FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Sustainable Tourism for Livelihood Recovery Project

Evaluation timeframe: June-August 2024

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Independent Evaluators and Consultants

August 2024

Project and evaluation information

Project information	
Project title	Sustainable Tourism for Livelihood Recovery Project (STLRP)
Project ID	Atlas-00111755 & Quantum-00110601
Corporate outcome and output	**Country Program Document (CPD) 2023-2027 Outcome:** *By 2027, more people, especially women, youth, and the most marginalized and poor increasingly participate in and benefit from coordinated, inclusive, participatory, transparent, and gender responsive governance, access to justice, and human rights at federal, provincial, and local levels.* Output 1.2: *Expanded access to sustainable livelihoods and income for women, youth, poor, and other marginalized groups.*
Country	Nepal
Region	Asia Pacific
LPAC meeting)	10 December 2020
Project dates	Start Valid period January 1, 2021 December 31, 2024
Project budget	Planned Budge: US $ Actual Resources: US $ Total: US$ $ 3,265,385 Total: USD 3,222,305 UNDP: US$ 1,700,000 UNDP: US$ 1,676153 GoN/NTB: US$ 1,565,385 GoN/NTB: US$ 1,546,152
Project expenditure *(at the time of evaluation: as of July 31, 2024)*	US$ 3,066,115 (93.38% against planned budget)
Funding source	UNDP Track fund and Nepal government
Implementing party	Nepal Tourism Board and Tourism Associations

Evaluation information	
Evaluation type	Project evaluation
Final/midterm review/ other	Final
Period under evaluation	Start: January 1, 2021 End: July 31, 2024
Evaluator	Dr. Dhruba Gautam, drrgautam@gmail.com Ms. Nigma Tamrakar, ntamrakar09@gmail.com
Evaluation dates	Start: Completion: June 26, 2024 August 31, 2024

Source: Project record, 2024

Acknowledgment

We extend our sincere gratitude to the senior management of UNDP Nepal Country Office for entrusting us with the responsibility of conducting the final evaluation of this project.

The involvement of the Government of Nepal (GoN), Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), Project Board members, stakeholders, project partners, and target groups was pivotal during the evaluation mission across 10 local governments in seven districts of four provinces. We are particularly thankful to the project team, especially Dharmaraj Dawadi, Amit Bista, and Khagendra Khadka, for their unwavering assistance in organizing meetings and consultations despite numerous challenges. In addition, we received valuable insights from the senior management of the Department of Tourism (DoT), NTB, and the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA). We also appreciate the technical inputs from Dr. Dhananjay Regmi (former NPD/ex-CEO), NPCs Shradha Shrestha (current) and Mani Raj Lamichanne (former NPC), and Nandini Lahe-Thapa, Officiating CEO NTB, and NPD STLRP.

This final evaluation report was made possible through the generous support of many individuals. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the project's implementing partners and stakeholders, particularly the local governments and tourism associations, for their contributions. Their willingness to share experiences, reports, thoughts, and insights during interviews and consultations proved immensely valuable.

We are also grateful for the insights and constructive feedback provided by Dharma Swarnakar (Policy Advisor, Inclusive Economic Growth), Kalpana Sarkar (Portfolio Manager, Inclusive Economic Growth), Niranjan Tamrakar (Inclusive Economic Growth), and Bipana Dhimal (Policy Analyst, GESI) of UNDP CO. Dinesh Bista, the Evaluation Manager, provided vital managerial and technical support throughout the evaluation period. Their contributions significantly shaped the approach and methods of this evaluation and helped address data gaps in the draft version of the report.

We take full responsibility for any lapses, shortcomings, or errors found within this final evaluation report.

Thank you all.
Dhruba Gautam, PhD
Nigma Tamrakar

Acronyms

AWP	Annual Work Plan
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CILRP	Community Infrastructure and Livelihood Recovery Project
CPD	Country Program Document
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DoT	Department of Tourism
FGD	Focus group discussion
FY	Fiscal year
GDP	Gross domestic product
GESI	Gender equality and social inclusion
GoN	Government of Nepal
GRES	Gender Result Effectiveness Scale
HRBA	Human rights-based approach
KII	Key informant interview
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Queer Plus
LoA	Letter of agreement
LRRD	Linking relief to recovery and development
LVGA	Low-value grant agreement
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MoCTCA	Ministry of Culture Tourism and Civil Aviation
NATHM	Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management
NMA	Nepal Mountaineering Academy
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NPM	National Project Manager
NTB	Nepal Tourism Board
O&M	Operation and maintenance
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
ProDoc	Project document
PwDs	Persons with disabilities
RRF	Results and Resources Framework
TAAN	Trekking Agents Association of Nepal
ToC	Theory of change
TSA	Tourism Satellite Account
UC	User committee
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization

Glossary of frequently used terms

LGBTIQ+	LGBTIQ+ play a significant role in Nepal's tourism recovery, contributing to a more inclusive and diverse industry. As the country emerges from the setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, promoting Nepal as a welcoming destination for LGBTIQ+ travelers can attract a broader range of tourists. Inclusive policies, events, and safe spaces for LGBTIQ+ enhance the travel experience, showcasing Nepal's commitment to diversity and equality.
Marginalized and deprived communities	They include ethnic minorities, Dalits, and indigenous groups, who face significant socio-economic challenges. Despite legal protections, these communities often experience limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, exacerbating poverty and social exclusion.
Partner organizations	Partner organizations comprised a range of entities, including government, the private sector, tourism associations, international and local NGOs, professional tourism agencies, and academic institutions.
Short-term employment	Short-term employment initiatives in Nepal have been crucial for tourism recovery from the pandemic, providing temporary job opportunities to offset economic impacts. These roles, including positions in hospitality, guiding, and service sectors, help revitalize the industry by supporting local businesses and infrastructure as tourism gradually rebounds. Short-term employment included workers; tourist guides, trekking helpers, porters, cooks, waiters, housekeeping, gardeners, drivers, river guides, etc.
Target people	Pandemic-affected vulnerable tourism-dependent communities, entrepreneurs, workers, women from poor and marginalized Dalits and Janajati communities and PwDs as well as LGBTIQ+.
Tourism associations/ Tourism stakeholder	These agencies included Trekking Agents Association of Nepal, Hotel Association of Nepal, Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents, Nepal Association of Rafting Agents, Nepal Cannoning Association, Restaurant and Bar Association of Nepal, Tourist Guide Association of Nepal, Nepal Tourist Vehicle Association, Himalayan Rescue Association Nepal, Nepal Mountain Academy, Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management, Mountain Guide Association of Nepal, Nepal Tourist Vehicle Association, and Community Homestay Network.

Executive summary

1. The context and evaluation objectives: The Sustainable Tourism for Livelihood Recovery Project ("the project") was signed in December and initiated from 2021 to revive Nepal's tourism sector by supporting affected workers, retaining the workforce, and enhancing the capacity of the Nepal Tourism Board. The project spanned 58 districts and 85 local government. Collaborating with governments, private tourism associations, NGOs, and professional agencies, the project focused on major trekking trails, river-based tourism sites, and cultural destinations to accelerate recovery efforts and ensure long-term sustainability. The objectives included evaluating the project's relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. The evaluation also assess the impact of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and human rights. It covered the implementation period: January 2021 to July 2024.

2. Approach and methods of the evaluation: The evaluation followed the UNDP Evaluation Guideline (revised in June 2021) and employed summative, constructive, and formative approaches. Based on the UNDP evaluation guidelines, which outline various methodological approaches, this evaluation employed the Participatory Evaluation and Most Significant Change approaches. The choice of these approaches aligned with the Terms of Reference (ToR), specific evaluation questions, and recommended methodologies. The participatory approach utilized tools such as document review (desk study), key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and direct observation. This approach was instrumental in capturing stakeholders' and beneficiaries' perspectives on the overall achievements of the project's interventions. In addition, the Most Significant Change approach was used to assess the project's accomplishments and measure the extent of change. This method was chosen for its effectiveness in evaluating complex projects with diverse stakeholders, outputs, and an intricate institutional and implementation structure. Applying this approach also helped identify any unintended outcomes or impacts resulting from the project's execution.

An evaluation mission was organized for 10 local governments and seven districts in four provinces. A mixed-methods approach was used, but to fulfill the primary evaluation objectives, qualitative tools were emphasized. Altogether 4 FGDs (men-15, women-9) and 46 KIIs (men-34, women-12) were conducted. GESI was integral aspects of the evaluation, so specific tools were used to ensure that data collection and analysis were gender disaggregated. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis, and different types of data were triangulated to ensure their reliability and validity. Project performance was evaluated, and ethical considerations were upheld throughout the process.

3. Main findings

3.1 Relevance: The project effectively addressed the specific needs of targeted populations by creating short-term employment and promoting skills-based entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. A total of 9,846 people, including 2,485 women, participated in short-term employment, generating 162,437 person-days of work worth US$ 1,299,496. In addition, 1,920 individuals are earning income in various tourism sectors using skills gained from the project's capacity-building initiatives. Despite challenges like the pandemic and the limited participation of women, collaboration with local governments and tourism associations had positive outcomes. Post-training support and an assessment of long-term training impacts could be improved, however. The project effectively aligned with Nepal's political landscape, development priorities, and UNDP's strategic objectives. However, it faced some challenges in identifying target groups and mobilizing provincial governments and women-led organizations. The two-phase approach successfully bridged short-term recovery and long-term resilience. Increasing the employment and incomes of targeted people and entrepreneurs is still a crucial aim of post-pandemic tourism sector recovery. More specifically, the project remains relevant for economic recovery and sustainable tourism. It was able to adapt to pandemic challenges with flexible strategies and enhanced digital capabilities.

3.2 Coherence: The project effectively integrated its outputs to advance tourism recovery through short-term employment, income generation, and policy advocacy. Promoting responsible tourism and resilience, it aligned with UNDP priorities, the SDG agenda, and national tourism policies. However, there are still some gaps in the equitable distribution of benefits and the establishment of a robust M&E framework during the initial phase of the project. The strategies developed by the project have been officially handed over to the NTB. There is a need to streamline policies, more comprehensively involve provincial governments and INGOs in the tourism sector and engage academia in technology and innovation.

3.3 Efficiency: The project efficiently used financial, human, institutional, and technical resources to meet its objectives and address GESI inequalities. The expenditure rate for each output was good. As of July 2024, expenditures for Outputs 1 to 3 were 97.11%, 96.27%, and 76.27% respectively, and ensured 93.38% overall expenditure. The project strategically generated US$1.4 million in cash, US$0.32 million in kind, and US$1.37

million in material co- and parallel financing for synergetic impacts. It also constructed 282 small-scale tourism infrastructures and renovated 99, revitalizing local tourism destinations. Substantial local government contributions and stakeholder coordination were effective. It also received technical input from the NTB as needed. Digital platforms and data analysis enhanced efficiency and promoted equitable opportunities for targeted people. However, the project didn't fully address the root causes of gender inequality and social exclusion. Despite the turnover of the NPM and the absence of dedicated IT and GESI officers, the project's management structure. In particular, the upgraded online portal improved impact tracking. Future reporting must integrate GESI considerations more thoroughly. The project's implementation strategy—utilizing strategic partnerships, adaptive management, and resource allocation—was cost-effective. The cost-sharing modality enhanced the project's impact and promoted sustainable recovery. Feedback emphasized the need for flexibility, more targeted support for marginalized groups, linking with relevant enterprises, and digital solutions for resilience. Challenges included limited training time, and insufficient staff for carrying out post-training monitoring. Lessons learned highlighted the importance of adaptability and enhanced support mechanisms.

3.4 Effectiveness: The project effectively addressed unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the project, 162,437 person-days of short-term employment were created, worth US$ 1,275,955, with an average income of US$ 165 per person. Women comprised 25.5% (2,485) of the beneficiaries, and over 35% of participants in capacity development training were women. Despite difficulties monitoring, vast coverage, the harsh climate, election-related disruptions, and budget constraints; the inclusive approach and strong partnerships improved livelihoods and advanced gender equality. However, limited resources and logistical management posed a challenge. Collaboration with tourism agencies and local governments enhanced technical expertise and tourism infrastructure. Mandates ensured diverse perspectives and equitable benefits. The project did advance gender equality and women's empowerment through targeted training, but challenges remain in achieving the broad representation and full integration of women and marginalized sections. Local government partnerships were crucial for advancing tourism development and supporting vulnerable communities as well as facilitating infrastructure development, social protection, and inclusive development and helped overcome low literacy, coordination difficulties, and administrative challenges.

3.5 Impact: The project's initiatives significantly boosted economic resilience and community development through short-term employment, tourism entrepreneurship, and policy advocacy. Thanks to affirmative action and the implementation of a gender action plan, 26% of participants in short-term employment were women, and 36% of those involved in capacity development initiatives were women. The renovation of local tourism infrastructure reduced vulnerabilities and enhanced pandemic resilience. Digital platforms and sustainable practices increased tourism entrepreneurship, thereby boosting local economies and long-term community resilience. While resource dilution (as a result of larger projects' coverage) and unequal benefit distribution were challenges, the project still achieved substantial positive impacts. Training programs equipped 4,087 participants, including women (1430) and LGBTIQ+, with essential tourism skills, facilitating recovery and enhancing the capacity of local governments. Long-term impacts included increases in entrepreneurship, institutional capacity, and policy advocacy, all of which promoted sustainable tourism development with disaster and climate risk awareness. Despite concerns that some training was too brief and the content too shallow, the project significantly bridged the human resource gap in tourism, promoting resilience and sustainable growth. The project conducted 104 skill-based training programs (23 different categories), benefiting 4,087 individuals and strengthening the capacity of 144 local government staff in tourism policy and planning. This enabled 15 local governments to develop effective tourism strategies. While the training programs had immediate impacts, a medium- to long-term strategy is needed to retain trained personnel and create opportunities for local youths and returning migrants. The project revived the tourism sector, supported 9,846 workers (exceeding the target of 1,600), and enhanced the capacity of NTB and other stakeholders. It improved the quality of life for 13,933 directly and 61,305 indirectly through small-scale tourism infrastructure projects.

3.6 Sustainability: The project successfully promoted long-term resilience and local ownership through its constant support for employment, entrepreneurship, policy advocacy, and community engagement. That said, a formalized exit strategy and sustainability plan is necessary for scaling up and embedding successful practices. Securing additional resources and co-financing is also essential, particularly for the operation and maintenance (O&M) of infrastructure. Integrating resources with local governments, I/NGOs, and tourism associations led to successful livelihood recovery and capacity-building. The project advanced GESI outcomes by providing equitable training and employment to women, Dalits, Indigenous people, and persons with disabilities (PwDs). It embedded GESI principles into its design and advocated for inclusive policies. Future efforts should focus on providing advanced training to women leaders in tourism, expanding advocacy for gender-responsive policies, and promoting digital literacy and gender-responsive tourism products to support women's empowerment and leadership. Measures like these will ensure gender balance and sustainable growth in Nepal's tourism sector.

3.7 GESI: The project effectively integrated GESI provisions, facilitating broad participation and making significant progress in enabling women and LGBTIQ+ to take on new roles through targeted training initiatives. The project created jobs, provided equal pay, and increased women's participation and leadership in various sectors. Some training content, however, was GESI-neutral, and socioeconomic disparities were not fully addressed. The project promoted leadership and empowerment among women, PwDs, and marginalized groups through training, mentorship, and advocacy designed to enhance their economic confidence and social status. Though there was no specific leadership training, and some disparities remained unaddressed, the project achieved measurable improvements in gender equality, women's empowerment, and social inclusion and was able to promote equitable participation and empower marginalized groups to claim their rights.

3.8 Human rights: The project effectively applied a human rights-based approach (HRBA), ensuring inclusivity and equality for women, LGBTIQ+, Dalits, ethnic minorities, and PwDs. Emphasizing dignity, equity, and empowerment, the project provided each of these groups with equal access to training and mentorship, thereby improving their livelihoods and increasing their visibility in decision-making. Fair labor practices and equitable working conditions were maintained, and there were no reports of discrimination or harassment. The project consistently applied HRBA throughout its design, implementation, and monitoring phases. Despite challenges in collecting data, the project demonstrated a strong commitment to human rights and generated tangible improvements for marginalized communities.

4. Conclusion
4.1 Relevance: The project successfully addressed the target population's needs through short-term employment and tourism entrepreneurship, generating significant income and employment. It provided 9,846 people, including 2,485 women, with 162,437 person-days of work worth US$ 1,299,496, and 1,920 individuals gained sustainable income in tourism. Despite pandemic constraints and limited women's participation, collaboration with local governments yielded positive results. The project aligned with Nepal's development priorities and UNDP's objectives, focusing on tourism recovery and economic resilience. However, gaps in post-training support and long-term impact assessment were noted. Ongoing support is needed, especially for underserved tourism-dependent communities, to sustain employment and income enhancements.

4.2 Coherence: The project promoted responsible tourism and resilience through infrastructure, skill enhancement, and community engagement, aligning with UNDP priorities, the SDG agenda, and national policies. Despite successes, gaps include equitable benefit distribution, a robust M&E framework, and objective selection processes. Enhancing training assessments, stakeholder coordination, and policy alignment could improve effectiveness. The project addressed pandemic challenges and fostered long-term resilience by adapting flexibly and leveraging collaborations. However, it needs to streamline policy documents, involve provincial governments, and engage academia in technology and innovation.

4.3 Efficiency: The project efficiently utilized resources, generating $1.4 million in cash and $1.37 million in material co-financing, to construct 282 and renovate 99 small-scale tourism infrastructures, revitalizing local tourism. Effective stakeholder coordination and substantial local government contributions were strengths, though NTB department engagement varied. Digital platforms and data analysis enhanced efficiency, but gender inequality was not fully addressed. The management structure and M&E system effectively tracked impacts and promoted digitization despite challenges. Future reports should better integrate GESI considerations. The project was cost-effective, with high expenditure rates and successful resource mobilization through strategic partnerships, enhancing sustainability. Feedback highlighted the need for flexibility, targeted support for marginalized groups, and digital solutions. Lessons emphasize adaptability and enhanced support mechanisms.

4.4 Effectiveness: The project mitigated unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic by creating 162,437 person-days of employment, worth US$1,299,496 and benefiting 3,915 women by promoting gender equality. Despite challenges like monitoring difficulties, large coverage, harsh climate, election disruptions, and budget constraints, the inclusive approach and strong partnerships improved livelihoods and tourism infrastructure. Women's and Indigenous community participation ensured equitable benefits. Collaboration with local governments and tourism stakeholders was crucial for sustainable tourism and cultural preservation. However, resource constraints, logistical management, low level of literacy, coordination issues, and administrative hurdles limited full benefits and caused delays.

4.5 Impact: The project fostered economic resilience and community development by renovating local tourism infrastructure, enhancing pandemic resilience, and increasing women's participation in short-term employment by 26% and to different capacity building initiatives by 36%. Digital platforms and sustainable practices boosted local economies, while skills development and infrastructure improvements supported long-term resilience. Despite resource dilution and unequal benefit distribution, the project delivered 104 training programs to 4,087

individuals, enhanced the capacity of 144 local government staff, and empowered 15 local governments to develop effective tourism strategies. It supported the livelihood recovery of 9,846 workers, benefiting 13,933 people directly and 61305 indirectly, and promoted sustainable economic development, disaster awareness, and improved market access. A medium- to long-term tourism revival strategy is needed to retain trained resources and create jobs for local youths and returning migrant workers.

4.6 Sustainability: The project fostered long-term resilience and local ownership by leveraging 43% of its resources through co-financing, raising US\$ 1, 325, 806 (1 US\$ equivalent to NPR 130) from local governments. While it supports livelihood recovery and capacity-building, it needs a formal exit strategy and sustainability plan, especially for infrastructure maintenance. It advanced GESI outcomes by providing equitable opportunities, with women comprising 28% of participants. Future efforts should focus on eco-friendly tourism products, gender-responsive policies, and advanced training for women leaders to ensure sustainable growth in Nepal's tourism sector.

4.7 GESI: The project advanced GESI through targeted approaches and consultations, promoting leadership and empowerment among women, PwDs, and marginalized groups. It created job opportunities, provided gender-specific training, and advocated for inclusive policies, increasing women's roles in the tourism sector. While it improved socio-economic conditions and cultural preservation, gaps in safety, social security, and specific leadership training remain. Overall, it enhanced gender equality and social integration, but further efforts are needed to address socioeconomic disparities more effectively.

4.8 Human rights: The project effectively used a HRBA to ensure inclusivity and equality for women, LGBTIQ+, Dalits, ethnic minorities, and PwDs. It provided equal access to training, mentorship, and leadership, improving livelihoods and visibility in decision-making. Fair labor practices were maintained with no reports of discrimination. The tourism recovery strategy emphasized human rights, inclusivity, and accessibility. Despite data collection challenges, the project made significant improvements for marginalized communities.

