of Monocenters, which have been conducting training sessions independently. These centers were initially supported by the project but are now examples of the project’s sustainable impact, functioning without ongoing external assistance​. Also, as mentioned above, the government has shown some commitment to develop and implement the project.

While the project has laid a solid foundation for sustaining its results over time, there are essential aspects that require deeper reflection and strategic enhancements to fully realize long-term sustainability

A more in-depth analysis is necessary to evaluate how effectively the project's approach has led to actual employment. Current data does not conclusively confirm that the training programs have directly resulted in employment opportunities for participants. It is crucial to develop mechanisms that better integrate the training programs with the local job market, enhancing the employability of the trainees. Continued efforts are needed to strengthen the existing ecosystem to ensure that these training opportunities are directly linked to tangible employment outcomes, potentially involving more comprehensive collaboration with local industries and employers to tailor the training programs according to market needs.

The project has made significant strides in bolstering Uzbekistan's entrepreneurial ecosystem through initiatives like business acceleration programs, which have supported the launch of new startups and aided existing ones in the Ferghana Valley. However, it is unrealistic to expect a single project to comprehensively enhance the entire ecosystem. Persistent efforts are required to extend these foundational developments:

* Regulatory Frameworks: Simplifying the process for starting and registering businesses, and evaluating the impact of VAT and other fiscal policies on new enterprises.
* Financial Access and Support: Addressing challenges faced by youth and startups in accessing finance, possibly by introducing targeted microfinance programs and facilitating connections with investors.
* Mentorship and Expertise: Expanding the availability of mentors and experts who can provide crucial guidance to budding entrepreneurs, which could be achieved through partnerships with professional networks and higher education institutions.
* Development of Incubators and Accelerators: Increasing the number of incubators and accelerators, particularly in underserved regions, to provide comprehensive support and resources to nascent firms.

From stakeholder interviews, it is evident that these areas present potential constraints that could inhibit the development of a robust entrepreneurship ecosystem. Insights from similar lower-middle-income economies indicate that addressing these challenges can significantly enhance the startup landscape.

The project has proactively incorporated gender equality measures into its core operations, evident from the specific support for women’s business projects and the inclusion of gender aspects in entrepreneurship training. However, several areas need improvement to ensure the sustainability of these outcomes:

* Inclusivity in Participation: Although the project has emphasized women's participation, there is a need to ensure that women from all sectors of society, including the most marginalized, are able to benefit equally from the project’s initiatives.
* Long-term Impact Assessments: Current evaluations do not fully measure the long-term impacts of gender-focused interventions on women's economic status. Improved tracking and analysis are needed to understand the enduring effects of these projects and to identify areas where women may still be facing significant barriers.
* Scalability of Gender Initiatives: While the project has made important strides in promoting gender equality, the scalability of these efforts across other regions and outside the immediate project scope remains limited. Expanding these initiatives to reach a broader audience could help maximize their impact.

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| **Evaluation criteria** | **Rating** |
| Sustainability | 4 (Moderately Satisfactory)  Initial steps towards sustainability are evident, but continuous support and development are needed to ensure long-term viability. |

## Conclusions

The "Adapting Population Skills to the Post-Pandemic Economy in Ferghana Valley" project was notably relevant, addressing the needs arising from COVID-19’s impact on the labor market. It effectively targeted skill mismatches and employment disruptions that disproportionately affected youth and women. The project's alignment with national socio-economic strategies and its comprehensive design spanning multiple components—employment opportunity creation, entrepreneurship support, and labor market program redesign—enabled a robust response to immediate and systemic challenges.

By improving technical and digital skills among the youth, women, and vulnerable groups, the project has increased their employability. Initiatives like the development of a National Digital Skills Development Strategy and vocational training in high-demand fields demonstrate a strong output-level achievement. These efforts are complemented by the establishment of Monocenters which provide ongoing training, showcasing an effective model for sustained skill development and employment support within the community.

While the project has spurred the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem through business acceleration programs and support for startups, the evaluation found that these efforts need to be part of a larger, more integrated approach to be truly transformative. The ecosystem’s growth is hindered by regulatory challenges, limited access to finance, and insufficient mentorship—areas that require ongoing attention and strategic partnerships to foster a more conducive environment for new and existing entrepreneurs.

The project’s focus on gender equality has led to significant participation of women in its programs, particularly through the Women’s Business Acceleration Program and sector-specific training initiatives. However, there is a critical need for more nuanced and scalable gender-focused interventions to ensure these gains are not isolated and can be expanded to benefit a wider demographic, including the most marginalized women in society.

There is evident commitment from the Uzbek government, as shown by the integration of training programs into national educational frameworks and the adaptation of professional standards to international norms (ISCO-08). This commitment is crucial for the sustainability of project results. However, the project’s documentation and strategies should be more rigorously aligned with detailed analyses of the current state and needs of the entrepreneurial ecosystem to guide future interventions effectively.

The project exhibits strong potential for sustainability due to the government’s ongoing support and the foundational work in building local capacities through training of trainers and infrastructure development at Monocenters. Nonetheless, for long-term impact, particularly in reducing unemployment and building a resilient workforce, there needs to be a continuous evaluation and adaptive measures that respond to evolving market demands and socio-economic conditions.

Overall, the project's multi-faceted approach aimed at addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labor market in Uzbekistan’s Ferghana Valley has laid a solid groundwork for continued economic recovery and growth. Its relevance to national priorities, effectiveness in enhancing employability and entrepreneurial skills, and the strategic focus on inclusivity and gender equality are commendable. Moving forward, building on these successes while strategically addressing the noted gaps and challenges will be essential in sustaining and scaling the project’s impacts. This endeavor will require continued collaboration between local stakeholders, government bodies, and international partners to foster a resilient and inclusive economic environment in Uzbekistan.

# Recommendations

Future projects should consider a more integrated approach that includes a detailed assessment of ecosystem needs, enhanced private sector involvement, and expanded cross-border collaborations to solidify the gains made. Additionally, establishing more robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks that not only track outputs but also assess the long-term outcomes and impacts of interventions will be critical in measuring success and guiding adjustments.

The recommendations below provide specific suggestions for each intended user of the evaluation. The recommendations are presented in order of priority for each intended user.

**For UNDP**

**Recommendation 1. UNDP Should Continue and Expand Holistic Development Initiatives**

It is recommended that UNDP continue its engagement in the Ferghana Valley with a renewed focus on a holistic development approach that integrates vocational training, capacity building, and entrepreneurship. This approach should aim to build on the current project’s successes by expanding its scope to include more advanced vocational training opportunities, deeper local capacity building in management and sustainability, and a more robust support system for entrepreneurship. This comprehensive strategy will ensure the sustained economic empowerment of vulnerable groups and foster long-term economic resilience in the region.

**Recommendation 2. UNDP Should Enhance the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework**

It is recommended to implement comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems that focus not only on outputs but also on long-term outcomes and impacts. This would involve developing indicators that measure the application of skills post-training, employment rates, and the long-term viability of startups created through the project’s initiatives. Regular assessments and feedback mechanisms should be integrated to track progress continuously and adapt strategies as necessary. UNDP could improve project outcomes by enhancing data collection and utilization, allowing for real-time adjustments and more tailored interventions.