5. Recommendations

Reco. #	Recommendations	Agencies responsible	Timeframe *(Start date and duration)*
5.1 For streamlining the current phase			
1	*Facilitate the approval of tourism-related strategies:* Four draft strategies and guidelines were integrated into training curricula and knowledge products. To expedite their approval, the project should develop and disseminate comprehensive policy briefs to relevant stakeholders, improve coordination through regular review-and-reflection meetings, and support policy modifications by adopting an inclusive perspective and conducting thorough assessments *(Based on conclusions[1] # 4, 8, 10, and 14).*	Government, UNDP, NTB, tourism association, and Project Board	August-December 2024
2	*Expedite the improvement of tourism satellite accounts and databases:* Limited coordination among stakeholders, including federal and provincial ministries, Nepal Rastra Bank, Central Bureau of Statistics, and the private sector, delayed the development of a tourism database and TSAs. This delay hindered the project's ability to identify trends, allocate resources, and engage in strategic planning. To expedite the TSA process, the project should create a detailed action plan with assigned roles, use advanced technology for real-time data collection, develop standardized guidelines, and regularly review and update TSA methodologies for the timely publication of reports. Develop a gender-sensitive tourism database, digitize tourism destinations, and segregate data to contribute to GDP through the TSA *(Based on conclusions # 5, and 13).*	Government, UNDP, NTB, tourism association, and Project Board	August-December 2024
3	*Assess the effectiveness of skill development programs and fill in the gaps:* Properly organized skill development programs in the tourism sector address skill gaps, boost employability, and advance the careers of marginalized groups, fostering a competitive and resilient tourism sector. To assess the effectiveness of programs, the project should conduct a tracer study to evaluate trainee involvement in the private sector and identify the benefits of the skill development programs, particularly their impacts on the employment and incomes of targeted individuals, and the way forward. Facilitate the amendment of forest operational plans of community forest user groups to prevent future disputes over small-scale infrastructure renovations within forest areas, in coordination with Divisional Forest Offices *(Based on conclusions #7, 9, 10, 11, and 13).*	Government, UNDP, NTB, tourism association, and Project Board	August-December 2024
5.2 For future programming of similar projects			
1	*Develop exit strategies and sustainability plans:* The project successfully integrated activities into local government plans, ensuring that they would have resources	Government, UNDP, NTB,	Within 6 months of

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[1] Conclusion numbers are derived from the main report.

	allocated to them, but there is no exit strategy or sustainability plan. Although a handover note assigns O&M responsibilities to local governments, the absence of explicit O&M budgeting and limited funding remain concerns. A contingency fund exists, but its use for O&M will remain uncertain unless there is a sustainability plan. The project should develop an exit strategy and sustainability plan with stakeholders, integrate O&M components into infrastructure designs and budgets, assign clear roles, and incorporate disaster and climate risk reduction features into the designs of small-scale infrastructures *(Based on conclusions # 2, 10, and 11)*.	tourism association	project implement ation
2	*The capacity-building of human resources:* The project's capacity-building initiatives faced issues such as inadequate post-training support, shallow content, incomplete GESI integration, and misalignments of training themes and short durations. Resource persons have inadequate knowledge of current policies, and training was event-based and had insufficient staff for follow-up/post-training monitoring. The project should provide advanced tourism training in digital marketing and destination development to women and LGBTIQ+, promote digital literacy and gender-responsive tourism, offer post-training support, maintain a roster of resource persons, and use virtual platforms for advocacy to enhance women's leadership and empowerment *(Based on conclusions #1, 3, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 13)*.	Government, UNDP, NTB, tourism associations, professional agencies	Regularly
3	*More strategically mainstream GESI in the programmatic cycle:* Effective GESI integration is hindered by limited advocacy for gender-responsive policies, partnerships with women-led groups, and research into gender dynamics. Training and employment opportunities are insufficient for all genders, and gender considerations are often absent from policy and strategy documents, impacting product design, service packages and delivery. The project should conduct gender assessments and define targets and indicators, develop inclusive planning and budgeting, use women's safety audits to promote awareness and policy advocacy, and disburse funds based on progress in gender action plans *(Based on conclusions # 5, 12, and 13)*.	Government, UNDP, NTB, tourism associations, professional agencies	Regularly
4	*Improve monitoring using a robust data system:* The project's wide reach across remote districts and limited staff resulted in inadequate monitoring and oversight, thereby hindering the project's ability to identify and respond to emerging issues promptly. The project should set clear, measurable objectives and indicators aligned with its goals, develop a robust real-time data collection system, and upgrade the M&E portal to capture disaggregated data. To enhance accuracy, local data should be integrated with national systems, and local governments and tourism associations should be involved. To improve quality assurance and build effective models, resources should be focused on strategic locations and monitored intensely *(Based on conclusions #6, 12, and 14)*.	Government, UNDP, NTB, tourism associations, professional agencies	Within 6 months of project implement ation
5	*Support for formulating inclusive policies:* The project's development of four strategies has significant room for improvement to ensure full inclusivity and equitable benefit-sharing among poor and marginalized groups. More consultations are needed in policy formulation, applying a HRBA, and providing technical assistance by reviewing legal frameworks and toolkits. Additionally, clarification is needed on the revenue distribution mechanism from protected areas among relevant entities. Offering small research grants to university students for inclusive development case studies is also recommended *(Based on conclusions # 12, 13, and 14)*.	Government, UNDP, NTB, tourism associations, professional agencies	Regularly
6	*Minimize the impacts of differences in the fiscal years of the government and UNDP:* Differences in the fiscal years of the government and UNDP complicated planning, funding, and resource mobilization, causing delays and hindering progress. The project should create a coordinated financial planning framework with a joint calendar that aligns budget cycles and reporting and get it approved by the project board. Regular coordination meetings and a unified financial management system should be implemented to track expenditures and approval. Developing flexible budget mechanisms to manage timing discrepancies will ensure the timely disbursement of funds, improve synchronization, and reduce delays *(Based on conclusions # 3, 5, and 6)*.	Government, UNDP, NTB, tourism associations, professional agencies, Ministry of Finance	Regularly
7	*Improve knowledge management:* Sharing project-generated learning and best practices through networks enhances knowledge exchange and resource leveraging, yet current initiatives are insufficient for systematic organization. The project should document best practices and lessons learned for replication; host learning-and-review workshops with the government, all departments of NTB, the project team, and other stakeholders; and develop a cost-effective knowledge management strategy for efficiently producing and distributing policy briefs, posters, flyers, tips, and case studies *(Based on conclusions #2, 5, 6)*.	Government, UNDP, NTB, tourism associations, professional agencies, media house	Regularly

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1. Background and context

1.1 Introduction

The Sustainable Tourism for Livelihood Recovery Project (STLRP), hereinafter referred to as 'the project,' was conceptualized in 2020 to address critical challenges and protect communities reliant on tourism. Designed to run for 48 months, from January 2021 to December 2024, with a total budget of US$ 3,285,385, the project aims to achieve three key outcomes: (i) contribute to the revival of the tourism sector, (ii) support the livelihood recovery of at least 1,600 tourism sector workers, and (iii) enhance the capacity of the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and other stakeholders to accelerate recovery efforts. These outcomes are pursued through three defined outputs, each with 5, 5, and 6 corresponding indicators, respectively. As the project nears completion on December 31, 2024, UNDP is planning a final evaluation to assess and document the project's achievements, challenges, lessons learned, and best practices. This evaluation also included an assessment of gender outcomes using the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES). The evaluation's findings are expected to inform the design of similar projects and support the scaling up of current initiatives in future phases. The project has followed the National Implementation Modality (NIM).

The evaluation report is organized into eight chapters. The first and second chapters provide an overview of the tourism context in Nepal and a detailed understanding of the project. The third and fourth chapters present the evaluation's purpose, objectives, and scope, as well as the approach, methods, and process used. Chapter five, the core of the report, presents the evaluation findings. Chapter six highlights best practices and lessons learned. The seventh and eighth chapters offer conclusions and recommendations. To supplement these chapters, a total of 12 annexes have been developed.

1.2 The context

Nepal's tourism sector is vital to the economy. It is a key pillar of Nepal's economy and a major source of foreign exchange and revenue. The tourism industry contributed about 6.7% to Nepal's GDP, while its total impact was US$2.2 billion (World Bank, 2022). Still, in 2023, the 1,014,882 foreign tourists (see Box 1). The tourism sector faces several challenges, including inadequate transportation networks, underdeveloped facilities, political instability, and frequent natural disasters like earthquakes, monsoon floods and landslides. The 2024 Travel & Tourism Development Index highlights that Nepal's tourism infrastructure remains underdeveloped, ranking 103rd out of 117 countries. This ranking underscore persistent challenges in both infrastructure and ICT readiness. To improve tourism competitiveness, significant upgrades in basic services and digital connectivity are necessary.

Environmental degradation and the need for sustainable tourism practices are also critical issues. The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted on tourism, causing a significant reduction in tourist arrivals and substantial economic losses. A UNDP Rapid Assessment (2020) indicated that, post-pandemic, the tourism sector, including hotels, restaurants, and travel agencies, expects revenue to fall by over 50% and for job losses to exceed 25%. The World Travel & Tourism Council projected a 20–30% decline in global tourism in 2020,

Box 1: Nepal's tourism sector-Facts and figures
- Nepal's tourism sector experienced a robust recovery in 2023, with tourist arrivals increasing by 65.05%, reaching 1,014,882.
- India was the leading source of tourists, contributing 31.52% of arrivals, followed by the USA (9.88%), China (5.99%), the U.K. (5.20%), Australia (3.82%), and Bangladesh (3.59%). The majority (90.09%) of tourists arrived by air.
- The average length of stay for tourists slightly increased from 13.1 days in 2022 to 13.2 days in 2023.
- The purpose of visits shifted, with 62.5% of tourists visiting for holidays and leisure. Adventure tourism grew significantly, rising to 15.2%, while pilgrimage tourism remained steady at 13.1%.
- There was a 15.3% increase in the number of permitted expedition teams, totalling 2,253 in 2023.
- Of the total visitors, 154,262 participated in trekking activities.
- Lumbini emerged as the most visited pilgrimage site, with 903,883 visitors, including 29.50% Indians and 9.80% from other countries.
- The surge in tourist arrivals led to a nearly 68% increase in gross foreign exchange earnings, reaching approximately USD 548.2 million. Per-day expenditure per tourist rose slightly from USD 40.5 to USD 41.
- Nepal had 1,416 operational hotels, with a total bed capacity of 54,370 per day, alongside a slight increase in registered travel and trekking agencies, totalling 4,845 and 3,191 respectively.
Source: Nepal Tourism Statistics (2023)

and the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) of Nepal anticipated a 16.3% drop in hotel and restaurant patronage in the FY 2019/20 in Nepal. The pandemic disrupted tourism-based livelihoods and economic activities, presenting challenges for retaining affected workers, and continuing tourism-based livelihood schemes. Addressing these challenges is crucial for the revitalization of Nepal's tourism sector.

1.2 Policy in Nepal's tourism sector

Nepal's various policies, plans, and strategies emphasize the significance of tourism for economic development and job creation. These policies underscore Nepal's dedication to utilizing tourism as a means for socio-economic development, improving infrastructure, promoting sustainability, and ensuring inclusive growth. They highlight the sector's crucial role in economic growth and livelihood enhancement. The Sustainable Tourism Policy (2009) aims to minimize environmental impacts by promoting eco-friendly practices and local community involvement. Nepal's constitution (2015) integrates tourism into the national framework, promoting economic growth, job creation, and cultural exchange while emphasizing sustainability. The National Tourism Strategy Plan (2016-2025) focuses on product diversification, service standardization and branding, infrastructure enhancement, and balancing growth with conservation. The 15th Plan (2019-2024) emphasizes infrastructure development, product diversification, community-based tourism, and sustainable practices. The Visit Nepal Campaign (2020) aimed to attract two million tourists through international marketing and infrastructure improvement, however, this was severely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Integrated Tourism Master Plan (2023-2032) promotes regional

Table 1: Salient features of the project

Atlas number	00111755
Signed	11 December 2020
Tenure	January 2021 to December 2024 (48 months)
Corporate outcome and output	Country Program Document (CPD) 2023-2027 **Outcome:** *By 2027, more people, especially women, youth, and the most marginalized and poor increasingly participate in and benefit from coordinated, inclusive, participatory, transparent, and gender responsive governance, access to justice, and human rights at federal, provincial, and local levels.* **Output 1.2:** *Expanded access to sustainable livelihoods and income for women, youth, poor, and other marginalized groups.*
Project budget	Total: US$ $ 3,285,385. UNDP: US$ 1,700,000 and GoN: US$ 1,585,385
Key project's partners	NTB; Ministry of Culture Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA); Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation; and tourism associations. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO)

Source: Project's records, 2024

Table 2: Result framework

Outcome	• Contribute towards revival of tourism sector • Likelihood recovery of tourism sector worker (at least 1600) • Enhancing the capacity of NTB and other stakeholders to accelerate recovery efforts
Outputs	• Vulnerable tourism-dependent communities, particularly women and people from disadvantaged groups in the tourism sector, that have lost their jobs or income due to COVID-19 have received short-term employment opportunities to meet immediate livelihood needs. • Entrepreneurs and other workers in the tourism sector have enhanced opportunities for employment and income generation through the renovation and development of tourism products in major tourist destinations. • The institutional capacity of the NTB is strengthened through the formulation of a comprehensive tourism recovery strategy, as well as through increased digitization and other efforts for future disaster risk management.
Indicators	***Indicators of output 1*** • # of people benefitted from short-term employment. (#men and # women) • # of installation of waste management plants or bins • # of bridges renovated/constructed • # of Km of drainage and/or stone stairs renovation • # of signage installation and maintenance ***Indicators of output 2*** • # of small-scale tourism infrastructure built, renovated, and reconstructed. • # of tourism destinations/products developed (10, at least 1 from each province) • # of people benefited from skill-based training in tourism (beginner, licensed, and refresher) • # of tourism-based enterprises /ecotourism created. • # of people from local government/tourism stakeholders capacitated on sustainable tourism, tourism promotion, and policy-related issues including trail audit training. ***Indicators of output 3*** • # of guidelines/tools on standardization for tourism services (number of knowledge products, earnings, best practices, and stories published). • # Tourist database in place. • Finalization of Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) • # Policy intervention for domestic tourism promotion/domestic tourism awareness & promotion activities. • # of sustainable tourism club established in school. • Tourism Recovery Strategy in Place

Source: ToR

development by enhancing connectivity and facilities in lesser-known areas. The 16th Plan (2024-2029) continues to focus on sustainable practices, infrastructure improvement, product diversification, and community-based tourism to boost the sector's economic contribution and improve livelihoods.

2. Description of the intervention

2.1 The Project

To address challenges and protect communities reliant on tourism, the Sustainable Tourism for Livelihood Recovery Project (STLRP), hereinafter called "the project," was initiated in December 2020. The project's key features are outlined in Table 1 above. Following a national implementation modality (NIM), the project aimed to revive the tourism sector by supporting the livelihoods of the most affected workers, retaining the critical workforce, and enhancing the capacity of the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and tourism

associations[2] to accelerate recovery efforts. It focused on creating immediate livelihood opportunities through short-term employment and on promoting sustainable jobs through the long-term revival of the tourism sector. To carry out the essential interventions for each of the three outputs, nine types of project partners were mobilized, each with specific roles and responsibilities. These partners included: (i) the federal government, (ii) NTB, (iii) local and provincial governments, (iv) tourism associations, (v) user communities, (vi) tourism sector workers' unions, (vii) NGOs, (viii) UNESCO and UNWTO, and (ix) UNDP's projects (refer to Table 3 below). Their collaboration ensured the smooth execution of the project activities.

2.2 Project's result framework
The project was designed to achieve three key outcomes designed to accelerate recovery efforts. These outcomes were pursued through three defined outputs. The first two outputs have five indicators, while the third has six (see Table 2 above).

2.3 Project coverage and stakeholders
The project reached 58 districts and 85 local governments across Nepal, under a letter of agreement (LoA) and low-value grant agreement (LVGA), in collaboration with NGOs and tourism associations. It was implemented in both the Terai region, including Lumbini and Janakpur (approximately 150 masl), and high-altitude areas such as the village of Chhukhung of Solukhumbhu District in the Himalayas (4,700 masl). The project aimed to cover major trekking areas (Annapurna, Everest, Kanchenjunga, and Makalu Barun regions), river-based tourism sites (such as rafting, kayaking, and canyoning), and high-potential tourism destinations. In addition, it encompassed key cultural heritage sites like Janakpur, Lumbini, and Kathmandu and prioritized river-based tourism areas such as Trishuli, Bhotekoshi, Kaligandaki, and Karnali. The project has been working with multiple stakeholders, including (i) local governments, (ii) private tourism associations, (iii) academic agency such as Nepal Mountaineering Academy (NMA), (iv) I/NGOs, (v) tourism workers unions, and (vi) CBOs/CSOs. Each of these six categories of stakeholders has its own defined roles and responsibilities regarding their expertise. Some of the notable stakeholders/partners and their brief roles are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Roles and responsibilities of project's partners

Sn	Partners	Key role/(s)
1	Federal Government	
a	Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA)	• Provide policy support, ensure quality assurance through timely monitoring of project activities, and assist in obtaining approval from the Ministry of Finance (MoF). • Support the development of policies and directives. • Work with other development partners to mobilize resources.
b	Ministry of Finance (MoF)	• Approve the Project Document in accordance with NIM Guidelines and the Foreign Aid Policy. • Serve as a board member and actively participate in project board meetings.
c	Department of Tourism	• Provide feedback and recommendations for the implementation of project activities. • Contribute to quality assurance through timely monitoring of project activities.
2	Nepal Tourism Board (NTB)	• Collaborate with UNDP and relevant stakeholders to implement the project. • Appoint a National Project Director (NPD) to chair project board meetings. • Approve and sign the annual work plans. • Allocate and disburse the budget as outlined in the financing agreement. • Approve and sign the Combined Delivery Report (CDR) at the end of each year. • Sign the Financial Report or the Funding Authorization and Certificate of Expenditures (FACE).
3	Local and provincial governments	
a	Local governments	• Facilitate project approvals and coordinate with stakeholders to manage the reconstruction of small-scale tourism infrastructure. • Oversee resource allocation, track progress, and ensure that projects align with local needs and standards. • Assist with program and financial reporting.
b	Provincial governments	• Oversee the reconstruction of small-scale tourism infrastructure by coordinating regional resources and offering both technical and financial support.

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[2] Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN), Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN), Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents (NATTA), Nepal Association of Rafting Agents (NARA), Nepal Cannoning Association (NCA), Restaurant and Bar Association of Nepal (REBAN), Tourist Guide Association of Nepal (TURGAN), Nepal Tourist Vehicle Association (NTVA), Himalayan Rescue Association Nepal (HRA), and Nepal Mountain Academy (NMA).
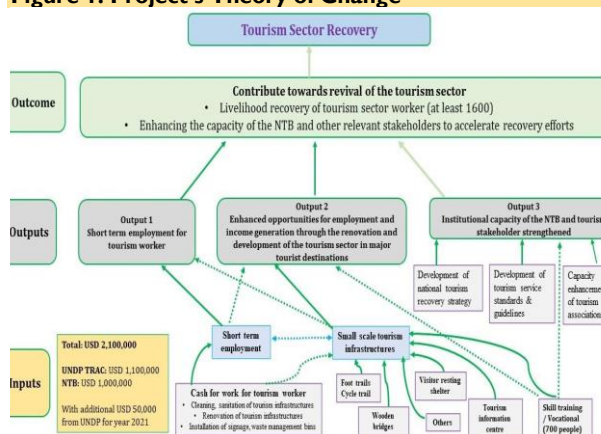
		• Facilitate collaboration among local stakeholders, monitor project progress, and ensure regulatory compliance to promote sustainable and effective infrastructure development. • Provide technical expertise in capacity-building training, developing knowledge products, conducting joint monitoring, and supporting provincial workshops and consultations.
4	Tourism associations	• Lead tourism recovery efforts by working with stakeholders, advocating for supportive policies, and executing targeted projects. • Promote sustainable practices, select beneficiaries for short-term employment, and coordinate initiatives to enhance industry competitiveness and economic growth. • Help identify tourism frontline workers affected by COVID-19 for short-term employment opportunities. • Collaborate with provincial chapters to select beneficiaries for capacity-building training. • Use a matching fund model to leverage partnerships and resources. • Provide support as a training service provider for capacity-building programs.
5	User communities	• Support the on-ground execution of the project by creating short-term job opportunities for residents and fostering long-term benefits. • Play a crucial role in maintaining and ensuring the sustainability of the project.
6	Tourism sector Workers Unions	• Engage the most vulnerable workers, including those who have lost their jobs or are seasonal, by creating short-term employment opportunities. • Identify workers in need of employment through participatory consultations. • Ensure the safety and security of beneficiaries in short-term employment. • Provide technical support in selecting targeted interventions tailored for frontline tourism workers.
7	Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)	• Execute project interventions and activities using a low-value grant process. • Coordinate with local governments and the private sector to ensure effective project implementation. • Support social mobilization efforts and address any project-related issues. • Provide regular reports on project status, service quality, outreach, and financial performance in line with the grant agreement. • Ensure transparency and accountability of grant recipients through public hearings and audits, and share success stories from project activities.
8	UNESCO and UNWTO	• Support the preservation of natural and cultural heritage. • Offer technical assistance in finalizing the Tourism Satellite Account, with leadership from UNWTO.
9	UNDP's projects	• Contribute to integrating disaster risk reduction, climate action, skill development, and microenterprise concerns.