**Recommendation 3. UNDP Should Facilitate Sector-Specific Partnership**

It is recommended to establish partnerships with specific industry sectors that can provide practical opportunities for training participants. By aligning the training modules directly with industry needs, UNDP can enhance job placement rates and ensure that the skills provided are directly applicable to the current labor market, thereby increasing employment opportunities significantly.

**Recommendation 4. UNDP should expand Digital Transformation Initiatives**:

It is recommended to Broaden the scope of digital skills training to include emerging technologies that are becoming increasingly relevant, such as AI, big data, and cybersecurity. This approach should also consider the development of digital literacy programs at community levels to widen access and inclusion, preparing the workforce for a digital economy.

**Recommendation 5. UNDP should act as a connector and convenor**

It is recommended that UNDP should strengthen its role as a connector among academia, government, the private sector, and other international organizations to facilitate dialogue, learning, and knowledge exchange around digitalization and other priority areas. This collaborative approach, as demonstrated in both Kosovo and Kyrgyzstan, can enhance trust and foster richer, more productive partnerships​​​​. It would be important to leverage UNDP’s unique position to advocate for policy changes that support sustainable development goals, particularly in areas such as education reform, digital inclusion, and economic diversification.

**Recommendation 6. UNDP should involve stakeholders in the field during project design**

It is recommended that UNDP involve actively key stakeholders not only from the central government but also from divisional branches in the target areas. This approach will ensure to take into consideration the vital needs of the communities and integration it into the project outputs during the design.

**Recommendation 7. Promote Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship**

UNDP should actively foster and expand Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to enhance vocational training and entrepreneurship initiatives. By collaborating with the private sector, UNDP can facilitate the co-creation of training programs, apprenticeships, and startup incubators. These partnerships should focus on aligning educational programs with industry needs and providing practical, real-world experience for students and young entrepreneurs. Such collaboration will not only enhance the relevance of training but also improve employment prospects and business success rates.

# Lessons learned

* **I**ntegration with National Policies: Successful alignment with national strategies enhances the project's relevance and impact. Future projects should ensure deeper integration with government policies to strengthen both implementation and sustainability.
* Digital Transformation: The project's focus on digital skills was crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic. Continuing to integrate digital tools and training in future projects can increase accessibility and resilience against similar disruptions.
* In-depth Stakeholder Analysis: Understanding the roles, capabilities, and limitations of all stakeholders can enhance project design and execution. Future projects should invest in thorough stakeholder analysis during the planning phase to tailor activities more effectively.
* Longitudinal Impact Assessment: Establishing mechanisms for long-term impact assessment can provide insights into the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions. Future projects should include plans for longitudinal studies to gather data on the lasting effects of their initiatives.
* **Stakeholder Engagement**: Active involvement of stakeholders at all levels, especially those on the ground, is essential during both the project design and evaluation phases. This engagement ensures that the project addresses real needs and that evaluations consider local insights and contexts.
* **Adaptability and Flexibility:** The project's ability to adapt to external challenges like COVID-19 significantly enhanced its impact. Future projects should incorporate flexible strategies to adjust to changing circumstances effectively.
* **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework:** Establishing a strong M&E framework that goes beyond output measurement to assess long-term outcomes and impacts is critical. This approach provides a deeper understanding of the project’s effectiveness and guides future improvements. Comprehensive documentation and robust data collection protocols are crucial. Inadequate documentation can lead to gaps in evaluating the project's effectiveness and hinder the ability to draw meaningful conclusions.
* **Timing of Evaluation**: Evaluating a project too soon after its completion may not provide enough data on long-term outcomes and impacts. Future projects should plan for post-implementation evaluations to better capture these effects.

# Annexes

Annex 1. TORs of this evaluation

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|  | **UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**  **TERMS OF REFERENCE / INDIVIDUAL CONTRACT** |

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| **I. Job Information** | |
| **Office/Unit/Project** | Uzbekistan/Inclusive Growth Cluster/Adapting population skills to the post-pandemic economy in Ferghana Valley |
| **Title** | International Consultant for Terminal Evaluation of UNDP project “Adapting population skills to the post-pandemic economy in Ferghana Valley” |
| **Duty station (City and Country)** | Tashkent, Namangan, Andijan and Fergana regions |
| **Type (Regular or Short term)** | Short-term |
| **Office- or Home-based** | Home-based with one mission to Uzbekistan of minimum 5 working days to Uzbekistan (not including weekends) |
| **Expected starting date** | 5 February2024 |
| **Expected Duration** | 20 working days during February-May 2024 |

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| **II. Introduction** |
| In accordance with UNDP policies and procedures, all nationally implemented projects are required to undergo a Final Evaluation (FE) at the end of the project by an independent evaluator selected by the Implementing Entity. This Terms of Reference (ToR) sets out the expectations for the FE of the project titled “Adapting population skills to the post-pandemic economy in Ferghana Valley” implemented through the UNDP Uzbekistan and the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction (MEPR) of Uzbekistan as the Implementing Partner. The project started on the 20th of January 2021 and is in its last year of implementation. The FE process must follow the guidance outlined in the document ‘Evaluation Implementation, June 2021’  (<http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/section-4.shtml>). |

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| **III. Background and context** |
| This project aims to pave a new path for the future of work based on continuous skill development, the digital leap and a new balance between life and work. The goal of the project is to retrain and improve the skills of the workforce to introduce new business models in the post-pandemic era. It targets college and university graduates, young women and men working in the informal sector, returning migrants and other vulnerable groups, and helps the Uzbek government and private sector develop a talent development policy and strategy that develops the important digital and cognitive skills of employees, their technical and socio-emotional skills, their adaptability and sustainability.  The project documents is available at <https://www.undp.org/uzbekistan/projects/population-skills-post-pandemic-economy>. The project activities are grouped into three major directions:   1. Creating decent employment opportunities by improving technical and digital skills and competencies of self-employed and unemployed women, returning migrants, youth and other vulnerable groups in Fergana Valley that are future-resistant, sustainable and adaptable to changing environment; 2. Strengthening entrepreneurship skills development and start-up ecosystem; and 3. Support re-designing of Government labour market programmes (LMPs) and increasing their impact and reach to create better opportunities for those employed in the informal economy.   The FE will assess the project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The FE will have two primary purposes:   * 1. to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and   2. to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNDP and their national partners such as the MEPR and regional hokimiyats (local authorities), as well as final beneficiaries – youth, returning migrants and women, mostly in regions, who are interested in engaging in productive employment and self-employment.   FE’s outcomes and recommendations will be instrumental for development of new employment and skills development project proposals for various donors through establishing a sound and well-informed ground for establishment of baselines and conducting an evidence-based situation analysis.  In this regards, UNDP is now seeking an experienced International Consultant for the Final Evaluation of UNDP project “Adapting population skills to the post-pandemic economy in Ferghana Valley”. |