2.4 Project's theory of change

The project's theory of change (ToC) followed a systematic progression, connecting the following elements in sequence: inputs → outputs → outcomes. Financial resources were allocated to execute planned activities aimed at overcoming barriers (see Figure 1).

Project's activities were intended to achieve three outputs, which, in turn, were designed to contribute to three targeted outcomes. Each output was accompanied by a set of indicators, for a total of 16 indicators, and targets, both of which are crucial for monitoring project performance. The project's ToC is robust: it demonstrates a strong correlation among inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes.

Figure 1: Project's Theory of Change

A brief analysis of the project's proposed results pathways showed that it aimed to achieve three main outcomes to accelerate recovery efforts. These outcomes were pursued through three specific outputs. Three outputs were again perused through (i) short-term employment, (ii) small-scale tourism infrastructure, and (iii) cash-for-work initiatives for tourism workers (including cleaning and sanitizing tourism sites, renovating infrastructure, and installing signage and waste management bins). The project's key interventions were interlinked, collectively enhancing the overall outcomes. Implementation involved collaboration with UNDP, the Project Implementation Unit (PIU), and the NTB, each with defined roles and responsibilities. Key elements of the project included developing a Results and Resources Framework (RRF), conducting stakeholder mapping and coordination, creating Annual Work Plans (AWPs), selecting local governments and tourism

destinations, and executing approved AWP activities. Evidence suggests that the interventions, implementation arrangements, and strategies remain relevant and consistent with the project's ToC. While the project's ToC followed a logical sequence, it did not address the challenges and critical barriers affecting output and impact drivers, nor did it consider the assumptions influencing these impacts.

3. Evaluation purpose, objectives, and scope

3.1 Purpose

The primary purpose of this evaluation was to assess the project's achievements, including gender-responsive results, against the expected outcomes. It aimed to document lessons learned and best practices. The evaluation also examined the project's implementation approaches, its results achieved compared to its outputs, its contribution to high-level outcomes, including gender equality and social inclusion (GESI). It also aimed to identify issues and challenges encountered and make specific recommendations for future similar interventions.

3.2 Objectives

The overarching objective of the evaluation was to assess the intervention according to the six criteria established by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC): relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. The specific objectives of the evaluation were as follows:

- Evaluate the project's progress against defined objectives, outputs, and indicators.
- Examine the approaches and interventions implemented by the project to ensure their alignment with the ToC and the designated strategies for achieving desired outputs.
- Assess the project's interventions, particularly their contributions to the development of the tourism sector in collaboration with the NTB and other tourism associations.
- Identify and analyze key achievements and results, extracting valuable lessons learned to inform and guide future actions.
- Evaluate each output to determine whether it is gender-negative, gender-neutral, gender-targeted, gender-responsive, or gender-transformative, providing the logic behind each assessment.
- Review and assess risks and opportunities; document key results, learning, and innovations; and recommend potential areas for future interventions.

3.3 Scope

The scope was a comprehensive assessment of the six OECD-DAC and cross-cutting criteria such as GESI and human rights covering the entire implementation period, from January 2021 to July 2024, and encompassed all targeted geographic areas and all three tiers of government. In addition, the evaluation assessed how well the intervention mainstreamed GESI through an intersectional lens which included disability issues and the green resilient inclusive development approach.[3] As per the terms of reference (see Annex 1), the five questions (see Annex 2) covered the overall scope of the evaluation.

3.4 Criteria and questions

The evaluation team followed the essential criteria and inquiries specified in the ToR and UNDP Evaluation Guideline (revised edition, June 2021[4]) for conducting terminal evaluations of projects supported by UNDP. This evaluation employed following key questions to assess the project's overall effectiveness (refer Annex 4 for the elaborated questions in each of the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria).

- What measurable positive changes or benefits can be observed in the vulnerable tourism-dependent communities, entrepreneurs, and workers in the tourism sector due to the project's intervention? How significant are these impacts?
- How efficiently were the short-term employment opportunities, renovation and development of tourism products, and strengthening of institutional capacity implemented to achieve the intended outcomes?
- How well do the outputs integrate and complement each other (e.g., UNDP priorities, SDG agenda, National Tourism Strategy) in contributing to the overall goal of tourism recovery? Are there any inconsistencies or gaps in the project's approach?

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[3]https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2024/06/15/operationalizing-inclusive-approach-project-designs-and-evaluations-pacific-region-good-initiatives-emerging-gaps-and-road-ahead/
[4] http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/documents/PDF/UNDP_Evaluation_Guidelines.pdf

- To what extent were GESI dimensions integrated/mainstreamed in the project design and interventions, and are there any positive direct changes in the situation of women and other marginalized communities?
- To what extent does the project's intervention have a lasting and sustainable impact on the target communities and the tourism sector? What measures have been taken to ensure the continued positive effects beyond the immediate project period?

The evaluation of project design and formulation involved analyzing the results framework, including the project's logic, strategy, and indicators. Detailed criteria and guidance questions can be found in evaluation matrix (annex 4).

4. Evaluation approach, methods, and process

4.1. Evaluation approach

This evaluation followed the revised edition of the UNDP Evaluation Guideline (June 2021) for conducting terminal evaluations of projects supported by the UNDP. It used summative, constructive, and formative approaches to evaluate the extent to which the project achieved its expected outputs and outcomes; investigated the reasons behind the project's design and arrangements for implementation; and identified and documented valuable lessons pertinent to the design and implementation of similar future projects. Evaluation also fulfills a vital function in bolstering accountability and acting as a catalyst. Throughout the assessment, the evaluation team worked autonomously.

Based on the UNDP evaluation guidelines, which outline various methodological approaches, this evaluation employed the Participatory Evaluation and Most Significant Change approaches. The choice of these approaches aligned with the Terms of Reference (ToR), specific evaluation questions, and recommended methodologies. The participatory approach utilized tools such as document review (desk study), key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and direct observation. This approach was instrumental in capturing stakeholders' and beneficiaries' perspectives on the overall achievements of the project's interventions. In addition, the Most Significant Change approach was used to assess the project's accomplishments and measure the extent of change. This method was chosen for its effectiveness in evaluating complex projects with diverse stakeholders, outputs, and an intricate institutional and implementation structure. Applying this approach also helped identify any unintended outcomes or impacts resulting from the project's execution.

4.2 Evaluation methods and process

The evaluation utilized a mixed method of data collection,[5] incorporating both qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods and instruments, but prioritized qualitative tools and techniques to effectively fulfill the primary purpose and objectives of the evaluation. The available data were disaggregated by gender to assess outputs and outcomes thoroughly. At the heart of the evaluation was an examination of the project's ToC. Consultations were conducted to grasp the project's approach and the necessary supporting conditions ("assumptions" and "drivers") to effect change. The ToC outlined causal pathways, which stakeholders later expounded during data collection. Quantitative tools were used to gauge progress towards targets. The evaluation team relied on available monitoring and evaluation (M&E) records and the project's database to get much of that quantitative data. However, it was only by combining qualitative and quantitative data that the evaluation team was able to gather a comprehensive set of data to address the key evaluation questions using the evaluation matrix (see Annex 3). In addition, the DAC-OECD's evaluation criteria were used to assess the overall performance of the project.

The evaluation team followed a structured approach with the following three phases: inception, data collection, tabulation and analysis, and report preparation. During the inception phase, the team mapped out agencies through stakeholder analysis, reviewed the ToC, established a sampling strategy (see Box 2 below), and crafted the evaluation framework. The team also developed a sampling frame encompassing stakeholders from various categories, including project partners, government agencies, tourism associations and networks, and academia. In addition, each data collection tool and approach was deliberately designed

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[5]The review methodology used for this project TE is based on the UNDP-GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policies and includes multiple methods with an analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, where possible.

so it would gather gender-disaggregated data and information. From the complete list provided by the project, a minimum of 50% of respondents were randomly selected from each of the categories discussed above, ensuring proportional representation during 4 focused group discussions (FGDs) and 46 key informant interviews (KIIs). Of the total 71 respondents, 21 (around 30%) were women (see Annex 4). The data collection, tabulation and analysis phase, for its part, included a desk review, stakeholder interviews, triangulation, analysis, observation/field visit and interpretation, while the report preparation phase involved presenting preliminary findings and drafting the report, soliciting stakeholder comments and factual corrections, and finalizing the evaluation report.

Box 2: Sampling Strategy
This evaluation focused on four provinces, seven districts, and 10 local governments as representative samples. Its selection was based on criteria such as geographical diversity, broad programmatic coverage, and the type of interventions. The evaluation's sampling strategy was designed to be representative of the universe of project participants. The approach was chosen for its practicality and feasibility, and it aimed to evaluate a representative sample within a limited timeframe. A random sampling method was adopted for selection, and purposive samples were used to avoid possible bias. From the complete list provided by the project, a minimum of 50% of respondents were randomly selected.

4.3 Selection of provincial and local governments and relevant stakeholders

An evaluation mission (7 to 16 July 2024) was organized to visit 10 local governments of seven districts and four provinces to balance the perspectives of different project areas (see Annex 5). The mission provided the evaluation team with valuable insight into the respondents' overall perceptions, the hurdles they encountered, the strategies they employed to overcome them, and their assessment of the impacts of the project's interventions. The evaluation team meticulously reviewed work progress, monitored physical progress, conducted online interviews with pertinent stakeholders in provinces that were not visited, and interacted with project board members in person to fill in data gaps.

4.4 Methods of qualitative data collection and analysis

The following methods were used to collect data and information (also see Annex 6 for details).

- **Initial briefing meetings:** The initial briefing meeting (27 June 2024) with representatives from the UNDP Country Office and the project team helped to clarify the primary objectives and areas of focus of the evaluation. This meeting allowed the team to gain a comprehensive understanding of the project's strategy, its development process, activities conducted in various phases, and significant adjustments made.
- **Document review (desk study):** The team examined this secondary information (see Annex 7) through the lens of the key evaluation questions, themselves based on OECD-DAC criteria, using the "quick scan method" to identify missing information. This approach helped the evaluation team gain a thorough understanding of the project. In addition, the team developed tables to evaluate project results and gender responsiveness.
- **Key informant interviews:** Based on the agreed checklist and guide questions (see Annex 8), 46 KIIs were conducted in a semi-structured manner using gender-responsive tools (involving 12 women). This approach helped the evaluation team gain a thorough understanding of the project. In addition, the team developed tables to evaluate project results and gender responsiveness.
- **Focus group discussions:** Four FGDs with project beneficiaries, including daily wage workers, trainees, local community user groups, local tourism promotion committees, and representatives from local governments helped evaluate the project's progress and assess significant changes, particularly in terms of effectiveness and impact. A total of 25 participants (15 men and 9 women) were covered during FGDs. This approach helped the evaluation team gain a thorough understanding of the project. In addition, the team developed tables to evaluate project results and gender responsiveness.
- **Direct observation:** The team employed both participant and non-participant observation methods and assessed the tangible outcomes of physical developments. This approach helped the evaluation team gain a thorough understanding of the project. In addition, the team developed tables to evaluate project results and gender responsiveness.
- **Most-significant-change technique:** The team employed the "most significant change" technique to evaluate the project's overall accomplishments and measure the extent of change. This approach helped the evaluation team gain a thorough understanding of the project. In addition, the team developed tables to evaluate project results and gender responsiveness. The tool was used during KIIs and FGDs.
- **Gender result effectiveness scale method:** The project's contribution to GESI-responsive results was measured using the gender results effectiveness scale (GRES), and potential opportunities for developing new projects aimed at addressing key gender gaps were identified. This approach helped the evaluation team gain a thorough understanding of the project. In addition, the team developed tables to evaluate project results and gender responsiveness.
- **Competency analysis:** The team also employed a competency analysis tool and identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats as part of KIIs and FGDs.

A detailed description of how the KIIs and FGD were conducted during the data collection:

Key informant interviews: Based on the agreed checklist and guide questions (see Annex 8), KIIs were conducted in a semi-structured manner. The interviews began with broad, open-ended questions to capture

the essence of the key evaluation inquiries and were followed by more specific questions to explore core issues in greater depth. Based on the ToR, the evaluation team involved representatives from the evaluation reference group,[6] the UNDP Country Office, and key project stakeholders. Efforts were made to ensure gender balance among interviewees, and the methods and tools used were gender-responsive, meaning they took into account gender equality, women's empowerment, and other cross-cutting themes. A GESI and human rights lens was applied throughout the data-gathering process. To delve deeper, discussions were also conducted to capture women's experiences and measure the sustainability of the initiative, considering prevailing societal norms and values.

Focus group discussions: FGDs were conducted with project beneficiaries, including daily wage workers, trainees, local community user groups, local tourism promotion committees, and representatives from local governments. These discussions helped evaluate the project's progress and assess significant changes, particularly in terms of effectiveness and impact. The team's assessment of GESI mainstreaming covered all aspects of governance systems, procedures, processes, and policies, from the conceptualization of programs and projects to their implementation and M&E.

Despite several limitations (see section 4.9), the evaluation team successfully conducted the planned KIIs and FGDs to encompass all stakeholder categories while maintaining quality. The team ensured gender sensitivity and addressed human rights issues using tools promoting equality. The lower number of women consulted was due to the predominance of male staff among government stakeholders and tourism associations. Nonetheless, the evaluation team made every effort to include as many women as possible to accurately capture their perspectives.

Ethical considerations: The evaluation team incorporated the perspectives of both men and women from various agencies. All information was acquired only after securing informed consent from respondents. The data generated in discussions was kept anonymous, and data collection adhered to UNEG guidelines and UN standards of conduct.

4.5 Quantitative data collection

During the desk review, the team collected quantitative information and structured it into various tables to validate during KIIs and FGDs. The data and information available in the project's database were also used to gauge output indicators.

4.6 Data analysis

The evaluation team utilized a mixed-method approach, analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data and triangulating the results obtained from each type. In qualitative analysis, the team used both a thematic approach and a content-analysis tool to categorize available information and thereby pinpoint the key issues and concerns respondents raised. Quantitative data were analyzed using Excel.

Figure 2: The Gender result Effectiveness Scale

Gender Negative	Gender Blind	Gender Targeted	Gender Responsive	Gender Transformative
Result had a negative outcome that aggravated or reinforced gender inequalities and limiting norms	Result gave no attention to gender, and failed to acknowledge the different needs of men, women, girls and boys, and other marginalized populations	Result focused on the number of women, men, or marginalized populations that were targeted (e.g. 50/50 representation)	Result addressed the differential needs of men, women, or marginalized populations and focused on the equitable distribution of benefits, resources, status, rights, etc. but did not address root causes of inequalities	Result contributed to changes in norms, cultural values, power structures and the roots of gender inequalities and discriminations

4.7 Performance Standards

The evaluation team used the Gender Result Effectiveness Scale (GRES) and assessed the project's contribution to GESI outcomes (see Figure 2). Each project output was evaluated across five parameters: (i) gender-negative, (ii) gender-neutral, (iii) gender-targeted, (iv) gender-responsive, and (v) gender-transformative (see Figure 2). This scale was applied to identify potential opportunities that could guide the development of a new project, with a particular focus on addressing key gender gaps.

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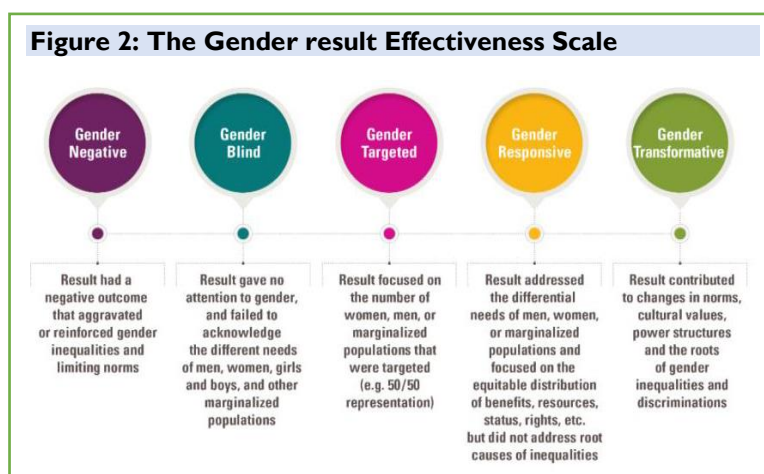
[6] Comprise of government representatives, at least one donor representative and UNDP representatives

Gender-responsive policy analysis and review tools were utilized during the document review process. The GRES scale was used to evaluate the outputs and outcomes of the activities. Gender sensitivity tools, including appropriate language, respect, comfort, and a supportive environment, were rigorously applied to assess attitudes and behaviors regarding gender, inclusion, and human rights (see Box 3). The following gender-responsive features were incorporated into KIIs, FGDs, and direct observations to ensure high-quality data collection:

- **Key informant interviews:** The evaluation team was mindful of gender sensitivity, employing gender-responsive language and behavior and adapting the checklist during KIIs.
- **Focus group discussions:** During the facilitation of FGDs, the evaluation team was highly attentive to the participants' sensitivity, ensuring respect for their culture, traditions, and rights. Efforts were made to create a comfortable environment for interviews. Gender-sensitive language and approaches were used throughout the discussions.
- **Direct observation:** Gender sensitivity and appreciative inquiry approaches were applied while observing activities and interacting with people.

4.8 Data triangulation and development of the evaluation report

To ensure its quality, the evaluation team developed this report based on insights gathered from interviews with key stakeholders and beneficiaries. To guarantee the reliability and validity of the data and contribute to an evidence-based evaluation, the team relied on triangulation for validation. Specifically, the team employed a wide variety of data sources and methodologies and meticulously cross-checked and validated them to ensure the inclusivity, accuracy, and credibility of the data and information. Primary information obtained through various tools such as KIIs, FGDs, direct observation, and the most significant change technique was compared to and cross-referenced with documented data. The team tested the consistency of the data and other findings obtained through different instruments to identify any factors that might have distorted the results. Once the data was validated, the team tabulated, synthesized, and analyzed it before drawing conclusions.

4.9 Limitations, challenges, risk, and mitigation

The evaluation team faced several challenges during data collection. The following section presents each of these challenges and the approach taken to mitigate them.

- **Coverage gaps:** The field mission covered only four of the nation's seven provinces and only 10 of 85 local governments, a limitation that potentially led to data gaps. To address this limitation, the team made an extra effort to gather information from the project and conduct interviews with relevant stakeholders. The selection of the 10 local governments was made to ensure they represented a diverse geographical range, broad programmatic coverage, and various types of interventions. Perspectives from stakeholders in other provinces and local governments were obtained through online interviews, which helped address data gaps.
- **Limited stakeholder availability:** Scheduling interviews was challenging due to stakeholders' limited availability. The team mitigated this challenge by proactively coordinating interview times and venues, including off-hours. A detailed field mission schedule was developed in consultation with the stakeholders, and the final schedules were shared with them prior to the commencement of the field mission. This approach facilitated stakeholder mobilization, even outside regular office hours. As a result, the evaluation team was able to engage with all planned stakeholders and ensure high-quality interactions.
- **Staff turnover:** The movement of staff led to a loss of institutional memory. To address this loss, the team worked closely with the UNDP Country Office and partner organizations and interviewed outgoing staff to capture key project details. Prior to this, the evaluation team identified the most knowledgeable and experienced staff with strong institutional memory about the project. A checklist was developed to ensure that no essential information was overlooked.
- **Monsoon impact:** The monsoon limited mobility, preventing fieldwork in Rong and Ilam municipalities of Ilam District. The team was, however, still able to gather relevant information from senior municipal officials by arranging meeting places in between comparatively accessible places. The field mission was scheduled according to the weather forecast from the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology to avoid disruptions from the monsoon. Aside from some impact in Ilam district, the field mission was not affected by the monsoon.

> **Box 3: Addressing cross-cutting themes during data collection and analysis**
>
> The evaluation team considered gender and human rights throughout the process of data collection, analysis, and reporting by using the following methods.
>
> - Conducting FDGs both with men and women thoroughly explore women's specific issues and concerns.
> - Ensuring that ethical considerations and tailored methods of data collection were integrated.
> - Employing gender-inclusive language and being aware of potential gender bias in evaluation questions and checklists.
> - Securing informed consent from all FGD participants, clearly explaining the evaluation's purpose, data usage, and procedures before collecting any data.
> - Formulating questions and checklists in a manner that enabled participants to openly share their experiences and perspectives regarding gender and human rights.
> - Avoiding framing questions in a way that assumes the absence of gender or human rights issues.
> - Creating a supportive environment in which participants could comfortably share their experiences, especially when collecting sensitive data on topics like gender-based violence and discrimination.
> - Ensuring that the data collection approach was culturally sensitive and respected human rights principles.