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| **IV. FE Evaluation purpose, scope and objectives** |
| 1. To develop evaluation report (a full outline of the FE report’s content is provided in ToR Annex A) that must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful by assessing project performance against expectations set out in the project’s Results Framework (see ToR Annex B); 2. To review all relevant sources of information including the Project Document, ESSP, Project Inception Report, PPRs, Project Board meeting minutes, Financial and Administration guidelines (SOP), project budget revisions, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the evaluator considers useful for evidence-based evaluation. 3. To review the baseline, targets and indicators and annual reports submitted to the project’s donors; 4. To follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the MEPR, local authorities), national partner agencies, the UNDP Country Office(s), direct beneficiaries and other stakeholders.   *Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful FE. Stakeholder involvement should include online interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, and project beneficiaries including but not limited to MEPR, regional Employment departments, Local Monocenters “Ishga markhamat”, Business Women’s Association, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ministry Digitl technologies, IT-Park, business support service providers, IT companies, local think tanks, CSO and women activists and international organizations such as UNICEF, ILO, World bank, ADB, KOICA, GIZ, EU, etc. As applicable, include any relevant data/information/policy framework that may be required for each activity;*   1. The FE should assess the programme’s achievement of all specific gender objectives set out in the planning document and other programme documents. To take into account criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, to review the final results and progress of the project (see ToR Annex C: guiding evaluation questions). 2. To deliver results as indicated in the deliverables table. |

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| **V. FE Approach & Methodology** |
| 1. The FE report must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful and comply with UNDG Evaluations Standards. 2. The FE consultant/expert will review all relevant sources of information including the Project Document. Project Board meeting minutes, Financial and Administration guidelines (SOP), project budget revisions, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the evaluator considers useful for this evidence-based evaluation. 3. The FE consultant is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with the Programme Team, government counterparts, national partner agencies, the UNDP Country Office(s), direct beneficiaries and other stakeholders. 4. Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful FE. Stakeholder involvement should include field mission and offline meetings with stakeholders who have project responsibilities. 5. If a data collection/field mission is not possible then remote interviews may be undertaken through telephone or online (skype, zoom etc.). International consultant can work remotely. 6. The specific design and methodology for the FE should emerge from online consultations between the FE consultant and the above-mentioned parties regarding what is appropriate and feasible for meeting the FE purpose and objectives and answering the evaluation questions, given limitations of budget, time and data. The FE consultant must use gender-responsive methodologies and tools and ensure that gender specific issues are addressed, also, other cross-cutting issues and SDGs should be incorporated into the FE report. 7. The final methodological approach including online interview schedule and data to be used in the evaluation must be clearly outlined in the FE Inception Report and be fully discussed and agreed between UNDP, stakeholders and the FE consultant. International Consultant will determine the best methods and tools for collecting and analysis of data, e.g. questionnaires. However, he/she will be able to revise the approach in consultation with the evaluation manager and key stakeholders. These changes in approach should be agreed and reflected in the FE Inception Report. 8. The final report must describe the full FE approach used and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the evaluation. |

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| **VI. Detailed Scope of the FE** |
| The FE will assess project performance against expectations set out in the project’s Logical Framework/Results Framework (see ToR Annex A). The FE will assess results according to the criteria outlined in the Guidance for TEs of UNDP projects ([United Nations Development Programme – Evaluation Guidelines (undp.org)](http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/)).  The Findings section of the FE report will cover the topics listed below. A full outline of the FE report’s content is provided in ToR Annex C.  The asterisk “(\*)” indicates criteria for which a rating is required.  Findings   1. **Project Design/Formulation**  * National priorities and country drivenness. * Theory of Change. * Gender equality and women’s empowerment. * Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards). * Analysis of Results Framework: project logic and strategy, indicators. * Assumptions and Risks. * Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g. same focal area) incorporated into project design. * Planned stakeholder participation. * Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector. * Management arrangements.  1. **Project Implementation**  * Adaptive management (changes to the project design and project outputs during implementation). * Actual stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements. * Project Finance and Co-finance. * Monitoring & Evaluation: design at entry (\*), implementation (\*), and overall assessment of M&E (\*). * Implementing Agency (UNDP) (\*) and Executing Agency (\*), overall project oversight/implementation and execution (\*). * Risk Management, including Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards).  1. **Project Results**  * Assess the achievement of outcomes against indicators by reporting on the level of progress for each objective and outcome indicator at the time of the FE and noting final achievements. * Relevance (\*), Effectiveness (\*), Efficiency (\*) and overall project outcome (\*). * Sustainability: financial (\*), socio-political (\*), institutional framework and governance (\*), environmental (\*), overall likelihood of sustainability (\*). * Country ownership. * Gender equality and women’s empowerment, focusing on gender-sensitive, gender-responsive and gender-transformative results. * Cross-cutting issues (poverty alleviation, improved governance, climate change mitigation and adaptation, capacity development, South-South cooperation, knowledge management, etc., as relevant). * Catalytic Role / Replication Effect. * Progress to impact.   **Main Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons Learned**   * The FE consultant will include a summary of the main findings of the FE report. Findings should be presented as statements of fact that are based on analysis of the data. * The section on conclusions will be written in light of the findings. Conclusions should be comprehensive and balanced statements that are well substantiated by evidence and logically connected to the FE findings. They should highlight the strengths, weaknesses and results of the project, respond to key evaluation questions and provide insights into the identification of and/or solutions to important problems or issues pertinent to project beneficiaries and UNDP, including issues in relation to gender equality and women’s empowerment. * Recommendations should provide concrete, practical, feasible and targeted recommendations directed to the intended users of the evaluation about what actions to take and decisions to make. The recommendations should be specifically supported by the evidence and linked to the findings and conclusions around key questions addressed by the evaluation. * The FE report should also include lessons that can be taken from the evaluation, including best practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success that can provide knowledge gained from the particular circumstance (programmatic and evaluation methods used, partnerships, financial leveraging, etc.) that are applicable to other UNDP interventions. When possible, the FE consultant should include examples of good practices in project design and implementation. * It is important for the conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned of the FE report to incorporate issues of women’s empowerment and gender equality.   The quality of the evaluation report will be assessed based an Evaluation Ratings Table, as shown below:  **ToR Table 2: Evaluation Ratings Table for the full-sized project titled “Adapting population skills to the post-pandemic economy in Ferghana Valley”**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) | Rating[[9]](#footnote-10) | | M&E design at entry |  | | M&E Plan Implementation |  | | Overall Quality of M&E |  | | Implementation & Execution | Rating | | Quality of UNDP Implementation/Oversight |  | | Quality of Implementing Partner Execution |  | | Overall quality of Implementation/Execution |  | | Assessment of Outcomes | Rating | | Relevance |  | | Effectiveness |  | | Efficiency |  | | Overall Project Outcome Rating |  | | Sustainability | Rating | | Financial resources |  | | Socio-political/economic |  | | Institutional framework and governance |  | | Environmental |  | | Overall Likelihood of Sustainability |  | |

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| **VII Evaluation Questions** |
| The evaluation will take into account criteria such as impact, **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability,** to review the final results and progress of the project. Below are the guiding evaluation questions. The questions will be further agreed with the respective unit through the inception report.  **Impact:**   * To what extent were the objectives of the project achieved? * What indicators demonstrate that? * What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives? * Is health community volunteerism an effective approach/mechanism to promote healthy livelihood and improved resilience of communities? Why or why not? * What has happened as a result of the project? * What real difference has the activity made to the beneficiaries? * What were the most significant changes that this project has helped to generate? * Include perception and behavior of communities who generate income from inputs of the project activities. * How many people have been affected? What types/kinds/groups of people have been affected and may be impacted after the project?   **Relevance:**   * To what extent was the project in line with the national development priorities, the country programme’s outputs and outcomes, the UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs? * To what extent does the project contribute to the theory of change for the relevant country programme outcome? * To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant projects considered in the project’s design? * To what extent were perspectives of those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the attainment of stated results, taken into account during the project design processes? * To what extent does the project contribute to gender equality, the empowerment of women principles? * To what extent does the project contribute to LNOB and the human rights-based approach? * To what extent has the project been appropriately responsive to political, legal, economic, institutional, etc., changes in the country? * To what extent has the project contributed to covid-19 response?   **Effectiveness**   * To what extent did the project contribute to the country programme outcomes and outputs, the SDGs, the UNDP Strategic Plan and national development priorities? * To what extent were the project outputs achieved? * What factors have contributed to achieving or not achieving intended country programme outputs and outcomes? * To what extent has the UNDP partnership strategy been appropriate and effective? * What factors contributed to effectiveness or ineffectiveness? * In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? Why and what have been the supporting factors? How can the project build on or expand these achievements? * In which areas does the project have the fewest achievements? What have been the constraining factors and why? How can or could they be overcome? * What, if any, alternative strategies would have been more effective in achieving the project’s objectives? * Are the projects objectives and outputs clear, practical and feasible within its frame? * To what extent have stakeholders been involved in project implementation? * To what extent are project management and implementation participatory and is this participation contributing towards achievement of the project objectives? * To what extent has the project been appropriately responsive to the needs of the national constituents and changing partner priorities? * To what extent has a gender responsive results framework been incorporated into the project design and implementation consistent with the objectives and the project indicators, outputs, outcomes, objectives, and baseline data are gender-sensitive and ensure that gender-related data are collected and contribute to performance? * ?   **Efficiency**   * To what extent was the project management structure as outlined in the project document efficient in generating the expected results? * To what extent have the UNDP project implementation strategy and execution been efficient and cost-effective? * To what extent has there been an economical use of financial and human resources? Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve outcomes? * To what extent have resources been used efficiently? Have activities supporting the strategy been cost-effective? * To what extent have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner? * To what extent do the M&E systems utilized by UNDP ensure effective and efficient project management? * To what extent resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc) are allocated strategically to achieve gender-related objectives?   **Sustainability**   * Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outputs? * To what extent will financial and economic resources be available to sustain the benefits achieved by the project? * Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outputs and the project’s contributions to country programme outputs and outcomes? * Do the legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes within which the project operates pose risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project benefits? * To what extent did UNDP actions pose an environmental threat to the sustainability of project outputs? * What is the risk that the level of stakeholders’ ownership will be sufficient to allow for the project benefits to be sustained? * To what extent do mechanisms, procedures and policies exist to allow primary stakeholders to carry forward the results attained on gender equality, empowerment of women, human rights and human development? * To what extent do stakeholders support the project’s long-term objectives? * To what extent are lessons learned being documented by the project team on a continual basis and shared with appropriate parties who could learn from the project? * To what extent do project interventions have well-designed and well-planned exit strategies? * What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability? * To what extent the project has an impact of its implementing and other partners to transform their policies, programmmes, and services to advance gender equality and women empowerment? |

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| **VIII. Timeframe** |
| 1. To review and adhere to the tentative FE timeframe as follows (the total duration of the FE will be approximately 30 working days over a time period of 12 weeks starting):  |  |  | | --- | --- | | Timeframe | Activity | | *04 September 2023* | Application closes | | *11 September 2023* | Selection of Evaluator | | *29 January 2024* | Preparation period for Evaluator (handover of documentation) | | *20 February 2024* | Document review and preparation of FE Inception Report | | *1 March 2024* | Finalization and Validation of FE Inception Report | | *15 March 2024* | Stakeholder meetings, interviews, etc. | | *1 April 2024* | Presentation of initial findings | | *20 April 2024* | Preparation of draft FE report | | *1 May 2024* | Circulation of draft FE report for comments | | *10 May 2024* | Incorporation of comments on draft FE report into Audit Trail & finalization of FE report | | *N/A* | Concluding Stakeholder Workshop (optional) | |  | Expected date of full FE completion |   Options for stakeholder online meetings, interviews, etc. should be provided in the FE Inception Report. |

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| **IX. FE Deliverables** |

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| # | Deliverable | Description | Timing | Responsibilities |
| 1 | FE Inception Report | Evaluator clarifies objectives, methodology and timing of the FE | No later than 2 weeks before stakeholder online meetings, interviews, etc., by 1 March 2024 | Evaluator submits Inception Report to project management |
| 2 | Presentation | Initial Findings | End of stakeholder online meetings, interviews, etc., by 1 April 2024 | Evaluator presents to project management |
| 3 | Draft FE Report | Full draft report *(using guidelines on report content in ToR Annex A, C)* with annexes | Within 3 weeks of end of stakeholder online meetings, interviews, etc., by 20 April 2024 | Evaluator submits to project management; reviewed by leading Cluster, National Project Coordinator |
| 4 | Final FE Report | Revised final report in which the FE details how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final FE report *(See template in ToR Annex D)* | Within 1 week of receiving comments on draft report by 20 May 2024 | Evaluator submits both documents to the project management |

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| \*All final FE reports will be quality assessed by the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO). Details of the IEO’s quality assessment of decentralized evaluations can be found in Section 6 of the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines.[[10]](#footnote-11) |

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| **X. FE Arrangements** |
| The principal responsibility for managing the FE resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project’s FE is the UNDP Country Office.  The Commissioning Unit will contract the evaluators. An updated stakeholder list with contact details (phone and email) will be provided by the Commissioning Unit to the FE consultant.The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the FE consultant to provide all relevant documents, set up online stakeholder interviews. |