- Government official availability: The busy schedules of government officials and project implementation unit (PIU) staff at the end of the Nepali FY made it difficult to carry out the interview. Advance communication and sharing of the field mission details with government officials facilitated productive and high-quality discussions. The team responded by analyzing recent project data, engaging in detailed discussions with PIU staff, and accommodating off-hour interviews to ensure that is collection of data would be comprehensive data collection.

The potential data gaps arising from these five types of challenges were addressed through appropriate mitigation measures. As a result of these efforts, there were no data gaps affecting the evaluation. All data and information were collected according to the plan, meeting the required extent, timeliness, and depth.

5. Evaluation findings

5.1 Relevance

1. How well did the project design and approaches align with the specific needs and challenges faced by vulnerable tourism-dependent communities, entrepreneurs, and workers in the tourism sector, considering the outputs related to (i) short-term employment opportunities and (ii) income generation?

Finding 1: The project's design and strategies were effectively tailored to address the specific needs of the targeted populations; in particular, they created short-term employment and promoted skills-based tourism entrepreneurship. A total of 9,846 people, including 2,485 women, engaged in short-term employment, generating 162,437 person-days of work worth US$ 1,624,370. Moreover, approximately 1,920 individuals are now earning income in various tourism sectors by utilizing skills acquired through the project's capacity-building initiatives. Despite challenges posed by the pandemic and limited female participation, the project achieved positive results through collaboration with local governments and tourism associations on activities such as destination renovation. Although the comprehensive training strategy addressed diverse needs, there are gaps in post-training support and long-term impact assessment, as evidenced by limited follow-up and incomplete tracer studies.

a. Addressed the specific needs and challenges of the target people in the project's design: A careful review of the project's activities and outputs and interviews with stakeholders revealed that the project's design addressed the specific needs and challenges of the target people. The project was conceptualized to lessen the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector, which included the loss of jobs and primary sources of income among many workers in the tourism sector due to travel restrictions and lockdowns. The pandemic caused drastic income reductions, many job losses, and severe financial strain. Target people reported that the crisis exacerbated gender based domestic violence, mental health issues, resulted in educational disruptions, and, due to the limited support from existing social safety nets, eroded confidence. There was an acute need for reskilling and new employment opportunities in new sectors. Stakeholders and target people confirmed that the project's design did, in fact, help to address urgent needs and challenges, thereby helping to reduce employment and severe economic hardship. The project was designed to address the acute needs of the target people, particularly those requiring direct financial aid and

Remarks from stakeholders and target people during KIIs and FGDs
- *"…the project's support for short-term employment was seen as a lifeline for those who were severely impacted by the pandemic. It addressed the needs and challenges of people whose livelihoods suffered due to lockdowns. The short-term employment opportunities helped restore lost livelihoods, and skill development training enabled income generation in the job market. The project's approach, engaging people for just 10 to 40 days and providing only NPR 1000 per day, regardless of geographical area, faced some criticism and should be reconsidered in future projects…"*
- *"…the project's foundation was built on best practices and lessons learned from previous UNDP projects. These tested methods gave the project management confidence to replicate them successfully…"*
- *"…the project followed the linking relief to recovery and development (LRRD) approach, linking recovery with the long-term development of tourism and resilience. It not only applied the skills and knowledge gained from training during the recovery phase but also enhanced employment and income-generation opportunities for entrepreneurs and workers. This approach demonstrated the project's effective use of resources for the right purpose at the right time…"*

employment to mitigate the economic fallout. This aid was envisioned in careful coordination with the government, non-governmental organizations, and private-sector tourism trade associations, hereafter called 'tourism associations.' Short-term employment was created to address the immediate needs of the target people. The project's design was relevant because it helped to retain and even extend the skills of the target people to enhance their employability and increase their potential to earn income.

While the project design adopted a promising approach[7] to identify and assist target people, it encountered several challenges during operationalization. Pandemic-induced travel restrictions and stringent health protocols made it impossible for the project to conduct a participatory assessment of potential target

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[7] These approaches were (i) partnering with the private sector, (ii) developing the capacity of human resources, (iii) supporting the creation of tourism-based enterprises to promote a green economy, and (iv) enhancing sector-related data, information management, and digitalization, and formulating a comprehensive tourism recovery strategy.

people. In some cases, then, the project had to rely on lists provided by tourism associations and labor unions as no good-quality data on pandemic-affected people were available. The project developed criteria to identify target people, including local tourism workers working as daily wages, those with no alternative livelihood options, families headed by single women, persons with disabilities (PwDs), and so forth. Initially, the project considered selecting individuals with 'worker licenses,' but this idea was abandoned as requiring licenses would have excluded many target people in need during the pandemic. The project advised that tourism associations, local governments, and labor unions mandatorily adopt a GESI-responsive approach when finalizing participants/target people. With these efforts, a total of 9,846 people (2,485 women) were included in the short-term employment opportunities. The limited participation of women was not surprising, as fewer women than men are involved in the tourism sector.

The project's activities were relevant as they were selected in conjunction with local governments based on the acute needs of the target people. It followed two execution modalities: directly implementing certain strategic activities and partnering with local governments and tourism associations to implement others. Respecting the recovery phase, the project's approach to reaching as many target people as possible was commendable. The project also aimed not to repeatedly target the same workers while providing short-term employment opportunities. Using different documentation such as citizenship and payment through a bank account, the project team reported that very few individuals had participated more than once. This fact was verified by the evaluation team through rigorous investigation.

b. Provided short-term employment opportunities to target people: During the project's tenure, it generated 162,437 person-days of short-term employment, equivalent to US$ 1,275,955 (the average income per person was US$ 165). The project was crucial in creating short-term employment opportunities for target people through campaigns to clean, renovate, and reconstruct tourist destinations and engage in other community work.

The project's training strategy was effective, and, as a result, relevant. It offered three distinct types of training: beginner training for those entirely new to a field, licensing training for skilled individuals seeking certification, and refresher training for those who had previously received similar training but needed to update or expand their skills. This comprehensive approach ensured that the training met the diverse needs of the target people. The project offered post-training support on a limited scale, operating under the assumption that skills development training, coupled with proper licensing, would be enough to secure jobs for participants. However, Dadagau Homestay in Budhanilkantha, Dhadey Homestay in Putalibazar, and Sisipu Homestay in Dupcheswor—all representing marginalized groups—did receive essential goods to help operationalize their homestay businesses. Without a tracer study, it is challenging to provide exact data on the number of individuals who are currently engaged in income-generating activities using the skills, knowledge, and understanding acquired from the various trainings. The project has planned to conduct a tracer study soon to assess the status of training participants. The PIU's records and consultations with the tourism association revealed that approximately 1,920 individuals are earning income in different tourism sectors using the project's capacity-building initiatives. Licensed trekking and rafting guides, for example, have secured stable positions.

2. To what extent was the project design relevant and appropriate in line with the (i) political developments, (ii) national and sub-national development priorities of GoN, (iii) UNDP's strategic plan, (iv) UNDP CPD priorities, and (v) need of intended beneficiaries?

Finding 2: The project's design was relevant to and well-aligned with Nepal's political landscape, development priorities, and UNDP's strategic objectives. Despite pandemic-triggered disruptions, it supported the government's focus on tourism for economic growth, job creation, and sustainability. By advancing tourism recovery, economic resilience, and livelihood diversification, the project matched federal, provincial, and local government goals. It also supported UNDP's aims of fostering sustainable livelihoods and economic recovery, effectively addressing the immediate needs of the targeted populations through job creation and stakeholder capacity-building. Participatory assessment faced challenges due to pandemic travel restrictions. Provincial governments were minimally involved due to their limited role in the ProDoc, and women's participation was restricted, as fewer women were engaged in the tourism sector compared to men.

a. Aligned the project's design with political developments and the government's development priorities: Nepal's various policies, plans, and strategies emphasize Nepal's determination to utilize tourism as a means for boosting socio-economic development, improving infrastructure, promoting sustainability, and ensuring inclusive growth. These policies and plans underscore the crucial role that the sector is to play in the nation's economic growth and livelihood enhancement. They further prioritize income generation, skill

development for employment, tourism service standardization, and the formulation of a tourism recovery strategy (see section 1.2, chapter 1, for details). The evaluation team found a strong correlation between the project's design and the provisions and mandates of existing policies. Policies mandate that Nepal's three tiers of government play a key role in protecting and promoting tourism-related initiatives for poverty reduction. Indeed, provincial and local governments have already formulated some plans and programs and allocated financial resources to promote tourism activities as economic development for prosperity.

At the federal level, the project contributed significantly to the formulation of four strategies, (i) National Tourism Recovery Strategy (2021), (ii) Domestic Tourism Strategy and Action Plan (2022), (iii) Green Tourism Strategy (2023), and (iv) Tourism Strategy and Action Plan Development Guidelines (2024) through a series of review-and-reflection sessions. There were no direct linkages at the provincial government level, but provincial governments were instrumental in selecting local governments for the implementation, providing periodic inputs to shape policy formulation, and providing technical assistance during training sessions. Local governments, for their part, were crucial in operationalizing the project's plans and programs. Ward chairpersons and their teams participated in feasibility studies for potential project activities. Despite tourism being highlighted as a key approach to promoting the prosperity and well-being of each local government, support for tourism often remained a slogan as both commitments to and resources for tourism were limited. During interviews, stakeholders assured us that the project was well aligned with the agenda of three tiers of government by focusing on economic recovery, infrastructure development, and social protection. The project design was relevant because it was designed to revive the tourism sector by supporting the livelihoods of the target people and enhancing the capacity of the NTB and other relevant stakeholders to accelerate recovery efforts.

b. Aligned project's design with UNDP's strategic plan and CPD priorities: The document review provided solid evidence that the project was well-aligned with UNDP's strategic plan and the priorities of the UNDP CPD. The project focuses on economic resilience, job creation, and sustainable development. The project revitalized the tourism sector by creating short-term jobs for 9,846 people and generating US$1,624,370 in wages. It provided sustainable income to 1,920 individuals, built and renovated 381 tourism infrastructures, and trained 2,288 people in tourism skills. This resulted in improved livelihoods for 13,867 people directly and 55,468 indirectly. The project exceeded its target by supporting 9,846 workers and conducting 53 skill-based training programs for 3,837 individuals. It also enhanced the capacity of NTB and other stakeholders, trained 144 local government staff in tourism policy and planning, and helped 15 local governments develop effective tourism strategies. Overall, the project met its outcome of revitalizing the tourism sector, supporting livelihood recovery for workers, and strengthening stakeholder capacity for accelerated recovery efforts. The project's progress has significantly contributed to several key frameworks and outcomes, including: (i) UNDP's Strategic Plan Output, (ii) Two CPD outputs and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) Outcome 1, (iii) the Country Programme Document (CPD) 2023-2027 Outcome, and (iv) CPD Output 1.2, as outlined below:
- **UNDP's Strategic Plan Output 1.1.2** focuses on empowering marginalized groups by providing universal access to basic services, financial and non-financial assets, and opportunities to build productive capacities for sustainable livelihoods and jobs. The project's three outputs were aligned with this objective.
- **UNDAF Outcome 1 and 2 CPD outputs** emphasize that by 2022, impoverished, economically vulnerable, unemployed, and underemployed individuals should have increased access to sustainable livelihoods, safe and decent employment, and income opportunities.
- **CPD Outputs 1.1 and 1.2** highlight the need for policy, institutional, and capacity development solutions to improve disaster and climate-resilient livelihoods, productive employment, and increased productivity in rural areas, as well as expanded access to sustainable livelihoods and income for women, youth, the poor, and other marginalized groups.
- **CPD 2023-2027 Outcome** envisions that by 2027, more people, particularly women, youth, and the most marginalized and poor, will actively participate in and benefit from coordinated, inclusive, participatory, transparent, and gender-responsive governance, as well as improved access to justice and human rights at the federal, provincial, and local levels.
- **CPD Output 1.2** specifically aims to expand access to sustainable livelihoods and income for women, youth, the poor, and other marginalized groups.

c. Aligned project's design with the needs of the target people: The immediate needs of the target people included the restoration of employment opportunities and livelihood diversification to help them return to normalcy through economic recovery. The project's overall goal and objectives revolve around the needs of the target people, making its design relevant. The project design largely focused on addressing the multi-

faceted challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and supporting the target people in recovering their livelihoods.

3. To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant and preceding projects and interventions incorporated in project design?

Finding 3: *The project's design effectively integrated lessons from previous disaster response initiatives in Nepal, including the TRPAP and the Immediate Livelihood Support for the Most Vulnerable Workforce in the Tourism Sector Pilot project. It also incorporated elements from UNDP's Support to Knowledge and Lifelong Skills Project. Key lessons included the need for infrastructure restoration, community-based tourism, livelihood diversification, and capacity-building. By applying these insights, the project was well-positioned to support economic revival, job creation, and resilience in the post-pandemic recovery context.*

a. Used lessons from UNDP's earlier projects: Before the pandemic, Nepal implemented various recovery projects in response to disasters like the 2015 earthquake, the 2017 floods, the 2018 Karnali drought, and the 2019 tornado. These efforts often included rebuilding and revitalizing the tourism sector indirectly. This project benefited from two earlier initiatives of NTB and UNDP: the Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Program (TRPAP[8], 2001-2007) and the pilot project Immediate Livelihood Support for the Most Vulnerable Workforce in the Tourism Sector (2020). The project adopted best practices, such as scaling up the reconstruction of small-scale tourism infrastructures through a matching fund modality from the Community Infrastructure and Livelihood Recovery Project (CILRP).[9] The project adopted best practices from the UNDP's earlier Partnership for Quality Tourism (PQT) Project, conducted from 1996 to 1997 in collaboration with NTB and MoCTCA.[10]These projects focused on livelihood diversification and sustainable tourism to reduce poverty. In addition, the project drew lessons from UNDP's Support to Knowledge and Lifelong Skills Project, which emphasized the importance of skill development for income generation and licensing training. Other similar interventions by various agencies also provided insights. Key learnings included the importance of infrastructure restoration, local resource- and skill-based livelihood diversification, community-based tourism, and capacity-building for disaster recovery. While earlier interventions were not specifically designed for pandemic recovery, they also aimed to revive economies, create jobs, and enhance resilience. Thus, they provided valuable lessons and frameworks that this project was able to adapt.

b. Used of lessons from other projects: Earlier interventions highlighted the importance of recovery and infrastructure rebuilding, the effectiveness of community-based tourism in enhancing local resilience, the benefits of livelihood diversification, and the need for capacity-building among tourism stakeholders. The project design team integrated these lessons after reviewing and engaging in a series of interactions with relevant stakeholders.

4. To what extent were the (i) project interventions, (ii) structure, and (iii) implementation arrangements relevant and logical to the project's theory of change? Are they still valid?

Finding 4: *The project's design and implementation were aligned with its ToC and relevant to the broader context. However, the ToC did not address key barriers affecting output and impact drivers or account for assumptions influencing impacts. It effectively addressed immediate COVID-19 impacts through short-term employment in tourism infrastructure, entrepreneurship promotion, and policy advocacy. However, the short duration of the project and the payment of fixed daily wages regardless of location were criticized and should be reconsidered in future initiatives. The project structure involved the UNDP and the PIU, as well as, for technical support and oversight, the NTB. The project used a results framework, stakeholder mapping, and joint monitoring to ensure good governance and alignment with national priorities, sustainable tourism, and local ownership.*

a. Relevance of project interventions to the project's ToC: The project's ToC followed a systematic progression, however, the ToC did not include challenges and critical barriers affecting output and impact drivers, nor did it account for assumptions influencing impacts. The project was designed to achieve three interconnected outputs to enhance the lives and livelihoods of the target people, those affected by COVID-19. The first output aims to provide short-term employment opportunities to address the immediate livelihood needs of those target people who lost their jobs due to COVID-19. The second output focuses on generating income through entrepreneurship in the tourism sector, while the third output centers on

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[8] Product development, skill enhancement, and knowledge management were derived from TRPAP. The project was implemented in six districts, implemented by UNDP with funding from DfID.
[9] Implemented from 2015 to 2020 and funded by multiple development partners.
[10] PQT highlighted the vital role of private sector involvement in promoting Nepal's tourism sector. Based on PQT's recommendations, NTB was established in 1998 through Parliament Act.

policy advocacy. The key project interventions[11] were closely interconnected and together enhanced the overall outcomes of the project. The selection of project interventions and activities was not arbitrary but instead took place only after rigorous interaction with local communities and government stakeholders.

Stakeholders highlighted that the project adhered to key principles, among them community ownership, addressing genuine needs, fostering partnerships, and optimizing resources during the intervention process. Quick feasibility assessments with relevant stakeholders were conducted before finalizing interventions. Since the project's focus was recovery, it prioritized short-term employment schemes that required just a few resources and demonstrated rapid results. Activities like renovating tourism infrastructure, installing signage and waste management bins, trekking trail and constructing green cycle trails were chosen to provide short-term employment ranging from 10 to 40 days, depending on the nature of the work. This approach ensured that the project's interventions were relevant to its ToC.

b. Relevance of the project's structure to the project's TOC: The project's structure involved collaboration with UNDP, the PIU, and the NTB. UNDP provided technical assistance, support, and, through regular monitoring, and quality assurance. The PIU implemented project activities as outlined in the approved annual work plan (AWP), partnering with local governments and tourism associations. NTB led the project, coordinating its execution with UNDP, the PIU, and tourism associations, and provided strategic oversight through the Project Board. This arrangement ensured that the project's structure was relevant to its ToC.

c. Relevance of implementation arrangements to the project's ToC: The project implementation involved several key elements: developing a results and resources framework (RRF), conducting stakeholder mapping and coordination, developing AWPs, selecting local governments and tourism destinations, and executing the activities of the approved AWP. From the start, UNDP committed to supporting procurement and assisting in quality assurance. The PIU facilitated review sessions to address critical needs as identified by itself, the National Project Coordinator (NPC), and the UNDP Portfolio Manager along with reporting weekly on deliveries and prioritizing the tasks of the upcoming week. The project's implementation strategies[12] also nicely supported implementation arrangements. To ensure smooth implementation and local ownership, the project worked closely with local governments, communities, and user committees (UCs) to share costs. The evidence above indicates that the interventions, implementation arrangements, and strategies remain valid and align with the project's ToC.

5. In the context of a post-pandemic situation, how valid and relevant are the objectives of the program, especially regarding the (i) enhancement of employment opportunities and (ii) income generation for entrepreneurs and workers in major tourist destinations?

Finding 5: The project's objectives—enhancing employment and income for tourism workers and entrepreneurs—are still relevant in the post-pandemic context. Its two-phase approach—initial recovery followed by resilience-building—effectively bridged short-term needs and long-term development by renovating infrastructure, building green trails, and providing skill training. While the cash-for-work strategy generated short-term employment, significant ongoing support is needed as 90% of tourism-dependent communities are still underserved. The project's income-generation goals continue to be critical due to the severe decline in revenue and many job losses in the tourism sector. The project's support for those affected is essential.

a. Relevance of the project's objectives in enhancing employment opportunities in the post-pandemic situation: The project was divided into two main phases: recovery and resilience. From 2021 to 2022, it focused on recovery, and then, from 2023 to 2024, it transitioned to resilience. During the resilience phase, the project aimed to standardize tourism services, institutionalize best practices, and foster economic development. Its goal of enhancing employment opportunities in the post-pandemic context remains relevant. The project followed a 'linking relief, recovery, and development (LRRD)' approach, bridging the gap between short-term recovery and long-term development. This approach was achieved by coordinating efforts among the relevant stakeholders. The cash-for-work approach was effective in generating short-term employment. However, despite this comprehensive approach, 90% of tourism-dependent communities still need ongoing support to meet their immediate livelihood needs, as the project only planned to reach 10% of the total population to be served due to limited resources.

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[11] (i) providing short-term employment to tourism workers for immediate livelihood support through the construction and rehabilitation of small-scale tourism infrastructures, (ii) promoting income generation through skill-based training that also links tourism-based entrepreneurship, and (iii) supporting tourism recovery-based policy advocacy.

[12] Aligning with national priorities through partnerships with provincial and local governments and relevant ministries, adopting an integrated approach to developing small-scale tourism infrastructure, providing short-term employment opportunities for target people, emphasizing cost-effectiveness by using local resources and materials, renovating and constructing sustainable trails and eco-friendly infrastructures, promoting domestic tourism, partnering with the private sector and tourism associations, and promoting gender equality, women's empowerment, and social inclusion.

b. Relevance of the project's objectives for generating income in the post-pandemic situation: The project's objectives remain crucial. Entrepreneurs and workers in key tourist destinations still need assistance in generating income after the pandemic. It mainly focused on helping those who had lost their jobs or faced disruptions in their incomes. According to a UNDP rapid assessment (2020), the tourism sector, including hotels, restaurants, and travel agencies, expects revenue to drop by over 50% and job losses to exceed 25%, losses that will have long-term economic consequences. With such a prediction, it is clear that the project's income-generating objectives are still relevant.

5.2 Coherence

1. *How well do the outputs integrate and complement each other (e.g. UNDP priority, SDG agenda, National Tourism Strategy) in contributing to the overall goal of tourism recovery? Are there any inconsistencies or gaps in the project's approach?*

Finding 6: The project's outputs are well-integrated; it has effectively advanced tourism recovery through short-term employment, income generation, and policy advocacy. By focusing on small-scale infrastructure, skill enhancement, and community engagement, the project has promoted responsible tourism and resilience, in alignment with UNDP priorities, the SDG agenda, and national tourism policies. It supported SDGs 1, 5, 8, and 10. However, there are gaps, including the need for a more equitable distribution of benefits, a robust M&E framework, and an objective beneficiary selection process. Improvements in training assessments and content are also needed. Enhanced stakeholder coordination and policy alignment with local realities could further boost the project's effectiveness in achieving sustainable tourism recovery. The project-developed tourism strategies have been submitted to the NTB for approval and endorsement.

a. Contributed to the overall goal of tourism recovery through integrated project outputs: The project's three outputs[13] were effectively integrated and complemented each other to contribute to tourism recovery. Stakeholders confirmed that investments in infrastructure improved tourism facilities, capacity-building enhanced local skills and entrepreneurship, and community engagement ensured local input into tourism development, thereby fostering ownership and inclusivity. These efforts promoted responsible tourism practices and enhanced resilient tourist destinations, supporting a holistic approach to tourism recovery. Interviews with key informants revealed

> **Box 4: Policy review**
> The project developed four key strategies all in draft form, align with the National Tourism Strategic Plan (2016-2025), which includes 11 specialized strategies and action plans. The main aspects of each strategy are outlined below.
>
> a. National Strategy for Tourism Recovery (2021): The pandemic severely affected Nepal's tourism sector, reducing the workforce as follows: 37% of businesses had no employees, 28% reduced their workforce to 25%, 14% to 50%, 9% to 75%, and just 9% retained their full workforce. A framework for the recovery of the tourism sector has accorded priority to 10 strategies. These strategies aim to offer targeted analysis and recommendations to the GoN and the NTB, supporting the national and sectoral planning processes and enhancing the resilience of the tourism sector against the impacts of pandemics and climate change.
>
> b. Domestic Tourism Promotion Strategy (2022): It was designed to enhance domestic tourism through a comprehensive promotion plan, policy framework, and strategic roles for the three tiers of government. It proposes 13 strategies with actionable plans and assigns specific responsibilities for domestic tourism promotion. While these strategies align with the tourism recovery framework, further details on operational and responsibility aspects are needed. This strategy also included an analysis of internal tourism status, existing policies, gaps, policy reforms, and government roles. Notably, tourism infrastructure developed under this project supports the promotion of domestic tourism at the local level.
>
> c. Green Tourism Strategy for Sustainable Development (2023): The strategy for climate-resilient tourism outlines 11 strategies[1] for developing green tourism. It involved a comprehensive review of relevant policies and proposes a two-phase implementation plan. The first phase includes creating a detailed five-year work plan within the first year of implementation. Then there will be biennial progress reviews and a comprehensive review in the fourth year. The second phase will develop a new five-year plan based on the findings from the initial phase.
>
> d. Tourism Strategy and Action Plan Development Guidelines (2024): The project contributed to develop this guideline which was helped to formulate tourism strategy and action plan at the local government level.

that the project is well aligned with the priorities of the UNDP, the SDG agenda, and tourism policies. It also contributed to developing four strategies (see Box 4), and now those strategies are already submitted to NTB. Policy discourse also helped build the capacity of and sensitize local governments to policies, facilitate the development of knowledge products, and standardize services. Moreover, the project developed 13 types of knowledge products (all new) in both printed and digital forms. These included reference books, training manuals, standards, pocketbooks, policies, and strategies. In response to the high demand, the "Reference Book for Trekking Guides" (2021) and "Training Manual for Tour Product

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[13] These outputs focus on short-term employment, income generation, and policy advocacy, and work together in areas such as small-scale tourism infrastructure development, capacity-building, and community engagement.

Development, Airline Ticketing, and Customer Services" were reprinted in 2023 (see Annex 9, Table 13). These products helped disseminate the project's key messages to a broad audience. In addition, the project's concerns were reflected in the Nepal government's 73-point tourism declaration. The project's interventions contributed especially to fulfilling SDGs 1, 5, 8, and 10.

b. Addressed any inconsistencies or gaps in the project's approach based on the context: While the project has made significant strides, its approach still has several inconsistencies and gaps. These include ensuring a more equitable distribution of benefits among all segments of the population, particularly marginalized groups such as Dalits, Janjati, PwDs, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ+) individuals. Stakeholders opined that a more robust M&E framework is needed to track the project's impact and to ensure that interventions effectively reach those most in need. They also said that the selection of

> **Remarks from stakeholders and target people during KIIs and FGDs**
> - *"…the project's outputs are integrated well, complement each other, and align with UNDP priorities and Nepal's tourism policies. It addressed policy gaps related to recovery and domestic tourism, topics not adequately covered in existing policies. The project's efforts in developing policies for recovery, domestic tourism, and green tourism were widely appreciated by stakeholders and will be remembered for years. However, the project needs to fully streamline the policy documents as they have not yet been approved…"*
> - *"…the project effectively utilized the experiences of the NTB, DoT, MoCTCA, local governments, and previous UNDP projects. However, it overlooked the role that provincial governments could have played and did not establish strong connections with other INGO-operated tourism projects. In addition, academia, which focuses on technology and innovation in the tourism sector, was not formally involved…"*

beneficiaries was not robust as it relied heavily on the word of tourism associations and used subjective criteria instead of a thorough and objective selection process. During the recovery phase, safety protocols made equitable selection almost impossible.

Key informants also opined that since the project document (ProDoc) did not specify a target people explicitly, judgments in determining beneficiaries had turned out to be subjective. They claimed that the project's training needs assessments and capacity-gap analyses were inadequate, as were the actual training content and sessions. There was no systematic approach to incorporating pre- and post-tests and no flexibility in training content and methods tailored to participants' performance. While these criticisms are partly true and there is room for improvement, it is important to note that the project was not designed to address regular tourism development issues but crucial issues that arose during the pandemic recovery. Strengthening coordination among stakeholders and aligning policies more closely with local realities could improve the project's effectiveness in achieving sustainable tourism recovery.

2. *How well does the intervention fit in a changed context?*

Finding 7: The intervention, which was designed to promote tourism recovery during the 2020 pandemic, is still rational. Even in the current context, it aligns with national priorities for economic recovery and sustainable tourism by addressing immediate challenges and fostering long-term resilience. By emphasizing infrastructure improvements, capacity-building, and community engagement, the project has helped revive Nepal's tourism sector. Its adaptive approach and its adaptions, which include flexible implementation, safety adjustments, revisions in promotional strategies, and enhancements of digital capabilities—have ensured its continued consistency, relevance and effectiveness in rebuilding Nepal's tourism sector amidst evolving pandemic challenges.

a. The intervention fits well within the current context: By addressing immediate economic challenges while at the same time fostering long-term resilience, it aligned with national priorities for economic recovery and sustainable tourism development. In the view of stakeholders, the project's emphasis on infrastructure improvements, capacity-building, and community engagement has supported the revival of Nepal's tourism sector, which was severely impacted by the pandemic. Its adaptive approach to the changing pandemic dynamics, coupled with its focus on inclusivity and sustainability, ensures that the project effectively contributes to rebuilding Nepal's tourism sector in a resilient and inclusive manner.

b. Adaptation and adjustment of types of interventions to suit the changed circumstances: The tourism recovery intervention has been adjusted to suit the changing circumstances. This adaptation included flexible implementation, modifications to safety protocols and activities, revisions in promotional strategies to match the evolving travel trends and behaviors of the target people, and resource reallocation to support sectors less affected by travel restrictions. In 2021, recognizing the significance of Output 1, UNDP allocated an additional US$ 50,000 to it for short-term employment. Additionally, US$ 25,000 was reallocated from Output 3 to Output 1. Output 2 remained unchanged. Later, another US$ 40,000 was redirected from Output 3 to Output 1 to expand the reach of short-term employment opportunities for livelihood recovery. In August 2023, the project modified some activities under outputs 2 and 3 (see Annex

9, Table 8). These changes were relevant and logical and created many opportunities for resource allocation and infrastructure improvement. Stakeholders emphasized that the project also enhanced digital capabilities that support virtual tourism experiences and online marketing in response to the increased reliance on digital platforms witnessed during the pandemic. These adjustments ensured the intervention remained effective in navigating the uncertainties and challenges of the pandemic while promoting sustainable tourism recovery in Nepal.

3. *To what extent does the intervention address the synergies and interlinkages with other interventions carried out by the (i) Nepal Tourism Board, (ii) Department of Tourism, (iii) Local Government, (iv) Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, and (v) UNDP's previous projects?*

Finding 8: *The intervention effectively leveraged synergies with the NTB, DoT, local governments, MoCTCA, and UNDP's previous projects. It aligned strategies and resources with the NTB and DoT to enhance destination marketing and infrastructure and incorporated feedback from provincial governments to modify tourism destinations. The MoCTCA contributed to training, policy formulation, and project operations, while continuous coordination with local governments ensured alignment with local priorities. The intervention also built on previous UNDP projects by integrating sustainable tourism and digital capabilities. However, the project needs to streamline policy documents, better involve provincial governments and INGO-operated tourism projects, and formally engage academia in technology and innovation.*

a. Created synergies and connections with the efforts of the NTB and the DoT: The project created synergies with the NTB and the DoT by aligning strategies, sharing human resources, coordinating activities, leveraging organizational brands, and scaling up best practices (see Section 6.1). In the views of stakeholders, the project utilized the NTB and the DoT's expertise and networks to enhance destination marketing, develop tourism infrastructure, and promote tourism-based entrepreneurship. The NTB played a crucial role, focusing on inclusive and innovative tourism interventions. The DoT oversaw large tourism infrastructure projects, developed guidelines for the Great Himalayan Trail, prepared and installed signage and information boards in national parks and protected areas, and served as technical resource input in training sessions. By working closely with the NTB and the DoT, the intervention maximized its impact, supported sustainable tourism practices, and effectively contributed to the recovery and growth. That said, although the DoT made these and more contributions, the ProDoc does not explicitly detail the DoT's strategic involvement.

b. Aligned intervention with local governments and the MoCTCA: The role of the MoTACA has been multifaceted and instrumental. It has significantly contributed to various training sessions, played a key role in the declaration of the 73-tourism agenda, and influenced policy formulation and amendments through review sessions. It also operationalized the Project Board,[14] facilitated joint meetings and monitoring, and assisted in the development of tourism profiling. As a result, the project helped to develop an information platform, digitized 100 destinations, and drafted the SPA and Wellness Implementation guideline for systematic regulation.

Joint meetings with the MoCTCA, DoT, the project team, local and provincial governments, and the NTB resulted in effective provincial coordination (though the role of provincial governments was not explicitly specified in the ProDoc). Stakeholders said that the project's intervention aligned closely with local governments and the MoCTCA plans and programs. It integrated local priorities and policies, ensuring consistency with national tourism strategies and leveraging government resources for effective implementation. Stakeholders claimed that this alignment had strengthened coordination, enhanced destination management, promoted inclusive growth, and contributed to the revitalization of Nepal's tourism sector post-pandemic.

c. Intervention built upon or related to UNDP's previous projects in the tourism sector: The project's interventions build upon UNDP's previous tourism projects by leveraging lessons learned and expanding successful strategies. The project incorporated the principles of sustainable tourism, community-based tourism, community engagement, and inclusive development, all principles foundational to earlier UNDP initiatives. Stakeholders opined that the current project had extended these efforts to address new pandemic challenges, such as implementing health protocols, supporting economic recovery, and enhancing

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[14] The project boards comprises representatives from the government, donor, and UNDP. TAAN is a special invitee. The board may invite representatives from the tourism industry and provincial and local government to serve as members as appropriate. There is a provision for the chief executive officer of the NTB (the implementing partner) to be the executive/national project director and assume overall responsibility for results and resources. Representatives of the MoCTCA, Ministry of Finance, and UNDP are the members of the board.

digital tourism capabilities. By building on established frameworks and experiences, the project's intervention ensured continuity in promoting resilient and sustainable tourism practices in Nepal.

5.3 Efficiency

1. *To what extent were resources (financial, human, institutional, and technical) strategically allocated and efficiently used to achieve results promptly and address GESI inequality and root causes?*

Finding 9: The project efficiently allocated and utilized financial, human, institutional, and technical resources to meet its objectives by promoting gender equality and social inclusion. The project used a strategic approach to generate US$1.61 million in cash, US$ 0.21 million in kind, and US$1.4 million in material co- and parallel financing for generating synergetic impacts. A total of 282 small-scale tourism infrastructures were constructed and 99 were renovated, a measure that helped to revitalize local tourism destinations. It has prepared a gender action plan with indicators and enforced it. Financial resources were directed towards employment programs, entrepreneurship support, and policy advocacy, and the contributions of local governments were substantial. Human resources supported training and capacity-building, while institutional backing ensured effective stakeholder coordination. Despite efficient management by NPCs, among the NTB directors, however, not all departments engaged in the project equally or learned from one another; a cross-departmental review workshop could remedy this shortcoming. Technical resources, including digital platforms and data analysis, improved project efficiency. The project promoted equitable opportunities for women and marginalized groups and integrated GESI considerations as far as possible in the participation level. However, the project did not fully address the root causes of gender inequality and social exclusion.

a. **Allocated financial, human, institutional, and technical resources to achieve results:** The project strategically allocated financial, human, institutional, and technical resources to promptly achieve results.

- **Financial resources** funded short-term employment supported tourism-based entrepreneurship through grants and capacity-building initiatives, and advocated for policy changes to enhance the resilience of the tourism sector. The project used a strategic approach to generate US$1.4 million in cash, US$ 0.32 million in kind, and US$1.37 million in material co- and parallel financing for generating synergetic impacts. The project received more than 100 commitment letters from local governments. The project effectively leveraged financial resources from local governments through 88 LoA and 14 LVGA.
- **Human resources** were deployed to build the capacity of local entrepreneurs and workers. Given the extensive workload and the geographical areas to be covered, the current human resources structure of the project is insufficient. There is a need to appoint full-time GESI and M&E officers, who would also handle communication tasks. Because tourism associations and other partners identified gaps in the tourism sector, the project was able to tailor its capacity-building package effectively. The project effectively utilized the NTB's strong human capacity and branding, with significant contributions from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who served as Member Secretary of the Project Board and National Project Director. The National Project Coordinators provided technical support throughout the project. The PIU collaborated closely with the NTB's senior team in planning, coordination, implementation, and joint monitoring. The project also introduced interventions for specific groups in its effort to challenge gender stereotypes and roles. It also supported the development of guidelines such as the SPA and Wellness operating standards in coordination with the SPA association. These guidelines are currently being formalized. However, while NPCs and one of the NTB directors supported implementing the project efficiently, not all departments were equally engaged or interested in learning from each other in the absence of regular practice of review and reflection sessions, and workshops. A 'learning cum review workshop' involving all departments and projects under the NTB would help address this gap.
- **Technical resources** were utilized for digital platforms, data analysis, and monitoring, all of which were used to enhance project efficiency. To foster entrepreneurship, the project provided training, orientation, and technical assistance. It also helped to sharpen the skills and improve the resources of local businesses promoting local products. During the project's tenure, 282 small-scale tourism infrastructures were established and 99 renovated, a measure that helped to revitalize local tourism destinations. Tourism associations and professional agencies like NMA played a key role in planning capacity-building, supporting coordination, and sharing financial resources, identifying training needs and gaps, arranging logistics, selecting participants and resource persons, finalizing course content, and delivering training.
- **Institutional resources** ensured that the project could effectively coordinate with local governments and tourism associations to streamline policy advocacy and institutional development. Stakeholders said that NTB's provincial chapter of Pokhara provided technical assistance but not in an adequate manner. At the federal level, the project benefited from the expertise of senior MoTACA and DoT officials, both current and retired, all of whom shared their extensive experience in tourism promotion, capacity building, and policy formulation.

b. **Used available resources to address gender inequality and social exclusion:** The project efficiently utilized financial, human, institutional, and technical resources to address gender and social exclusion issues across its initiatives. It also prepared a Gender Action Plan (see Box 5 above) with indicators and enforced it.[15]

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[15] UNDP has categorized this project as "GEN 2," indicating that gender equality is a significant objective. The four-point scale used includes GEN0 (not expected to contribute to gender equality), GEN1 (contributes to gender equality in a limited way), GEN2 (gender equality is a significant objective), and GEN3 (gender equality is the principal objective).

Financial resources were allocated that promoted short-term employment and entrepreneurship development opportunities for the target people. Human resources were deployed to conduct capacity-building training and sensitization programs to empower target people in the tourism sector. Institutional support ensured that policies and practices were inclusive, responded to gender issues, and fostered a supportive environment for equitable participation. Technical resources enabled data-driven decision-making and the monitoring of gender equality and social inclusion outcomes, ensuring accountability and effectively reducing inequalities. This integrated approach successfully promoted social inclusion and economic empowerment within Nepal's post-pandemic tourism recovery efforts. The project identified dimensions of inequalities and exclusion and their root causes during its design phase. It mandated the integration of GESI in every stage of all interventions with its partners. The project's scope does not, however, extend to addressing the root causes of gender inequality and social exclusion for transformative change.

> **Box 5: Overall Assessment of Gender Action Plan**
> The project has prepared a Gender Action Plan to ensure the inclusion of women, youth, Dalit, Janjati, and other groups among beneficiaries. LoA and LVGA agreements with partners include clauses specifying target group participation and require segregated data reporting for various support areas.
> - **Output 1:** Clauses in LoA and LVGA agreements aim to increase the participation of women, youth, Dalit, and Janjati in short-term employment, marking a targeted gender intervention.
> - **Output 2:** Exclusive skill development programs for women, LGBTIQ+, Dalit, and Janjati have broken gender stereotypes, enabling them to work in tourism-related jobs. LoA agreements explicitly aim to increase participation from these groups. Local governments must ensure at least 33% of executive committee members are women, promoting female leadership.
> - **Output 3:** The project supported the formulation of four tourism strategies and guidelines, all gender-neutral/blind. It also developed standard tourism service guidelines, training manuals, a tourism database, digitized tourism destinations, and a TSA, all of which are gender-neutral/blind. Sustainable tourism clubs were established in schools, ensuring female participation in their executive committees. These activities aim to shift from gender-neutral/blind to gender-sensitive.

2. Was the existing project management structure, and M&E system appropriate and efficient in generating the

> **Remarks from stakeholders and target people during KIIs and FGDs**
> - *"…the project successfully mobilized financial, human, institutional, and technical resources to meet the actions specified in the approved AWP. Being housed within the NTB and implemented through a high-authority project board, it leveraged NTB's connections, networks, and experiences effectively…"*
> - *"…the project's current human resources structure is inadequate. To meet its overall goals, full-time GESI and M&E cum communication officers are needed. These roles are essential for integrating GESI into each project phase, ensuring a robust M&E system, and documenting successes and failures case studies…"*
> - *"…the project's cost-sharing approach was widely appreciated by stakeholders, with each participating local government contributing at least 50% of the total resources required. This strategy was highly successful, as it not only increased the budget but also expanded the project's outreach and fostered a sense of ownership. No corruption cases were reported, highlighting the project's transparent use of resources, which proved both efficient and cost-effective…"*
> - *"…the project operated in a cost-effective and cost-efficient manner by optimizing resource utilization and maximizing output relative to expenditure. Through rigorous budget management, leveraging local resources, and adopting innovative technologies, the project minimized costs without compromising quality. Strategies such as bulk purchasing, energy-efficient operations, and sustainable practices helped reduce overhead and operational expenses…"*

expected results, considering the (i) renovation and development of tourism products and (ii) increased digitization efforts?