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| **XI. Evaluator** |
| An International Consultant will conduct the evaluation and will be responsible for the overall design and writing of the FE report, etc. The expert will assess emerging trends with respect to regulatory frameworks, budget allocations, capacity building, work with the Project Team in arranging stakeholder online meetings, interviews, etc., collecting stakeholders’ feedback, etc.)  UNDP will sign the contract with the International Consultant in accordance with the approved UNDP procurement procedures for an individual contract with possible mission to Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Payment for services will be made from the Project funds with satisfactory discharge of duties and achievement of results. The results of the work shall be approved by the UNDP DRR through SPIU Associate/CO M&E focal point.   * The Consultant will work under the direct supervision of the UNDP DRR, with support from SPIU Associate/CO M&E focal point; * The Consultant is responsible for the quality and timely submission of the deliverables; * The Consultant ensures timely and rational planning, implementation of activities and achievement of results in accordance with the Terms of Reference; * The Consultant provides the results of work in accordance with Deliverables; * The Consultant shall provide reports in electronic form in MS Word format in English.   Prior to approval of the final report, UNDP Programme Manager, in close coordination with SPIU Associate/CO M&E focal point and UNDP DRR will circulate the draft for comments to government counterparts: Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction of Uzbekistan, Project Board key members and UNDP RTA. UNDP and the stakeholders will submit comments and suggestions within 10 working days after receiving the draft. The finalized Final Evaluation Report, addressing all comments received shall be submitted by 20 May 2024.  If any discrepancies have emerged between the findings of the evaluator and the aforementioned parties, these should be explained in an annex attached to the final report.  The evaluator(s) cannot have participated in the project preparation, formulation and/or implementation (including the writing of the project document), must not have conducted this project’s Mid-Term Review and should not have a conflict of interest with the project’s related activities.  The selection of the international evaluator/consultant will be aimed at maximizing the overall qualities in the following areas:  Education  Master’s degree in economics, finance, public administration or public policy, business administration, management, labor economics or other closely related field.  Experience   * At least 5-years of work experience in conducting mid-term and terminal project/ programme evaluations; * Project evaluation/review experience within United Nations system will be considered as an asset.   **Corporate Competencies:**   * Demonstrates commitment to UNDP’s mission, vision and values; * Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability; * Demonstrating/safeguarding ethics and integrity; * Demonstrate corporate knowledge and sound judgment, self-development, initiative-taking; * Acting as a team player and facilitating teamwork; * Managing conflict and facilitating and encouraging open communication, communicating effectively; * Creating synergies through self-control; * Learning and sharing knowledge and encourage the learning of others; * Promoting learning and knowledge management/sharing is the responsibility of each staff member; * Informed and transparent decision-making.   **II. Functional Competencies:**  *1. Communications and Networking*   * Has excellent oral communication skills and conflict resolution competency; * Has excellent written communication skills, with analytic capacity and ability to assess project outputs and relevant findings for the preparation of quality project evaluation reports; * Demonstrates maturity and confidence in dealing with senior and high ranking members of national and international institutions, government and non-government.   *2. Knowledge management and Learning*   * Leadership and Self-management; * Focus on result for the client and responds positively to feedback; * Consistently approaches work with energy and a positive, constructive attitude; * Remains calm, in control and good humored even under pressure; * Competent in leading team, if any, and creating team spirit, stimulating team members to produce quality outputs in a timely and transparent fashion.   *3. Development and Operational Effectiveness*   * Ability to organize and complete multiple tasks by establishing priorities; * Ability to handle a large volume of work under time constraints.   *4. Job Knowledge/Technical Expertise*   * Understands the main processes and methods of work regarding to the position; * Strives to keep job knowledge up-to-date through self-directed study and other mans of learning;   *5. Leadership and Self-Management*   * Consistently approaches work with energy and a positive, constructive attitude; * Demonstrates good oral and written communication skills.   Desired additional skills and competences:   * Relevant experience with results-based management evaluation methodologies; * Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios; * Competence in adaptive management, as applied to labor/employment change adaptation*;* * Experience in evaluating projects; * Experience working in Central Asian countries*;* * Experience in relevant technical areas for at least 5 years; * Demonstrated understanding of issues related to intersections of gender equality and women’s empowerment with employment change adaptation*;* experience in gender sensitive, gender-responsive and gender-transformative results evaluation and analysis; * Excellent communication skills; * Demonstrable analytical skills; * Project evaluation/review experience within United Nations system will be considered an asset;   Experience with implementing evaluations remotely will be considered an asset.  Language   * Fluency in written and spoken English. Knowledge of Russian will be considered an asset |

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| **XII. Evaluator Ethics** |
| The FE consultant will be held to the highest ethical standards and is required to sign a code of conduct upon acceptance of the assignment. This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG ‘Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation’. The evaluator must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The evaluator must also ensure security of collected information before and after the evaluation and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information knowledge and data gathered in the evaluation process must also be solely used for the evaluation and not for other uses without the express authorization of UNDP and partners. |

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| **XIII. Payment Schedule** |
| * 20% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the final FE Inception Report and approval by the Commissioning Unit. * 40% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the draft FE report to the Commissioning Unit. * 40% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the final FE report and approval by the Commissioning Unit and DRR (via signatures on the FE Report Clearance Form) and delivery of completed FE Audit Trail.   Criteria for issuing the final payment of 40%:   * The final FE report includes all requirements outlined in the FE TOR and is in accordance with the FE guidance. * The final FE report is clearly written, logically organized, and is specific for this project (i.e. text has not been cut & pasted from other FE reports). * The Audit Trail includes responses to and justification for each comment listed.   In line with the UNDP’s financial regulations, when determined by the Commissioning Unit and/or the consultant that a deliverable or service cannot be satisfactorily completed will not be paid. |

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| **XIV. Application Process[[11]](#footnote-12)** |
| Requested Presentation of Proposal:   1. **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability** using the [template](https://intranet.undp.org/unit/bom/pso/Support%20documents%20on%20IC%20Guidelines/Template%20for%20Confirmation%20of%20Interest%20and%20Submission%20of%20Financial%20Proposal.docx)[[12]](#footnote-13) provided by UNDP; 2. **CV** and a **Personal History Form** ([P11 form](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Careers/P11_Personal_history_form.doc)[[13]](#footnote-14)); 3. Brief description **of approach to work/technical proposal** of why the individual considers him/herself as the most suitable for the assignment, and a proposed methodology on how they will approach and complete the assignment; (max 1 page) 4. **Financial Proposal** that indicates the all-inclusive fixed total contract price, supported by a breakdown of costs, as per template attached to the [Letter of Confirmation of Interest template](https://popp.undp.org/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/UNDP_POPP_DOCUMENT_LIBRARY/Public/PSU_%20Individual%20Contract_Offerors%20Letter%20to%20UNDP%20Confirming%20Interest%20and%20Availability.docx&action=default). If an applicant is employed by an organization/company/institution, and he/she expects his/her employer to charge a management fee in the process of releasing him/her to UNDP under Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA), the applicant must indicate at this point, and ensure that all such costs are duly incorporated in the financial proposal submitted to UNDP.   Applicants are requested to apply online through the UNDP website at [http://www.undp.uz](http://www.undp.uz/). Application shall be submitted by indicated deadline. Incomplete applications will be excluded from further consideration.  **Criteria for Evaluation of Proposal:** Only those applications which are responsive and compliant will be evaluated. Offers will be evaluated according to the Combined Scoring method – where the educational background and experience on similar assignments will be weighted at 70% and the price proposal will weigh as 30% of the total scoring. The applicant receiving the Highest Combined Score that has also accepted UNDP’s General Terms and Conditions will be awarded the contract. |

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| **XV. TOR Annexes** |
| * ToR Annex A: Project Logical/Results Framework * ToR Annex B: Project Information Package to be reviewed by FE consultant * ToR Annex C: Content of the FE report * ToR Annex D: Evaluation Criteria Matrix template * ToR Annex E: UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators * ToR Annex F: FE Rating Scales * ToR Annex G: FE Report Clearance Form * ToR Annex H: FE Audit Trail |

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| UNDP is an equal opportunity employer. Qualified female candidates, people with disabilities, and minorities are highly encouraged to apply. UNDP Gender Balance in Management Policy promotes achievement of gender balance among its staff at all levels. |