> ***Finding 10:*** *The project management structure and M&E system were effective in renovating tourism products and advancing digitization. The project allocated approximately 5% of its budget to M&E activities. The PIU, with support from the NPC and the NPD, and overseen by UNDP, ensured efficient execution. Challenges included absence of full time NPM, dedicated IT, M&E and GESI officers. Despite these problems, however, the project successfully developed infrastructure, built capacity, and reformed policy. The M&E system, initially manual and later upgraded with an online portal, effectively tracked digitization impacts and project performance. Future reporting should combine current and cumulative progress for a comprehensive view and integrate GESI considerations with segregated data more thoroughly.*

a. Effectiveness of project management structure in renovating and developing tourism products: To manage the project, a PIU[16] was established to support the day-to-day project implementation. A NPC, managed by the NTB, assisted in the implementation of project activities and technical backstopping. The National Project Manager (NPM), under the management of the UNDP, was responsible for steering the project's activities to ensure smooth and efficient progress. UNDP's Portfolio Manager provided overall

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[16] The PIU comprises a NPM, livelihood/enterprise specialist, an admin and finance officer, an infrastructure support engineer, and a driver. In addition, to create learning opportunities for youths, there is a provision for engaging interns. This initiative ensured that youths gained practical experience and contributed to the project's success.

quality assurance through strategic oversight, while thematic advisors from UNDP offered strategic guidance in their respective areas of expertise.

The project management structure is integrated within the NTB. The Project Board meets twice a year to endorse decisions; it has met 10 times thus far (refer Box 6). The PIU absence both dedicated M&E and dedicated GESI officers. The absence of dedicated IT staff hindered efforts to advance the digitization of tourism promotion. Thus, the responsibilities of these two posts have been distributed among the technical team, significantly increasing their workload. After 13 months, there was a turnover in the NPM position, and it was not refilled. Instead, the Livelihood/Enterprise Specialist was appointed as acting NPM to maintain project continuity. The communication focal person, an individual consultant, left the job in July 2024 during a crucial phase of developing and synthesizing knowledge products. The project is now recruiting a new consultant. Stakeholders noted that the NPD and the NPC both play instrumental roles in enhancing the project's performance. This project management structure proved effective in achieving the desired outcomes of renovating and developing tourism products. The fact that clear roles and responsibilities were allotted to various stakeholders ensured the efficient utilization of resources. Regular monitoring and adaptive management enabled timely adjustments to changed circumstances, ensuring that project activities aligned with the goal of revitalizing Nepal's post-pandemic tourism sector.

> **Box 6: Project Board**
> - Project Board meetings were crucial to the project's making major decisions and supporting project execution. All the decisions made by the project board are now being implemented (see Annex 9, Table 14).
> - A total of 10 project board meetings were held (the target was 8), including two virtual meetings.
> - Key decisions made during these meetings included: (i) modifying the project's activities to include the Sustainable Summit film project production (2021), (ii) revising the AWP to accommodate an additional US$ 50,000, (iii) extending the project from September 2023 to July 2024, with an additional budget of US$ 600,000 from UNDP and NPR 7,350,000 from NTB, and (iv) extending the project duration from August 2024 to December 2024 and making a plan for this extension period without any financial obligations from the NTB (see Annex 9, Table 7).
> - Sixteen Project Board members were replaced due to transfers or retirements. It took between 2 to 14 months to nominate each new member to fill the vacancies (see Annex 9, Table 7). However, since not all members left simultaneously, these changes did not have a significant impact on decision-making or the project's overall performance.

b. Efficiency of the M&E system in assessing the outcomes of increased digitization: The M&E system assessed the outcomes of increased digitization efforts, effectively tracking the impact of digital platforms and initiatives. It provided valuable insights into how well digital tools connected job seekers with opportunities, supported entrepreneurs in accessing markets, and advocated for policy changes. Initially, there was no online M&E portal, so data was managed manually. An online system is now in place, making data entry more efficient. This advance, however, was introduced only towards the end of the project's tenure. The project followed UNDP's Program, Operations, Policies, and Procedures (POPP) for review, reporting, and M&E. Outcomes were monitored against an M&E framework aligned with the UNDP CPD and UNDAF outcome indicators. In addition to these initiatives, the project followed various M&E protocols. Each quarter, a quality assessment was conducted to record progress according to the project's M&E framework. The Project Document (ProDoc) did not explicitly identify the social, environmental, financial, operational, organizational, political, regulatory, strategic, safety and security, or other risks that emerged or evolved during project implementation. However, three specific risks were identified: two operational and one organizational. During the design phase, the identified risks included: (i) the prolonged disruption of socioeconomic life due to the ongoing COVID situation, (ii) local governments being too occupied with their core functions to less actively engage in project implementation, and (iii) the possibility that NTB's contribution in the AWP 2023 might not be fully utilized by the fiscal year 2079/80 (July 15, 2023). To mitigate these risks, the project took the following mitigating measures: (i) ensured project activities adhered to the standard norms established by the Government of Nepal and adjusted them as needed based on the situation, (ii) engaged with local governments and provided necessary technical support to encourage their full participation, and (iii) conducted regular follow-ups and secured immediate approval for any extensions or additional funding. Stakeholders indicated that the anticipated risks and mitigation strategies remain crucial and relevant, as there was high involvement from stakeholders in managing these risks.

The project successfully implemented UNDP's Social and Environmental Safeguards (SES) to manage programmatic risks and ensure compliance throughout all phases. It fostered a safer environment in the tourism sector, with a strong stance against harassment and violence toward women and girls. By identifying potential risks that could impact the project's success, the team monitored and managed these risks using a risk log aligned with UNDP's SES guidelines. The project management team actively identified risks and took measures to address them, while consistently maintaining the risk log to track both risks and the actions taken. Project partners were involved in developing mitigation plans, and the project also addressed any concerns or complaints through the established accountability mechanism.

These risks were clearly presented with detailed descriptions, including the year of identification, type of risk, probability rating (on a scale from 1, low, to 5, high), countermeasures, management responses, and the responsible party assigned to address each risk (see Annex 10). Based on the initial risk analysis, a risk log was activated in Atlas (now in Quantum) and updated by the acting NPM to track and resolve potential problems and make requests for changes. A monitoring schedule plan in Atlas was also activated to track key management actions and events. Quarterly progress reports, along with annual progress reports, were shared with the Project Board to consolidate the year's progress against the targets set in the AWP. These reports also updated the M&E framework.

> **Box 7: Auditor's issues**
> - The 2021 expenditure was 91.37%. Auditors identified issues including a mismatch of activities and total budget in LOAs with LGs, recommending budget revisions, and recording expenditures according to the approved activity-wise budget. Additionally, TDS was not deducted from wages, urging compliance with the Income Tax Act.
> - The 2022 expenditure was 105.27%. Auditors noted delays in verifying withheld tax returns and recommended depositing and verifying tax returns within 25 days of the month's end.
> - The 2023 expenditure was 87.55%. Auditors highlighted issues such as expenses being reported without activity completion. They suggested ensuring activities are completed before payment, sharing expenditures based on work completion, and maintaining financial and program monitoring to ensure high standards of financial integrity and quality assurance before handing over projects to LGs. They also flagged incorrect funding sources in signage.
> - All identified issues are medium risk and manageable by the project. No high risks were raised (see Annex 12 for details).

> **Box 8: Monitoring from Senior Officials**
> - Senior UNDP officials visited the project's activities and provided feedback on them. For instance, the UNDP Resident Representative visited the local governments of Mechinagar and Rong, while the Assistant Secretary General of UNDP and the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative visited the Chandragiri-Kirtipur Cycle Trail.
> - Project board members, the communications team, portfolio, operations, and UNDP field offices in Janakpur and Butwal also provided feedback after they visited project sites.
> - National and international media covered several activities (See Annex 9, Table 15).

Stakeholders appreciated the fact that the project organized an annual project review in the fourth quarter to assess performance and prepare an AWP for the next year. While these reporting practices are effective, there is room for improvement. Reporting should include both the current FY and cumulative progress up to that FY to provide a comprehensive picture. Recognizing the importance of M&E for improving programmatic quality, the project allocated approximately 5% of its budget to M&E activities. This provision helped the project implement various robust monitoring mechanisms and thereby ensure thorough oversight.[17] The project also conducted numerous field observations and monitoring visits to project sites to conduct quality checks and monitor interventions. Joint monitoring visits with partners and stakeholders were also conducted, allowing for joint observation and identification of areas for improvement. The project also conducted internal spot checks and external audits annually (see Box 7). Joint monitoring, involving the PIU, the NPC, the UNDP Portfolio Manager, government officials, and media personnel, ensured the quality of the project and provided timely feedback (see Box 8).

3. *How efficient and cost-effective was the project's implementation strategy and execution, particularly in relation to achieving the outlined objectives?*

> **Finding 11:** *The project's implementation strategy was both efficient and cost-effective, and the project was able to achieve its goals through strategic partnerships, adaptive management, and targeted resource allocation. The expenditure rate for each output was good. By July 2024, expenditures for Outputs 1 to 3 were 97.11%, 96.23%, and 76.27% respectively. To ensure value for money, the project secured at least 30% of its total budget resources from partners. By using a parallel financing model and local co-financing, the project reduced costs and increased sustainability. The project successfully managed resources implemented cost-saving measures, and leveraged innovative approaches like digitization and bulk purchasing to support cost-effectiveness.*

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[17] Monitoring visit, joint monitoring visit, third-party monitoring, Project Board monitoring, annual progress review, database and monitoring plan, monitoring related training/orientation/mechanisms and NIM audit/grant audit/spot check.

a. The efficiency of the project's implementation strategy in achieving its objectives: The project's implementation strategy was highly efficient in achieving the project's objectives. Stakeholders highlighted that the project successfully accelerated the rollout of employment programs by leveraging strategic partnerships, allocating resources wisely, and employing adaptive management practices. Project's approach facilitated the skill development of entrepreneurs and advocated for policy reforms to enhance sector resilience. By integrating these elements, the project ensured that its initiatives were responsive to evolving needs, thereby maximizing its impact and fostering sustainable recovery in Nepal's tourism sector.

b. Cost efficiency and effectiveness: The expenditure rate for each output was good. As of July 2024, the total expenditures for Outputs 1 to 3 were 97.11%, 96.23%, and 76.27% respectively (see Annex 9, Table 2). Output-wise planned and actual expenditure of the budget revealed that except output 3, the level of expenditure is good (see Table 4).

Table 4: Output-wise planned and actual expenditure of the budget

Output	Planned budget (US$)	Expenditure (US$) (As of July 2024)	Reason for this scale of expenditure
1	737,300	715,995 (97.11%)	To meet the increased demand for short-term employment, the Project Board approved reallocating unused funds from Output 3 to enhance short-term employment opportunities in 2021.
2	1,667,285	1,604475 (96.23%)	Activities are ongoing and are expected to meet the target by the end of December 2024.
3	421,915	321808 (76.27%)	The lower budget was due to the remaining final payments for four activities. Only 20% was paid upfront as the first installment, with the remaining 80% to be disbursed upon completion of the final products. The activities, including (i) the Tourism Satellite Account (US$ 29,000), (ii) the development of a tourist database (US$ 8,000), (iii) the digitization of destinations for promotion (US$ 8,000), and (iv) the Sustainable Tourism Club (US$ 7,000), are nearing completion and are ready for disbursement. The project also plans to document best practices and lessons learned at the end of the project period for broader dissemination.
4 (Operation)	456,885	423,837 (92.77%)	The remaining funds will be utilized by December.

The project ensured cost efficiency and effectiveness by setting clear objectives, developing a comprehensive project plan, and implementing robust project management strategies. Efficient resource allocation for each output, risk management with effective mitigation measures, and adoption of proper M&E techniques further contributed to this success. To uphold value for money, the project mobilized at least 30% of the total resources in its budget from its partners, especially from local governments. It also employed a parallel financing model involving local governments, tourism associations, and other NGOs. For instance, collaboration with local governments generated US$ 1,275,955 (the target was US$ 1,000,000). Tourism associations and I/NGOs mobilized US$ 89,826 (the target was US$ 50,000) and US$ 56,000 (no target), respectively (see Annex 9, Table 10). These funds helped expand infrastructure development and increase the number of training events. This system aided in the achievement of all targets. All training events except for two residential training courses were shifted to non-residential to reduce costs. The unit cost of training was lower than the cost of similar training provided by other development agencies. The project has worked with ICIMOD in Dhankutta Municipality to build the capacity of tourism stakeholders. Stakeholders appreciated the fact that the project secured co-financing from tourism associations to run the training component. By adopting the local government's estimates of agreed-upon rates for infrastructure costs, the project effectively reduced its expenditures on infrastructure too. Through rigorous budget management, leveraging local resources, and adopting innovative technologies, the project minimized costs without compromising quality. Strategies such as bulk purchasing, energy-efficient operations, and sustainable practices helped reduce overhead and operational expenses. The project's use of local and eco-friendly materials contributed to resource efficiency.

c. Project management: The project falls under "assistance agreements." Thus, the 'Standard Basic Agreement' forms the legal basis of the relationship between the GoN and UNDP. The project was guided by a Project Board and managed using the NIM Guidelines, which were agreed upon and approved by UNDP and the Ministry of Finance on March 27, 2017, and promulgated on April 1, 2017. A mechanism was established so that the Project Board could endorse the selections of local governments.[18] The Project

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[18] It also facilitated consensus-based management decisions, provided recommendations to the implementing partners and PIU, approved annual and quarterly work plans and budgets, reviewed progress reports, and offered strategic guidance to ensure the project would achieve its goals and objectives, and approved the project's upcoming plans and budget.

Board's composition is generally strong, but including the National Planning Commission would further enhance the project's sustainability by connecting with similar projects and programs to facilitate resource sharing. In the PIU, program staff were hired within two months, and administrative, finance, and support staff were recruited between one and four months (see Annex 9 Table 4). The delay was due to the late deputation of an NPD and the late composition of the Project Board. This minor delay had no significant impact on the project's overall performance. The project faced some challenges in managing its human resources. The NPM resigned after 13 months in August 2022. Instead of recruiting a new NPM, the Project Board designated a livelihood/enterprise specialist as the acting NPM and streamlined activities. The admin and finance associate were promoted to the post of administrative finance officer in June 2023. A driver resigned in February 2024, so the project hired a temporary driver for 130 working days (see Annex 9, Table 5). Despite these challenges, the overall performance of the PIU has been exceptional.

d. Resources and fund flow: The funds for this project, as agreed by the GoN and the UNDP through a financing agreement, were deposited into the UNDP's account. UNDP then periodically transferred the allocated funds to the project's account, which was managed by the NTB and utilized as per the approved AWP. The initial installment was provided based on the approved AWP and the first quarterly work plan. Subsequent installments were transferred upon the certified completion of each quarterly plan, including the financial report for that plan and the existence of a subsequent quarterly work plan. In addition, 80% of the previous plan's funds and 100% of all still earlier advances had to have been spent. This mechanism provided financial checks and balances and improved overall governance.

The budget was disbursed from the NTB to UNDP in four installments. The first three installments were delayed by seven, three, and five months respectively due to delays in the deputation of the NPD by the NTB Board. The final installment was delayed by five months due to the Ministry of Finance's delay in approving an extension of the project (see Annex 9, Table 16). These delays impacted the pace of implementation, speeding it up to ensure that the many planned activities could be completed within a limited timeframe. The UNDP budget for the project was disbursed in 10 installments, generally within one to two months after their receipt (see Annex 9, Table 17). However, delays in transferring the NTB's budget contributions caused further delays in releasing funds to implementing partners.

e. Cost-effectiveness and timeliness of the project's execution in achieving its objectives: The project's execution was cost-effective in achieving its objectives. By optimizing resource allocation and leveraging existing infrastructure and partnerships, the project pursued the principle of "value for money" to maximize its impact. Investments in capacity-building programs, digital platforms, and policy advocacy initiatives were strategically directed to yield sustainable outcomes and ensure the efficient use of financial, human, and technical resources to foster economic recovery and resilience.

Key milestones such as project identification form (PIF) approval, CEO endorsement, the Local Project Appraisal Meeting (LPAC) for project endorsement, the ProDoc signing (the project start date), and the inception workshop were all completed on time (see Annex 9, Table 18). The planned and actual dates for signing LoAs with local governments were generally timely and decided in meetings with them (see Annex 9, Table 19). The few delays that arose had no significant impact. The project underwent an eleventh-month cost extension (September 2023 to July 2024), and an additional five months with no cost extension until December 2024 to complete the remaining work necessary to restore tourism to its pre-COVID-19 state. This extension was crucial for rebuilding and reviving pandemic-stricken tourism enterprises by implementing national tourism recovery strategies, promoting domestic and green tourism, and introducing the "national sustainable tourism club" concept throughout the country. It was found that this additional time and resources helped to improve market access through the establishment of a TSA, enhanced tourism databases, digitized tourism, and improved destination branding. The implementation of national sustainable tourism clubs in at least 100 schools was also part of this extension period. Stakeholders emphasized that the extension contributed to the project's long-term impact, ensuring that the project's partners are better equipped to support tourism-dependent individuals and their families.

4. *Was the cost-sharing modality for the project intervention effective in achieving the desired results, and what lessons were learned in terms of feedback and learning incorporated into subsequent planning and implementation?*

Finding 12: The cost-sharing modality was highly effective in achieving the project's goals. Leveraging diverse stakeholder resources supported the project's employment, entrepreneurship, and policy initiatives. This collaborative approach to financing significantly

enhanced the project's impact and promoted sustainable recovery in Nepal's tourism sector. Feedback to the project emphasized the need for maintaining flexibility, providing targeted support to marginalized groups, and leveraging digital solutions for resilience. While transparency and digital tools did prove effective, challenges included limited training and planning time, inadequate funding for infrastructure, and insufficient staff for monitoring training action plans. Some of the lessons learned included the need for making informed adjustments in planning, focusing on adaptability, and enhancing support mechanisms.

a. Effectiveness of cost-sharing in achieving the desired results: The cost-sharing approach was highly effective in achieving the results desired. By fostering collaboration among the government, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, community stakeholders, and professional agencies, this approach leveraged diverse resources and expertise to amplify impact. According to project stakeholders, having financial contributions come from various partners facilitated comprehensive interventions, including infrastructure upgrades, skills training, and policy reforms, and ensured that rebuilding and enhancing resilience in Nepal's tourism sector would proceed holistically. This collaborative effort maximized the project's effectiveness in promoting sustainable economic recovery in the post-pandemic context.

The project adhered to two payment models: an advance payment model used until 2022 (during the core recovery phase) and a results-based payment model in 2023 and 2024. Transparency in financial transactions was ensured by seeking recommendations from the focal person of the concerned local government, an individual nominated by the mayor or chairperson, and the respective ward chairperson. SuTRA[19] was used to monitor the expenditures of local government budgets. Inputs were strategically allocated to implement project activities effectively using the project's key approaches.

b. Lessons learned from the feedback received: Several valuable lessons were learned from the feedback received during the project's planning and implementation phases. Feedback highlighted the importance of flexibility and adaptability in responding to dynamic economic recovery processes. It underscored the necessity of specific support for target people, to ensure an inclusive recovery. In addition, feedback emphasized the critical role that digital solutions play in enhancing connectivity and resilience within the tourism sector (see Section 6.2 for key lessons learned).

5.4 Effectiveness

1. *To what extent did the project effectively address the immediate issue of unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly concerning the vulnerability of women and people from disadvantaged groups in the tourism sector? Provide the gendered/ GESI nature of addressing unemployment with insights from which ethnic/caste groups were targeted and sub-groups that changed their status of unemployment.*

Finding 13: The project effectively addressed unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic by generating 162,437 person-days of short-term work and offering skill-based training, both measures which significantly aided economic recovery. It notably benefited 9,699 women, enhancing their economic opportunities and boosting their self-reliance through tailored programs. Over 35% of the participants in capacity development training were women. Despite challenges such as monitoring difficulties due to fear related to the pandemic and harsh climate, election-related disruptions, and budget constraints, the inclusive approach and strong partnerships improved livelihoods and advanced gender equality, though some issues like resource mismatches and logistical constraints prevented the project from fully achieving its goals.

a. Addressed the issue of unemployment in the tourism sector during the COVID-19 pandemic: The project tackled unemployment in the tourism sector during the COVID-19 pandemic by providing short-term jobs. The target people were prioritized for these opportunities. Although the selection process was less participatory due to pandemic-related restrictions, no conflicts or disputes were reported. The project also offered skill-based training and connected trainees to various jobs and enterprises, mainly in the tourism sector. Stakeholders praised the project for fostering medium- to long-term economic recovery by creating jobs and boosting local tourism-related infrastructure.[20] Through functional partnerships with tourism associations too, the project was able to enhance programmatic synergy.

b. Addressed the vulnerability of target people due to unemployment: The project addressed the unemployment of target people by providing short-term employment and linking the unemployed to relevant jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities. Tailored skill-based training was organized to meet their needs and interests. The project's inclusive approach, which was praised by stakeholders, ensured that each participant worked for 10 to 40 days, receiving NPR 1,000 per day (minus a 10% social security tax), so as

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[19] SuTRA (Subnational treasury regulatory accounting system) is a software applied by LGs for a financial management system which includes modules on budgeting, accounting and financial reporting to ensure transparency, accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness in financial management at the local level.
[20] Wooden bridges, resting places, waste management systems, signage, stone stairs, trails, and tourism information centers, etc.

many people as possible could receive at least some degree of aid. Most workers were local, but some external labor was used where necessary. Exceptionally, in a few places, such as Ward No. 1 of Machhapuchhre Rural Municipality of Kaski, a few daily wage laborers were used from outside. In this case, outside labor was sourced because the local porter's rate per day was NPR 2,500, a rate beyond the willingness of the project to pay.

Short-term employment significantly impacted the recovery of the damaged tourism sector, with 2485 women benefiting from this initiative. Stakeholders noted that the project's support had improved livelihoods and well-being by promoting diversity, equity, and better access to economic opportunities. Tourism associations played an instrumental role in building the capacities of target people. For instance, Three Sisters Adventure Trekking provided disadvantaged rural women with training to become trekking guides and assistants, thereby bridging the gender gap and generating tourism revenue for women. Government officials highlighted that women-targeted training not only improved economic opportunities for women but also built their self-esteem and confidence. Over 34 single women received support without administrative hassle. Exclusively women-targeted capacity-building programs, such as river guide training, trekking guide courses, and homestay management, increased women's self-reliance and attraction to the sector. The project's data revealed that over 35% of the participants in capacity development training were women, a high rate of participation ensuring inclusivity and diversity. Regarding GESI diversity, UNDP CO maintains 50% women representation. However, there are no women staff in the project. Out of the 16 project board members, only three were women (see Annex 9, Table 21).

Table 5 presents the assessment of output level indicators and justification of lower achievement.

Table 5: Assessment of output level indicators

Output and output indicators	Baseline	Target	Achieve	Reasons for lower achievement
Output 1: Vulnerable tourism-dependent communities, particularly women and people from disadvantaged groups in the tourism sector that have lost their jobs or income due to COVID-19 have received short-term employment opportunities to meet immediate livelihood needs.				
1.1 # of people benefitted from short-term employment. (#men and # women)	0	10534	9846	Still a work in progress, but project aim to meet the target by the end of the project period.
1.2 # of installation of waste management plants/bins	205	1000	1390	Eligible to receive co-funding from local governments.
1.3 # of bridges renovated/constructed	0	15	11	Local governments allocated their own budget for the remaining four bridges.
1.4 # of Km of drainage and/or stone stairs renovation	74.25	100	78.85	The project board advised prioritizing product development over drainage improvements.
1.5 # of signage installation and maintenance	177	1620	1708	Achieved
Output 2: Entrepreneurs and other workers in the tourism sector have enhanced opportunities for employment and income generation through the renovation and development of tourism products in major tourist destinations.				
2.1 # of small-scale tourism infrastructure built, renovated, and reconstructed.	36	225	282	Eligible to receive co-funding from local governments and tourism associations.
2.2 # of tourism destinations/products developed (10, at least 1 from each province)	NA	10	16	Eligible to receive co-funding from local governments and tourism associations
2.3 # of people benefited from skill-based training in tourism (beginner, licensed, and refresher)	NA	2000	3837	There is high demand for training, with local governments providing co-financing for 40-50% of the costs. To save expenses, most of the training sessions are non-residential.
2.4 # of tourism-based enterprises /ecotourism created.	NA	200	413	Eligible to receive co-funding from local governments and tourism associations
2.5 # of people from local government/tourism stakeholders capacitated on sustainable tourism, tourism promotion, and policy-related issues including trail audit training.	NA	7	7	Achieved
Output 3: The institutional capacity of the NTB is strengthened through the formulation of a comprehensive tourism recovery strategy, as well as through increased digitization and other efforts for future disaster risk management.				
3.1 # of guidelines/tools on standardization for tourism services (number of knowledge products, earnings, best practices, and stories published).	NA	15	15	Achieved
3.2 # Tourist database in place.	NA	1	1	Achieved
3.3 Finalization of Tourism Satellite Account (TSA)	NA	1	1	Achieved
3.4 # Policy intervention for domestic tourism promotion/domestic tourism awareness & promotion activities.	NA	1	1	Achieved
3.5 # of sustainable tourism club established in school.	NA	100	150	Eligible to receive co-funding from local governments and tourism associations
3.6 Tourism Recovery Strategy in Place	NA	1	1	Achieved

Source: Desk study and consultations with stakeholders, 2024.

The indicators under Output 1 and 3 are all completed and exceeded the target, however, a few activities under Output 3 are still ongoing and require further effort to complete. Mechanisms are in place to fulfill these targets at the end of the project period (see Table 5). Table 6 summarizes the execution of activities by output, along with their respective timeframes and approaches for implementation across various stakeholders.

Table 6: Key timeframes and methods of output for various activities

Output wise activities	When	How and by whom	Status
Output 1: Vulnerable tourism-dependent communities, particularly women and people from disadvantaged groups in the tourism sector who have lost their jobs or income due to COVID-19 have received short-term employment opportunities to meet immediate livelihood needs.			
1. Organize short-term employment schemes for immediate support	2021-24	The project selected schemes in consultation with local governments, UNDP, NTB, tourism associations, and target groups.	Completed
2. Installation of waste management plants/bins	2021-23	The project, in coordination with local governments, UNDP, NTB, and tourism associations, selected locations for waste management plants and bins.	Completed
3. Renovation and construction of bridges	2021	The project, in coordination with local governments, UNDP, NTB, and tourism associations, selected locations for bridge renovation and construction.	Completed
4. Renovation of drainage and/or stone stairs	2021-22	The project, in coordination with local governments, UNDP, NTB, and tourism associations, selected locations for drainage and stone stair renovations.	Completed
5. Installation and maintenance of signage	2021	The project, in coordination with local governments, UNDP, NTB, and tourism associations, selected locations for installing signage.	Completed
Output 2: Entrepreneurs and other workers in the tourism sector have enhanced opportunities for employment and income generation through the renovation and development of tourism products in major tourist destinations.			
1. Construction and renovation of small-scale tourism infrastructure	2021-24	The project, in coordination with local governments, UNDP, NTB, and tourism associations, selected locations for constructing and renovating small-scale infrastructures.	Completed
2. Development of tourism destinations/products	2023	The project, in coordination with local governments, UNDP, NTB, and tourism associations, developed tourism destinations and products.	Completed
3. Organize skill-based training in tourism (beginner, licensed, and refresher)	2022-24	The project, in coordination with local governments, UNDP, NTB, and tourism associations, organized beginner, licensed, and refresher skill-based training in tourism.	Completed
4. Creation of tourism-based enterprises /ecotourism	2021-24	The project, in coordination with local governments, UNDP, NTB, and tourism associations, created and identified tourism-based and ecotourism enterprises.	Completed
5. Build capacities of people from local government/tourism stakeholders on sustainable tourism, tourism promotion, and policy-related issues including trail audit training.	2022-24	The project, in coordination with local governments, UNDP, NTB, and tourism associations, built capacities of local government and tourism stakeholders in sustainable tourism, promotion, policy issues, and trail audit training.	Ongoing*
Output 3: The institutional capacity of the NTB is strengthened through the formulation of a comprehensive tourism recovery strategy, as well as through increased digitization and other efforts for future disaster risk management.			
1. Develop and publish guidelines/tools on standardization for tourism services	2021-24	The project, in coordination with local governments, UNDP, NTB, tourism associations, and media houses, developed and published guidelines and tools for standardizing tourism services.	Completed
2. Develop tourist database	2021-24	The project, in coordination with all levels of government, UNDP, NTB, tourism associations, and other agencies, developed a tourist database.	Ongoing*
3. Develop and finalize TSA	2023-24	The project, in coordination with the federal government, UNDP, NTB, tourism associations, and other agencies, designed and developed TSA. It is yet to be finalized.	Ongoing*
4. Support to policy intervention for domestic tourism promotion/domestic tourism awareness & promotion activities.	2021-24	The project supported policy interventions and awareness activities for domestic tourism promotion, coordinating with all government levels, UNDP, NTB, and tourism associations.	Ongoing*
5. Form and institutionalize sustainable tourism clubs in school	2023-24	The project, in coordination with education units of local governments, UNDP, NTB, and tourism associations, selected, established, and institutionalized sustainable tourism clubs in schools.	Completed
6. Develop a Tourism Recovery Strategy	2021	The project, in coordination with all government levels, UNDP, NTB, and tourism associations, facilitated the development of a Tourism Recovery Strategy.	Completed

Source: Desk study and consultations with stakeholders, 2024. The status denoted by * revealed that the process has been completed but is yet to be finalized.

Some of the factors that benefited (Box-8) and hindered (Box-9) the achievement of the project's results are summarized below:

Box-9: Beneficial factors

- *Strong coordination:* Effective collaboration among government agencies, tourism associations, NGOs, professional agencies, and communities facilitated the rapid, non-disputed selection of the targeted population, easing project implementation.
- *Clear partnerships:* Allocating clearly defined roles and responsibilities among local governments, tourism associations, and other agencies accelerated project activities.
- *Resource sharing modality:* The partnership between UNDP and NTB at the macro level and between the project and local governments at the micro level fostered ownership from the outset, aiding in amicable issue resolution during planning and implementation. The resource sharing mechanism was clear and no disputes arose.
- *GESI integration:* The incorporation of a GESI approach throughout the program facilitated the execution of the project's gender action plan.
- *PATA Gold Award:* The project was honored with the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Award three times for its creative and innovative initiatives.

Box-10: Hindering factors and their mitigation measures

Externalities

- *Fear related to the pandemic:* Fluctuating pandemic conditions affected project timelines and logistics in remote areas and required continuous adaptation to health dynamics (during the initial years). The project adopted the safety precautions and measures prescribed by the government.
- *Climatic conditions:* Harsh winter conditions in high altitudes impacted the implementation calendar. The project rescheduled its plan for higher altitudes to align with the best season for mobilizing the work.
- *Election disruptions:* The November 2022 elections to the Federal Parliament and local government disrupted project timelines, and newly elected local government members were preoccupied with their duties, slowing project implementation. Delays in NTB's contributions to the 2022 annual work plan further hampered progress. The Election Commission's protocols were followed, and large gatherings were avoided.

Training

- *Training mismatches:* Some training themes, participant types, and durations of sessions were misaligned. For instance, the project was unable to offer a one-day event for women vehicle drivers and helpers due to the limited number of participants. Stakeholders also noted that most of the project's training sessions were organized on short notice as differences in FYs left limited time for planning due to the existence of cumbersome administrative procedures. The project used these cases as lessons to enhance future training sessions.
- *Inadequate resource person:* Finding qualified human resources knowledgeable about the latest policy landscape was challenging. To overcome this challenge, the project maintained a roster of potential resource persons and mobilized them as needed.
- *Difficult to maintain planning calendar:* The planning and support calendar for infrastructure and skill development training was inadequate since activities could only be implemented after securing approval from the Project Board. The project reached agreements with tourism associations for mandates and resource-sharing.
- *Local dishes are not featured in hotel and restaurant menus:* In Lumbini, training programs received positive feedback, including local food cooking, tour guide refreshers, etc. However, local dishes are not yet featured in hotel and restaurant menus.

Budget

- *Financial disbursement:* The delayed disbursement of the allocated budget from the NTB affected the project's implementation.
- *Budget constraints:* The per-unit budget for capacity-building events was low compared to the considerable demands of participants, making it difficult to find a balance. The project conducted a swift budget analysis and attempted to make adjustments, per se non-residential courses.
- *Limited resources with high demand:* Balancing limited resources with high demand was challenging. Stakeholders said that the project's cap of NPR 3 million for infrastructure development at major tourism destinations was inadequate. Dialogue and negotiation were conducted with pandemic-affected local governments willing to contribute 50% of the resources required.

Coordination

- *Fiscal discrepancies:* Differences between the government's and the project's FYs led to delays in completing activities and synchronizing funding. The project aimed to hold the Project Board meetings on schedule and approve the activities during these meetings.
- *Coordination issues:* Inadequate coordination among federal and provincial ministries, Nepal Rastra Bank, CBS, and the private sector slowed down the development of a tourist database and the TSA. The project accelerated the process by creating a matrix and clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the relevant stakeholders.

Data and monitoring

- *No robust data on skill training trainees:* There are no updates on the involvement of skill training trainees in job markets. The project planned to conduct a tracer study to update the status.
- *Difficult to operationalize the tourist database and TSA:* The involvement of an excessive number of stakeholders in developing and operationalizing the tourist database and TSA made coordination difficult and caused delays. A strict action plan was developed, condensing coordination to the most relevant of agencies by using a matrix and defining roles.

- *Monitoring challenges:* Extensive project coverage across diverse and remote districts, combined with limited human resources at the PIU, made monitoring difficult and inadequate. The action plans created at the end of each training session couldn't be monitored effectively because there were too few staff at the PIU and because the locations of the project's activities were scattered across the nation. A robust M&E mechanism was developed using social media tools like WhatsApp, photo monitoring, and sharing reports with segregated data.

Policy

- *Tourism-related strategies are still in draft form:* Tourism-related strategies have been completed and submitted to the NTB for approval. The MoCTCA has also integrated these strategies into a 73-point tourism recovery action plan. Key concerns and issues identified in these strategies have been incorporated into formal training curricula and knowledge products.

Despite these hindrances, the project maintained flexibility in design and implementation and employed a robust communication strategy to effectively engage and support target people and stakeholders.

2. *How effective is the partnership and collaboration with major tourism stakeholders and local governments in achieving the project's objectives and intended outcomes? Are these men-led/women-led? How are Indigenous men and women engaged?*

Finding 14: *The project's collaboration with tourism stakeholders and local governments was highly effective, enhancing technical expertise and tourism infrastructures. The co-financing and support provided by Local governments were pivotal for implementation. Although most agencies are run by men, the project's mandates for one-third of UC members to be women and for the active participation of Indigenous communities ensured that perspectives would be diverse and benefits equitable. Involving the Indigenous in decision-making and integration of traditional knowledge significantly strengthened sustainable tourism practices and cultural preservation.*

a. Partnership and collaboration with major tourism stakeholders and local governments: The project partnered with 11 planned tourism associations. In addition to these 11 associations, the project partnered with seven more agencies[21] based on new ideas that emerged during implementation. For example, due to respecting the emerging need to increase the capacity of mountain guides and develop a knowledge product on the basics of ropes and knots, the project partnered with MOGAN. According to stakeholders, the multi-faceted partnership resulted in several benefits.

- Technical inputs and network mobilization: Coordination with the MoCTCA, DoT, and NTB provided technical inputs, mobilized networks, and provided for joint monitoring, thereby enhancing capacity-building initiatives, policy formulation, and project quality.
- Local government involvement: Partnerships with local governments added unique value to domestic tourism development. Their involvement in designing, planning, implementing, monitoring, and supervising initiatives fostered co-financing, institutional rapport with other development agencies, and programmatic synergy. For instance, in Rong Rural Municipality, a 19-km village tourism trail has been completed out of the planned 29 km, starting with an initial 500 meters supported by the project.[22] Ilam Municipality drafted a now-operational tourism development framework with assistance from Australian Aid. Mechi Municipality has been developing a park with support from the President Chure Conservation Program, the World Wildlife Fund, Sahara Nepal, and provincial government budgets. Local governments like Ilam, Rong, Mechi, Lumbini Cultural, Tulsipur, Adhikhola, Annapurna, and Machhapuchhre have earmarked matching funds to collaborate with various agencies in the tourism sector. These initiatives are a direct result of having effectively implemented LoAs. Local governments contributed almost 43% of the total budget (1.4 million against 3.2 million total budget) of the project.
- Tourism infrastructures: Collaboration improved social amenities and tourism infrastructures.
- School partnerships: The project collaborated with 150 schools to form inclusive national sustainable tourism clubs, each with 11 members (total of 1,650), and mobilized club members as tourism ambassadors to promote sustainable tourism development through awareness-building.
- Economic resilience: The project coordinated efforts to successfully revitalize tourism, generating employment opportunities for the populations and promoting economic resilience.

b. Gendered leadership for partnerships and collaborations: The project effectively collaborated with tourism associations and NGOs, leveraging their expertise and experiences in its activities. While most partner agencies were led by men, local governments ensured that at least 33% of the members of UCs were women. The exact proportion was based on the size of the intervention. Even though men dominated proceedings, the evaluation team found no evidence that women's concerns were overlooked in the decision-making process. The project's approach and strategies successfully placed women at the center of both its design and implementation.

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[21] Mountain Guide Association of Nepal, Hotel Professional Federation Nepal, Kathmandu Environmental Education Project, National Forum of Photojournalist, National Trust for Nature Conservation, Tourism Research & Training Institute, and Community Homestay Network.
[22] In Rong local government, the project improved the 29 km Korsang trail by developing a 10-year master plan and renovating 19 km across six villages.

c. Leadership of Indigenous people through partnerships and collaborations: Indigenous men and women were actively engaged in the project's partnerships and collaborations through inclusive decision-making processes, representation in planning and implementation, and capacity-building initiatives. The project also effectively mobilized youth, predominantly from indigenous communities. Their involvement ensured that their perspectives and traditional knowledge contributed to the adoption of sustainable tourism practices, economic recovery efforts, and the branding of local products. Stakeholders believe that these collaborations with Indigenous communities prioritized the equitable distribution of benefits and enhanced the preservation of cultural heritage.

3. *To what extent has UNDP contributed to gender equality, women's empowerment, and social integration results through this project at the (i) policy and (ii) implementation level? What was the change (narrowing certain gender gaps/ inequalities etc.)?*

Finding 15: The project advanced gender equality and women's empowerment by contributing to key policies such as the National Tourism Recovery Strategy, Domestic Tourism Promotion Strategy, and the Green Tourism Strategy, all of which incorporated provisions for providing women with leadership and economic opportunities. Implementation efforts included developing standards, enhancing compliance, and fostering policy dialogue, all measures that narrowed gender gaps through both targeted training and awareness campaigns. However, challenges persist in achieving a broad representation of women and full integration of gender equality in the tourism sector.

a. Contribution of the project to gender equality, women's empowerment, and social integration at the policy level: The project facilitated four strategies. Through extensive consultations, it gathered and synchronized policy concerns, all the while fostering domestic tourism, building awareness, and profiling destinations. Stakeholders acknowledge that adopting these strategies and standards capitalized on Nepal's potential for tourism, enhancing tourism's resilience to future crises and promoting sustainable tourism. These initiatives effectively addressed gender equality, thereby promoting their social integration. Stakeholders noted that these policy provisions slowly promoted women's leadership, enhanced their participation in decision-making, and ensured their equitable access to economic opportunities and resources in the tourism sector.

b. Project's contribution to achieving goals at the implementation level: The project played a crucial role in advancing goals by adopting through various strategic initiatives at the implementation level. First, it organized review-and-reflection meetings, fostering the critical analysis and evaluation of policy implementation. Second, the project was instrumental in increasing awareness about and orienting people to policy, ensuring stakeholders understand the rationale and implications of policies. Moreover, it actively organized policy dialogue, debate, and discourse, engaging diverse sectoral stakeholders to enhance collaboration and alignment. In addition, by establishing the backward and forward linkages of policies as the baseline, the project has ensured that policy frameworks will exhibit both coherence and continuity. Last, it identified areas for amendments in other policies to support the smooth operationalization of the newly developed provisions, thereby promoting effective policy implementation and sustainable development outcomes.

c. Specific changes that narrowed gender gaps or reduced inequalities: The project significantly narrowed gender gaps and reduced inequalities by promoting women's leadership and participation in the tourism sector through skills training and campaigns promoting awareness of gender equality. These efforts improved women's access to employment and economic opportunities and fostered a more inclusive tourism sector. The implementation of the GESI action plan engaged youth and marginalized groups in short-term employment, training, infrastructure development, and entrepreneurship. Mandatory integration of GESI in agreements with project partners heightened partners' commitment to inclusivity, ensuring GESI considerations are reflected in policy documents and project activities. Despite these advances, challenges remain in increasing women's representation in the tourism sector. More needs to be done to get stakeholders to integrate GESI principles.