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| **XVI. Signatures - Post Description Certification** |
| Incumbent *(if applicable)*  Name: Signature: Date: |
| Officer of Commissioning Unit  Name / Title  Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signature: Date:  Deputy Resident Representative  UNDP Uzbekistan |

Annex 2: Evaluation matrix

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| **Evaluation Questions/ Sub-questions** | **Judgment criteria** | **Data collection methods & sources** | **Data analysis** |
| **Relevance:**  **1.** **To what extent were the project results relevant to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries, as well as the national and donor priorities in Uzbekistan?** | | | |
| 1.1 To what extent was the design of the project appropriate for achieving the desired objectives? | · Project design (and TOC) is based on a solid analysis and assessment – it addresses clearly some of the key challenges of job shortage, skills mismatch and identifies future skills and needs in the economy  · Project responds to the demand of private sector companies’ needs  · Project is developed on a sound TOC – the hierarchy of results are clear and the related assumptions are based on evidence  · Coherence between outputs and activities is solid | · Desk review of documents    · Review of Theory of change  · Review of existing literature | * Contribution analysis - analysis of TOC: conflict analysis and analysis of the approach     · Qualitative and content analysis  · Comparison between project TOC and good practices |
| 1.2 To what extent was the project based on a sound understanding of the different needs of participants (in particular vulnerable groups)? | · % of young women and men perceive the project as relevant for their needs (including vulnerable groups)  · The project team conducted participatory workshops to develop the project - number of participants that have been consulted on or associated with the drafting and design of the project (including vulnerable groups)  · Adjustments that the project has made as a consequence of the COVID-19 situation are clearly justified so that it remains relevant to the new beneficiaries’ priorities | · Interviews  · FGDs  · Review of the project documents | * Qualitative and content analysis |
| 1.3 To what extent is the project consistent with key national strategies, including in the area of digital transformation? | · Project objectives are aligned with relevant institutions policy objectives and with UN strategic document for Uzbekistan | · Review of the project  · Review of UN documents  · Review of government main strategic document  · Interviews | Qualitative and content analysis |
| **Effectiveness:**  **2.** **To what extent did the project achieve its intended objectives and contribute to the project’s strategic vision?** | | | |
| 1. To what extent have the project’s results been achieved in terms of:   * Enhancing youth employability and empowerment; * Creating spaces and opportunities for youth to be more innovative and entrepreneurial? * Enhancing the capacity of formal education to better prepare youth for digital economy | · Evidence shows that objectives are met at output and outcome level through:  · Number of participants in the activities of the project  · Perception of the beneficiaries and stakeholders reporting that the project has been effective  · Increased capacity of beneficiaries in technical and digital skills (i.e. teachers)  · Increased capacity of beneficiaries in entrepreneurship skills  · Number of concrete deliverables to strengthen the formal education system  · Examples of empowering women (also from vulnerable groups) as they are better skilled  · Causal linkages in the reconstructed TOC are verified by project results  · Number of instances where TOC was used to verify causal linkages and assumptions during the implementation of the project | * Review of the project document * Review of the progress report * Interviews * Online questionnaire | · Contribution analysis - analysis of TOC: analysis of changes produced by the project and the ones attributable to the project as conditions are met   * Analysis of results data against project logframe (quantitative analysis) * Contribution analysis - Verification of the validity of the TOC main linkages against project results * Analysis of survey questionnaire against interviews and FGD (quantitative analysis) * Qualitative analysis |
| 2. To what extent the project was flexible and adaptive to the context especially given COVID-19? | · Clarity of mentions for changes to the timeframe, content of the project activities or reallocation of funds also related to the consequences of COVID-19 | * Review of the project document * Review of the progress report * Interviews | * Qualitative analysis |
| **Efficiency:**  **3.** **To what extent did the project achieve its objectives with optimized resources ?** | | | |
| 3.1 Have funds and activities related to project been delivered in a timely and resource appropriate manner? | · % activities that have been planned and completed on time  · % of budget that has been disbursed VS timeline  · Number of stakeholders interviewed who perceive the financial and human resources to be adequate for achieving the results of the project in the given timeframe | * Review of project workplan, reports * Interviews * Budget assessment | * TOC-based contribution analysis: analysis of mobilisation and optimisation of assets * Quantitative analysis of the information * Qualitative analysis |
| 3.2 To what extent was the governance set-up appropriate to achieve results? | · Stakeholders interviewed who perceive Project board to have provided clear guidance | * Minutes of Project Board * Interviews with Agencies | * Content analysis * Qualitative assessment of the interviews |
| 3.3 To what extent were the monitoring mechanisms in place effective in measuring and informing management of the project performance and progress towards the targets? | · Project indicators coincide with the TOC of the project  · Number of examples of reaction and adaptation of action according to monitoring findings  · Evidence of use of SMART indicators in the logframe and project reports - data collection/reporting is based on SMART indicators | * Review of project document, MEL, and progress reports * Interviews | · Content analysis  · Qualitative assessment of the interviews |
| **Sustainability:**  **4.** **To what extent the project results are likely to be sustained over time?** | | | |
| 4.1 How effectively has the project generated national ownership and capacity to continue implementation of the results achieved? | · Instances of plans and strategies developed by the government that integrate the training material development  · National counterparts report they are willing and capable to continue the implementation of the project activities | * Review of project documentation * Interviews | * ToC-based contribution analysis: assessing the likelihood of impact of the intended changes and assumptions * Content analysis * Qualitative assessment of the interviews |
| 4.2 How likely is it that the results of the project will sustain after its end? | · Ecosystem in the country is appropriate for entrepreneurship and for developing startups  · Financial and political risks have been addressed  · Evidence and examples of interventions that are being implemented/have been implemented without support from project | * Review of project documentation * FGDs * Interviews * Online questionnaire | * Content analysis * Qualitative assessment of the interviews |
| **Impact:**  **5.** **To what extent is the impact of project's actions conducive to a better match between labor supply and demand?** | | | |
| 5.1 Did the project contribute to reducing the job shortage in the country and address the skill mismatch? | · Number of young people (disaggregated by sex, age, sector, locality) who were employed following the training provided by the project  · Number of self-employments created (disaggregated by sex, age, sector, locality) created thanks to the support of the project | * Review of project documentation * Interviews * Online questionnaire | * Content analysis * Qualitative assessment of the interviews |
| 5.2 What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives? | · Instances that the project contributed to unexpected positive or not-positive results | * Review of project documentation * Interviews | * Content analysis * Qualitative assessment of the interviews |

Annex 3: Evaluation questionnaire for interviews

**Introductory notes**

* The following guiding questions are intended mainly to be used for semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries;
* The questions provided below are meant to serve as a menu. Only relevant questions will be used in each interview, depending on the experience, involvement of the interviewee in each of the initiatives selected as well as the quality of the discussion with the interviewees.

**Steps**

1. Introduction of evaluators and interviewee;
2. Introduction of the interview purpose by highlighting that this is not an assessment of the performance or behaviour of anyone
3. Obtain the consent of the interviewee as the interview notes will not be shared and the evaluation will ensure confidentiality/anonymity
4. Question and answer - interviewer takes notes and writes down also the day of the meeting the interviewee name/s

**Guiding Questions**

***For UNDP project team***

* Tell me about your role and involvement in the project?

* Can you tell me what were the main objective of the project and its TOC?

* Can you clarify who was the target of the project for the 3 separate components? How were the stakeholders selected to participate in the program?

* Can you tell me more about the skills assessment and how you analyzed skill gaps? Did you also assess private sector needs?

* Can you clarify the support you wanted to provide on the startup ecosystem?
* Can you clarify the activity related to ‘The capacities of the MELR and local community authorities improved in delivering services in support of youth and women employment’ and how this is part of the overall project?
* What do you think have been some of the key successes and challenges in terms of the design, implementation, and results of the project?

* To what extent were the activities in which you were involved relevant for the beneficiaries of the project? To what extent did you participate in the design of the project? Was a gender analysis conducted and integrated into the project design?

* To what extent were the activities you were involved taking into consideration other similar initiatives in the country (*add if needed* - how did you create synergies with other initiatives during implementation)?
* (*If not answered previously*) To your appraisal, what have been the most important results of the project (the activities you were involved in and, more generically, the results of the project) for building the capacity of young men and young women and vulnerable groups (can you give me examples of that – i.e. specific skills youth acquired) and building the capacity of other stakeholders (i.e. government staff)?

* What were the key factors contributing or not to achieving the results? Do you reckon you had sufficient financial and human resources to achieve the results of the project in the given timeframe? To your appraisal, was the project approach innovative and if so, how (how would you define innovation)?

* Did COVID-19 influence the implementation of the project and what did the project do to address possible negative consequences? What were the other factors hampering project implementation?

* What are the measures being developed to institutionalize/formalize the results of the project – has the national counterpart enough ‘capacity’ to continue implementation? Are there any examples of spill-over effects or replication of project activities in other geographical areas or sector?

* How was the cooperation with the other Agencies (private sector partners, NGOs, donor) at project design and implementation stage? What were the challenges, if any?
* To your appraisal, how solid was the guidance from the Project Board, and the cooperation among supporting and implementing partners?

* Did you ensure that issues of equity, gender and human rights were integrated into the design, planning and implementation of the activities of the project? How? With what results?

* Other issues?

***For Partners***

* Tell me about your role and involvement in the project?

* What do you think have been some of the key successes and challenges in terms of the design, implementation and results of the project?

* To what extent were the activities in which you were involved relevant for the beneficiaries of the project? To what extent did you participate in the design of the project? Was a gender analysis conducted and integrated into the project design?

* To what extent were the activities you were involved taking into consideration other similar initiatives in the country (*add if needed* - how did you create synergies with other initiatives during implementation)?

* (*If not answered previously*) To your appraisal, what have been the most important results of the project (the activities you were involved in and, more generically, the results of the project) for building the capacity of young men and young women and vulnerable groups (can you give me examples of that – i.e. specific skills youth acquired) and building the capacity of other stakeholders (i.e. government staff)?

* What were the key factors contributing or not to achieving the results? Do you reckon you had sufficient financial and human resources for achieving the results of the project in the given timeframe? To your appraisal, was the project approach innovative and if so, how (how would you define innovation)?

* Did COVID-19 influence the implementation of the project and what did the project do to address possible negative consequences? What were the other factors hampering project implementation?

* What are the measures being developed to institutionalize/formalize the results of the project – has the national counterpart enough ‘capacity’ to continue implementation? Are there any examples of spill-over effects or replication of project activities in other geographical areas or sector?

* How was the cooperation with the UNDP? What were the challenges, if any?
* To your appraisal, how solid was the guidance from the Project Board, and the cooperation among supporting and implementing partners?

* Other issues?

**For Government stakeholders**

• Tell me about your role and involvement in the project?

• What do you think have been some of the key successes and challenges in terms of the design, implementation and results of the program?

• What is your appraisal of the problem analysis conducted by the project? To what extent were the activities relevant for Uzbekistan (i.e. in line with country policies and programs)? To what extent did you participate in the design of the project?

• To what extent were the activities you were involved built upon successful previous projects in the country (add if needed - how did you create synergies with other initiatives during implementation)?

• (If not answered previously) To your appraisal, what have been the most important results of the project (the activities you were involved in and, more generically, the results of the project) for building capacity of youth in IT (can you give me examples of that)?

• What were the key factors contributing or not to achieving the results? Do you reckon the project had sufficient financial and human resources for achieving the results of the project in the given timeframe? To your appraisal, was the project approach innovative and if so, how?

• Did COVID-19 influence the implementation of the project and what did the project do to address possible negative consequences?

• What are the measures being developed to institutionalize/formalize the results of the project– do you have enough ‘capacity’ to continue implementation? Are there any examples of spill-over effects or replication of project activities in other geographical areas or sector?

• How was the cooperation with UNDP? What were the challenges, if any?

• Do you think issues of equity, gender and human rights were integrated into the design, planning and implementation of the activities of the project? How? With what results?

• Other issues?

***For institutions (universities, local development centers etc)***

* Tell me about your role and involvement in the project?

* What do you think have been some of the key successes and challenges in terms of the design, implementation and results of the program?

* To your appraisal, what are the main objectives of the project?

* Was the initiative relevant to your needs? Why?

* To your appraisal, what have been the results of the project in terms of  enhancing the capacity of formal education system in relation to digital skills development?

* What have been the main results of the project in your institution?

* What were the key factors contributing or not to achieving the results? To your appraisal, was the project approach innovative and if so, how?

* To your appraisal, how is this program developing a system that can be sustainable over time? Are you institutionalizing something part of the program? Why? How?
* What are the possible recommendations to enhance the demand driven curriculum to prepare better the youth for digital economy? Other recommendations.

***For CSOs***

* Tell me about your role and involvement in the project?

* What do you think have been some of the key successes and challenges in terms of the design, implementation and results of the program?

* To your appraisal, what are the main objectives of the project?

* Was the initiative relevant to your needs? Why?

* To your appraisal, what have been the results of the project in terms of  enhancing the capacity of formal education system in relation to digital skills development?

* What have been the main results of the project in your institution?

* What were the key factors contributing or not to achieving the results? To your appraisal, was the project approach innovative and if so, how?

* To your appraisal, how is this program developing a system that can be sustainable over time? Are you institutionalizing something part of the program? Why? How?

* What are the possible recommendations to enhance the demand-driven curriculum to prepare better the youth and marginalized groups for digital economy? Other recommendations.

***For final beneficiaries (youth, migrants, marginalized groups)***

* Which activity did you participate in? What do you think was the main objective of the activity you participated in (i.e. workshop, training)? Do you feel there are differences from similar activities you did before this project (i.e. comparing the revised curriculum to the previous one).

* In what ways was this relevant to your needs? Why?

* What did you enjoy the most or did not enjoy about your participation in this activity?

* What are the things that you learned from it (*add if needed* - did you learn new skills? Do you feel more confident? have you been able to apply what you have learned? Did you have any obstacles to do that?

* *For girls* - In what way is it different (or not different) for a girl to study and participate in training in your country? Can you give an example? Do you think there are differences for young women or men concerning education in IT – i.e. do young women face more obstacles?

* *For migrants* – what are the obstacles for migrants to participate in technical and digital training? What are the obstacles migrants have to find job opportunities? To what extent did the project contribute to overcome some of those challenges?

* Do you feel more confident as a result of the project’s activities?

* Thinking about the future, what activities do you think are needed to support you to be better fit to find a job?

**Annex 4: List of Interviewees**

| **Time** | **Actions/Meeting** | **Venue** | **Responsible** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Monday 25, March** | | | |
| 02:50 - 08:05 | Arrival from Paris, France by flight TK-368 to Tashkent (and transfer to Hotel WYNDHAM)  Resting, work | Tashkent International Airport | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 10:00-10:30 | **UNDP Country Office**: Meeting with UNDP Resident Representative a.i., discussion of the Meeting plan with national partners and about the project activities | 4, Taras Schevchenko str., Tashkent | UNDP Country Office |
| 11:00-12:30 | **UNDP Project Team:** Meeting with Project Manager, Task managers  Discussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnerships with stakeholders, and recommendations for future projects | 4, Taras Schevchenko str., Tashkent | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 14:45-15:45 | **Meeting with Monocenter in Tashkent**  **Meeting with WorldSkills Uzbekistan Association**  Discussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | 331, Parkent Street, Tashkent | Project Manager, UNDP |
| **Tuesday 26, March** | | | |
| 10:00-10:30 | **Meeting with the Deputy Minister of Employment and Poverty Reduction (MEPR)**  **Department of International Relations and Cooperation with International Organizations**  Discussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | 8, Nukus street, Mirabad district, Tashkent | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 11:00-12:30 | **Department of External Labor Migration Policy**  **Agency for External Labor Migration**  Discussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | 8, Nukus street, Mirabad district, Tashkent | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 14:30-15:30 | **Department for Organization of Vocational Training and Development of Professional Qualifications**  Discussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | 8, Nukus street, Mirabad district, Tashkent | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 16:00 – 17:00 | **Department of Wages and Labor Standards of MEPR**  Discussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects |  | Project Manager, UNDP |
| **Wednesday 27, March** | | | |
| 07:45 – 08:45 | Arrival to Namangan region by flight HY-93 | Namangan International Airport |  |
| 09:30-10:30 | Regional division of MEPR in NamanganEmployment Support Center in NamanganDiscussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | 3, Nodira str., Namangan | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 10:30-12:30 | **Ishga Marhamat Monocenter in Namangan**  **Center for Professional Development in Namangan**  Discussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | 38, A.Khujaev str., Namangan | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 14:30-15:30 | **Muqaddamkhon Makhmudova / Beneficiary of the women business projects acceleration program (manufacture of sewing products).** Discussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | 2, 5th Afrosiyob street, Yangi-Namangan district, Namangan city. | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 16:00-17:00 | **Namangan regional department of International businesswomen association "Tadbirkor ayol".**  Head of the department - Lola Abduhalimova.  Discussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | 9, Bank street, Namangan city. | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 17:30-19:00 | Transfer to Fergana region by car |  |  |
| **Thursday 28, March** | | | |
| 09:30-10:30 | Regional division of MEPR in FerganaDiscussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | 4, B.Margiloniy, Fergana | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 10:30-12:30 | **Ishga Marhamat Monocenter in Fergana**  **Center for Professional Development in Fergana** Discussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | 245, Shodiyona, Amir Temur str., Fergana | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 14:30-15:30 | Employment Support Center in FerganaDiscussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | 50, Taraqqiyot str., Fergana | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 16:00-17:00 | **Gulhumor Agzamova / Beneficiary of the women business projects acceleration program (manufacture of children's, women's and men's bags).** Discussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | 8-a, Kukalamzor street, Fergana city. | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 22:50 – 23:40 | **Transfer to Namangan region by car Arrival to Tashkent by flight from Namangan region HY-96** | Namangan International Airport | Project Manager, UNDP |
| **Friday 29, March** | | | |
| 09:30-10:30 | **Center for Project Management under the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction**  Discussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | 62, Amir Temur str., Tashkent | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 10:30-12:30 | **Meeting with the Agency for youth affairs** Discussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | 11, Alisher Navoi str., Tashkent | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 14:30-15:30 | **Meeting with the Embassy of the Russian Federation**  Discussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | online | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 16:00-17:00 | **Meeting with IT park**  Discussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | 4, Olimlar str., Tashkent | Project Manager, UNDP |
| 17:00-18:00 | **Meeting with UNICEF in Uzbekistan**  Discussion of the project activities and outcomes, partnership with UNDP Project Team, recommendations for future projects | online | Project Manager, UNDP |

1. For a list of the OECD DAC criteria see: [www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationnetwork](http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationnetwork) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. The questions for those themes are already integrated into the evaluation matrix [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The evaluation team had made a few changes to the questions in the TORs with the aim of reducing the number of questions and regrouping some of them [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. The evaluation will use a non-experimental evaluation design and a theory-based approach. ‘Today, the most commonly used method in development evaluation is a *mixed method results‐based approach*, using both qualitative and quantitative information. ‘ OECD guidance note on evaluating peacebuilding’ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Participants of trainings on digital entrepreneurship and digital technologies in the development of business praised the content of the trainings and recorded knowledge increase in the post-assessment survey. They mentioned to have acquired new knowledge and skills on IT-technologies in business, electronic commerce. Almost all participants (98%) were confident they will use acquired knowledge and skills during the training in their work. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. According to post-assessment survey conducted by the project, participants of the Acceleration Program were confident they will use acquired new knowledge and skills in the future. On average, they rated the content of training 4.8 out of 5 max. They were also confident that it will serve for their personal development and increase potential in realization of business projects (4.7 out of max 5) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. As a result of trainings, participants acquired important skills in using digital technologies in their business operations. Particularly, 81% of participants of IT trainings “Digital Mix” in Ferghana noted their confidence in using technologies in business in the future. In Andijan and Namangan the portion of the participants planning to make a use of digital technologies in business was 84% and 97% respectively. Some participants also stated that they learned how to transform their businesses with digital technologies. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. According to surveys, participants of the financial literacy training demonstrated significant rise in knowledge increase. For example, in Andijan knowledge increase on financial literacy issues was more than 70% after the training, while in Namangan it was 66%. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, Implementation/Oversight & Execution, Relevance are rated on a 6-point scale: 6=Highly Satisfactory (HS), 5=Satisfactory (S), 4=Moderately Satisfactory (MS), 3=Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), 2=Unsatisfactory (U), 1=Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability is rated on a 4-point scale: 4=Likely (L), 3=Moderately Likely (ML), 2=Moderately Unlikely (MU), 1=Unlikely (U) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Access at: <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/section-6.shtml> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Engagement of evaluators should be done in line with guidelines for hiring consultants in the POPP <https://popp.undp.org/SitePages/POPPRoot.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. <https://intranet.undp.org/unit/bom/pso/Support%20documents%20on%20IC%20Guidelines/Template%20for%20Confirmation%20of%20Interest%20and%20Submission%20of%20Financial%20Proposal.docx> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Careers/P11_Personal_history_form.doc> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)