4. *How relevant and impactful was the partnership between the (i) project and (ii) local governments in the development of tourism at the local level, particularly considering the engagement with vulnerable communities?*

Finding 16: The partnership between the project and local governments was crucial for advancing local tourism development and supporting vulnerable communities. It facilitated infrastructure development, and sustainable tourism practices, and aligned with local priorities, enhancing community-based tourism and local capacity. The collaboration created short-term jobs, improved social protection,

and promoted inclusive development. However, challenges like low literacy among target people limited the full realization of benefits. The involvement of too many stakeholders in developing and implementing the tourist database and TSA led to coordination issues and delays. Variations between the government's and the project's fiscal years caused further delays in activities and funding synchronization. Additionally, training sessions were often scheduled on short notice due to limited planning time, cumbersome administrative procedures, and difficulties in finding qualified trainers familiar with the latest policies.

a. Relevance of partnerships between the project and local governments for developing tourism at the local level: The project's partnership with local governments was instrumental in advancing the development of local tourism through collaborative efforts in infrastructure development, sustainable tourism practices, and alignment with local priorities. This collaboration effectively supported community-based tourism initiatives and strengthened local capacity to manage and benefit from tourism activities. Stakeholders noted that such partnerships enhanced opportunities for promoting domestic and religious tourism. In addition, expanding partnerships with development agencies and NGOs and mobilizing co-financing and parallel financing resources created programmatic synergy, further bolstering the project's impact and sustainability.

b. Impacts of partnerships on engaging with vulnerable communities: Partnership between the project and local governments effectively engaged vulnerable communities by ensuring their active participation in implementing targeted interventions and fostering inclusive development. This collaboration generated short-term employment opportunities, thereby addressing specific challenges and reducing disparities, enhancing social protection measures and community resilience. The local government's adoption of 86 public hearing mechanisms after activities were completed, installation of more than 200 information boards,[23] and several review and reflection sessions promoted transparency and accountability in governance (see Annex 9, Table 12). Moreover, facilitating bank account openings and managing PAN cards for wage workers aimed to maintain transparency. Challenges persist, however. For example, the low literacy levels among beneficiaries hinder the effective operation of accounts, including the withdrawal of funds.

5.5 Impact

1. *To what extent do the project initiatives indicate that positive and negative changes, both intended and unintended, have been achieved, considering the impacts on vulnerable communities along tourism destinations?*

Finding 17: The project initiatives yielded significant positive impacts. Women's participation in short-term employment and capacity development has reached 26% and 36% respectively by adopting affirmative actions to implement GESI action plan. In doing so, it was able to foster economic resilience and community development. Short-term employment schemes renovated local tourism infrastructures, reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing capacity to face the pandemic. Growth in tourism entrepreneurship accomplished through digital platforms and sustainable practices boosted local economies. The project also promoted skills development, increased employment opportunities, and supported infrastructure improvements, all measures that contributed to long-term community resilience. Challenges included the dilution of resources due to scattered interventions. Overall, the project achieved substantial positive changes. Securing long-term benefits will require strategic adjustments in some areas.

a. Assessment of result framework: The overall achievements of the project were evaluated using the result framework, which comprised assessments of each output and its indicators, outcome, and impacts (see Table 7 below, also see Annex-11). Careful assessment of the result framework revealed that the project nicely achieved its output-level indicators and thereby its outputs. The fact that the project crafted intelligent SMART indicators that were easy to measure was helpful. By achieving its targets, the project met its outcome and impacts, as stipulated in the result framework.

b. Positive impacts: Positive changes have been observed and it was possible because the project employed multiple approaches, including COVID-19 recovery assistance in the form of short-term employment and post-recovery livelihood promotion initiatives. These short-term employment schemes helped renovate, rehabilitate, and reconstruct local tourism infrastructures, enabling people to resume their daily lives, reducing vulnerabilities, and increasing capacity to face the pandemic. Over 162,437 person-days of employment, equivalent to US$ 1,275,955, were generated locally, boosting job opportunities and skills development in local communities and fostering economic resilience. Tourism entrepreneurship has grown, and more businesses have adopted digital platforms and sustainable practices. Stakeholders said that community resilience has improved through the enhancement of skills, entrepreneurship, and infrastructure, and local economies are stronger. The project generated local employment through the

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[23]Installation of signage, erection of information boards, and establishment of tourist information centers and rest places, and shelters helped to attract more tourists, thereby promoting local economies. Provisions for homestays along trekking routes and the promotion of awareness about destinations through different media were other key successful measures. The installation of information boards also enhanced the accountability and transparency of the project.

renovation and construction of tourism infrastructures, increased accessibility with improved foot trails, and boosted income through livelihood schemes. These efforts have built physical, social, and financial capital, thereby laying the foundation for long-term community resilience.

Table 7: Assessment of result framework

Assessment of impact (1)	By achieving its goals of revitalizing the tourism sector, supporting worker livelihood recovery, and strengthening stakeholder capacity for accelerated recovery, the project helped revive the pandemic-impacted tourism sector, retain a critical workforce, and build the capacity of the NTB and tourism associations. This fulfilled the project's overall aim (impact).		
Assessment of outcomes (3)	The project revitalized the tourism sector by creating short-term jobs for 9,846 people and generating US$1,624,370 in wages. It provided sustainable income to 1,920 individuals, built and renovated 381 tourism infrastructures, and trained 2,288 people in tourism skills. This resulted in improved livelihoods for 13,867 people directly and 55,468 indirectly. The project exceeded its target by supporting 9,846 workers and conducting 53 skill-based training programs for 3,837 individuals. It also enhanced the capacity of NTB and other stakeholders, trained 144 local government staff in tourism policy and planning, and helped 15 local governments develop effective tourism strategies. Overall, the project met its outcome of revitalizing the tourism sector, supporting livelihood recovery for workers, and strengthening stakeholder capacity for accelerated recovery efforts.		
Assessment of Outputs (3)	Assessment of Output 1: Five indicators were designed to measure this output. Analysis shows that achievements are slightly below target (see Table 3 in the effectiveness section). However, the project has implemented a mechanism to meet the remaining targets within the project's timeframe.	Assessment of Output 2: Five indicators were used to evaluate this output. The assessment shows that all targets were met, with some even exceeded. The project is now focused on institutionalizing these achievements to ensure their sustainability.	Assessment of Output 3: Evaluated using six indicators, the project successfully met all targets despite challenges. Efforts are underway to institutionalize these achievements.

Local people gained employment opportunities, for example, as tourist guides and in ticketing and travel. Others opened small service ventures such as tea shops, gift shops, and homestays. These enterprises generated local employment and income. The project supported local governments in developing small infrastructures and leveraging resources from other agencies. For example, in the Rong Rural Municipality of Ilam, Caritas Nepal supports homestay operations, training for cooks, and the development and installation of signage with youth and school involvement. Similarly, World Wildlife Fund supports homestays, the President's Chure Conservation Program supports river training, and Sahara Nepal supports plantation in Bahundagi of Mechi Municipality.[24] These collaborative efforts helped local governments make additional investments in tourism-led infrastructures despite their limited capacity for integrated tourism development. The implementation of a gender action plan, 26% of participants in short-term employment were women, and 36% of those involved in capacity development initiatives were women. The involvement of women in the rafting business and the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ in the trekking business have demonstrated that barriers can be overcome. Stakeholders noted that the project has also supported the growth of pink tourism.[25]

Remarks from stakeholders and target people during KIIs and FGDs

- *"…the project has had a significant social impact by promoting community development and improving the quality of life of local people. It involves locals in tourism, shares benefits with communities, creates jobs, and supports skill-building to enhance employability and self-sufficiency…"*
- *"…the project boosts the local and national economy by attracting tourists, generating foreign money, and increasing revenue for local businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and craft shops. By using local suppliers and products, it ensures that more tourism revenue stays within communities, promotes economic stability, and reduces poverty while encouraging investment in infrastructures and services…"*
- *"…the project supports the preservation and promotion of local heritage and traditions by protecting historical sites, cultural practices, and artisanal crafts from being lost to modernization and mass tourism. It involves local communities in tourism activities to keep traditional customs alive and fosters a deep appreciation of Nepalese heritage…"*

c. Negative impacts: No serious negative impacts were recorded during the evaluation. In the stakeholders' views, however, there is a risk of losing human resources trained in the tourism sector to the national and international markets, creating a gap at the local level. To retain these human resources and boost local economic development, then, a medium- to long-term tourism revival strategy is required to create jobs

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[24] In Mechi municipality, it mobilized funding from different agencies. NPR 20 million for a matching fund from local government. NPR 3 million from the President Chure Program for river training. NPR 283,000 from Mechi Municipality for disaster management. NPR 1 million each from Koshi Province for eco-tourism and cross-border tourism. NPR 5 million was used for homestay training. Sahara Nepal provided 10 million plants whereas ICIMOD assisted with NPR 4 million for conservation activities.

[25] Pink tourism in Nepal focuses on attracting LGBTIQ+ travellers by promoting inclusive and welcoming experiences. It highlights Nepal's commitment to LGBTIQ+ rights and provides tailored travel services, such as LGBTIQ+-friendly accommodations, tours, and events. This niche tourism sector aims to create a safe and enjoyable environment for LGBTIQ+ visitors while contributing to the country's diverse tourism offerings.

and livelihood opportunities for local youths and returning migrant workers. The scattered nature of the project's interventions diluted resources and impacts and the low per-unit budget often compromises the quality and incompleteness of the infrastructure work and training. Stakeholders also viewed that insufficient technical capacity among local government staff affected the quality of infrastructure work. The project aimed to minimize possible environmental impacts during the renovation and construction of small-scale infrastructures. Stones were extracted and trees were cut from safe areas so as not to trigger landslides.

2. *What was the (i) immediate and (ii) long-term impact of the training provided through the project, and to what extent did it contribute to bridging the human resource gap in the tourism sector?*

Finding 18: The project implemented 104 skill-based training programs, reaching 4,087 individuals from diverse backgrounds. The project also strengthened the capacity of 144 local government staff in tourism policy and planning, enabling 15 local governments to formulate effective tourism strategies at the local government level. The project's training programs had immediate impacts. They equipped 2,288 participants, including women and LGBTIQ+, with essential skills in various tourism sectors. Training fostered tourism recovery, created short-term employment, and enhanced the capacity of local governments. Long-term impacts included increased entrepreneurship among women and LGBTIQ+, greater institutional capacity, and more policy advocacy. The project improved local economies through tourism-led infrastructure and livelihood schemes. These schemes economically empowered marginalized groups like Dalits and Janjati specific to Tamang communities. It also promoted sustainable economic development, disaster and climate risk awareness, and improved access to markets and services. Good practices from the project are being replicated, as trial approaches used successfully in earlier UNDP projects. Despite some criticisms regarding the duration and depth of training, the project significantly bridged the human resource gap in the tourism sector and promoted resilience, inclusivity, and sustainable growth. To retain trained personnel and enhance local economic development, a medium- to long-term tourism revival strategy is needed to generate jobs and livelihood opportunities for local youth and returning migrant workers. With these initiatives, the project has revived the tourism sector, supported the livelihood recovery of at least 9,845 (the target was 1,600) tourism sector workers, and enhanced the capacity of NTB and other stakeholders to accelerate recovery efforts, thereby achieving its overall outcomes.

Immediate impacts
a. Skill-based training for livelihood resilience: The project implemented 104 skill-based training programs, reaching 4087 individuals from diverse backgrounds, including 34.5% women, 0.7% LGBTIQ+, 3% Dalit, 52% Janajati, and 45% others. These programs covered various tourism sectors, including trekking, mountaineering, hotel and restaurant management, river rafting, homestay management, and travel and tours. Out of the participants, 721 (314 women and 25 LGBTIQ+) were certified as guides and 1,040 as knowledgeable in tourism skills. Another 498 (165 men and 333 women) became homestay entrepreneurs and 1,828 received "up-skilling" training, with over 50% returning to their jobs with improved skills. The project also strengthened the capacity of 144 local government staff in tourism policy and planning, enabling 15 local governments to formulate effective tourism strategies at the local government level.

b. Impact on tourism recovery: The training programs fostered recovery by building the capacity of the NTB and other stakeholders, a measure bound to accelerate recovery efforts in the medium to long term. The renovation and reconstruction of small-scale tourism infrastructures provided short-term employment, meeting immediate livelihood needs. The cleaning and rehabilitation of tourism infrastructures ensured their quality and the safety of visitors, supporting the revival of domestic tourism. The training programs enhanced skills boosted employment opportunities, and fostered entrepreneurship within the tourism sector, equipping participants with competencies in hospitality, digital marketing, and sustainable tourism practices. These initiatives also supported policy advocacy by building stakeholders' capacity to engage in sector-specific governance and promote sustainable tourism policies.

The project offered training which acted as a gateway to careers in tourism and helped narrow the gap in the demand for trained human resources. However, there were some feedback. One-time training events for deprived people, it was argued, are not enough to fully enhance skills. For instance, 14 days of training in rafting delivered only a basic understanding (only 12 were eligible to receive a license against 54 women targeted training). In addition, just 14-15 out of the 54 women trained found employment as rafting support staff, and two were engaged in the international market. Obtaining a license after basic training alone proved difficult. The LGBTIQ+ community was enthusiastic about being selected for the trekking guide training program, with 25 individuals completing the 35-day course. Of these, three have since secured positions with tour and travel agencies.

Women and LGBTIQ+ have begun linking entrepreneurship with skills and information acquired from training, therefore ensuring their economic empowerment. The institutional capacity of the project's partners, including local governments and tourism associations, has been strengthened through training and

mentoring. The short-term employment provided by the project has improved mental health by building the confidence of targeted individuals. The project ensured tourism infrastructures were disabled-friendly by including PwD issues in its policies. PwDs were mainstreamed in the project through photography training. The matching funds approach for infrastructure development and training was adopted enthusiastically by the project's partners, enhancing programmatic synergy.

Long-term impact

a. Enhancing skills for tourism resilience: The training equipped participants with essential skills in hospitality, digital marketing, sustainable tourism practices, and entrepreneurship, enabling them to meet evolving market demands. The skilled trainees helped fill critical roles in hotels, travel agencies, and local enterprises, addressing human resource shortages. The project promoted sustainable economic development by enhancing employability and fostering entrepreneurship, positioning trained individuals to capitalize on emerging opportunities. Training also contributed to the sector's long-term resilience.

b. Strengthening institutions and policy advocacy: The training strengthened institutional capacity and policy advocacy within the tourism sector and promoted sustainable practices and good governance. In the stakeholder's view, by building a skilled workforce and advocating for supportive policies, the project laid the groundwork for continued growth and resilience in Nepal's tourism sector beyond the immediate recovery phase. Promoting the principles of inclusivity and diversity in all training groomed a resilient workforce capable of supporting sustainable growth.

c. Improved access to markets and services: Short-term employment schemes upgraded trekking trail and cycle trail, improving connections between villages and markets and service centers. Travel time to local markets was reportedly reduced, local employment was generated, and daily wage earners, migrant returnees, and unemployed youths and women were able to earn an income. Improved roads and trails allowed villagers to supply farm produce to markets year-round and increased access to schools and healthcare facilities.

d. Enhancing disaster and climate risk reduction awareness: The project increased community awareness about disaster and climate risks and their impacts on infrastructure and livelihood schemes. Although disaster risks were not adequately raised in the ProDoc, tourism-related infrastructure was renovated using bio-engineering and slope-stabilization techniques, such as planting hedges along green trails, to mitigate these risks. UNESCO and UNWTO helped provide the technical expertise needed to protect cultural heritage in Janakpur and Lumbini. The project also leveraged UNDP's empirical experience in disaster risk reduction, climate action, skill development, and microenterprise to create synergy.

f. Fostering resilience and inclusive economic recovery: Although most livelihood schemes had limited budgets, they fostered a strong sense of ownership among locals, indicating the presence of robust social capital. User committees enforced transparency in decision-making, engaged in effective financial management, and enforced rules based on agreed norms. Women and marginalized groups were involved in both formulating and enforcing these rules, an action that slightly improved political capital. Local employment enhanced financial capital, gradually increasing resilience and capacity to recover from the pandemic's impacts. Policy reforms enhanced tourism-sector governance and sustainability, promoting long-term resilience. These efforts revitalized the tourism sector, fostering inclusive growth and sustainable development in Nepal.

> **Box 11: Replication of good initiatives**
> - Ratnanagar Municipality replicated the street-numbering initiative of Lumbini Cultural Municipality using a one-page guideline developed by the project in Sauraha, Chitwan.
> - The partnerships with local governments using matching-fund modalities were inspired by UNDP's earlier project CILRP and the skill-based training linked to job markets implemented under the Micro Enterprise Development for Poverty Alleviation project.
> - The NTB contributed to the project by promoting tourism and developing capacity-building guidelines based on its extensive experience.
> - UNDP's green project supported waste management and recycled materials to use to make tourist souvenirs, enhancing integrated tourism. The project provided plastic benches and signage made from recycled plastic waste to Kalapatther in the Khumbu region.
> - Ideas for making tourism infrastructures both disaster- and climate-resilient came from the environment and resilience portfolio.
> - This project is enriched by UNDP's Accelerator Lab project by linking start-ups, boot camps, and AI-Hackathon technologies for waste management and digital platform.

In summary, long-term impacts include (i) developing business plans for sustainable enterprises, (ii) creating jobs for poor and vulnerable communities through tourism-led infrastructure and livelihood schemes, (iii) ensuring income opportunities through business-promoting livelihood schemes, and (iv) creating local

employment opportunities based on the skills and knowledge enhanced through training. These impacts have been possible because this project's good practices are slowly replicated in other areas and UNDP's current and earlier project also provided technical support (see Box 11 above). With these initiatives, the project contributed to reviving the tourism sector, supported the livelihood recovery of at least 9,845 (the target was 1,600) tourism sector workers, and enhanced the capacity of NTB and other stakeholders to accelerate recovery efforts, thereby achieving its overall outcomes (see Annex 9, Tables 22-24).

3. *To what extent did the project make a real difference to the people (men, women, marginalized women, Dalits, Indigenous, persons with disability (living along the destinations where the project worked, particularly in terms of socio-economic impact?*

Finding 19: The project significantly contributed to improving the socio-economic conditions of local communities, including their men, women, women from marginalized groups, Dalits, Indigenous people, and PwD members. Socially, it fostered cohesion, inclusivity, and community solidarity by promoting equal treatment, reducing stigma and discrimination, and empowering marginalized groups. It directly and indirectly benefited 13,933 and 61,305 people by improving their quality of life through the construction and renovation of small-scale tourism infrastructures. It engaged locals in tourism, shared benefits with communities, created jobs, and, to enhance employability and self-sufficiency, supported education and skill-building. Economically, it generated employment and entrepreneurial opportunities through small businesses such as homestays, hotels, restaurants, and craft shops, transitioning, as it did so, from subsistence living to regular earnings. It supported the preservation of local heritage and traditions and involved communities in tourism activities that maintained various cultural practices. The project enhanced community resilience by supporting sustainable tourism practices, improving infrastructure, and, through mandatory women's representation in decision-making roles, promoting gender equality. Overall, these initiatives reduced stress among pandemic-affected families, increased incomes, and empowered individuals, thereby shaping a more prosperous and inclusive future for the targeted populations.

a. Social impact: The project positively impacted local communities by promoting social cohesion and inclusivity, regardless of gender, caste, or class. Since local governments lead activities, the project fostered social unity. It directly and indirectly benefited 13,933 and 61,305 people respectively by improving their quality of life through the construction and renovation of small-scale tourism infrastructures. Target people experienced stress reduction, and anxiety and gained a psychological boost. Women belonging to Dalit felt empowered because project services provided equal treatment, reduced social taboos, stigma, untouchability, and discrimination, and fostered rights and entitlements. Stakeholders said that community solidarity was strengthened through joint social actions, local resource mobilization, and participatory capacity-building initiatives.

Target people involved in short-term employment overcame the depression they had felt due to the halt in tourism and loss of jobs. Even small-scale income provided a ray of hope to daily wage laborers during tough times. The project created employment opportunities through short-term initiatives and supported long-term entrepreneurship development, improving livelihoods and reducing economic vulnerability in the process. By promoting sustainable tourism practices and inclusive growth, the project contributed to building community resilience and socio-economic stability, thereby fostering a more prosperous future for the target people.

b. Economic impact: The project contributed to exploring several domestic and religious tourism destinations. Local people started service businesses like tea shops, homestays, groceries, food stalls, and gift shops. These small investments provided employment and income opportunities, especially for women and youths from marginalized communities, transforming their livelihoods from subsistence level to having regular earnings and savings. The project supported the long-term revival of the tourism sector by creating sustainable jobs, developing the capacity of human resources, supporting tourism-based enterprises, strengthening data management and digitalization, and crafting a comprehensive tourism recovery strategy. Together, these efforts enhanced economic resilience. The construction of foot trails and other infrastructures increased tourist numbers, a trend that benefited local hotel businesses and motivated them to attract still more visitors. The changes seen in Shey Phoksundo of Dolpa District were, for example, considerable. The project-generated improvements in facilities and connectivity contributed to local economic growth.

Women received employment opportunities and skills training, thereby expanding their avenues for economic and social empowerment. Women-led income-generating schemes increased women's incomes and empowered them economically. They gained technological skills and boosted their self-esteem and leadership abilities, thereby enabling them to interact more effectively with other right holders as well as with decision-makers.

c. Benefits to diverse groups: The project provided equal access to training and employment opportunities to target people. These opportunities in turn empowered these groups to participate actively in tourism-related activities. By promoting inclusive practices and distributing benefits equally, the project fostered social integration and improved livelihoods. In Simara, Bara District, the project provided post-project material support for homestays run by Dalit communities once they had completed the project-run training. In Budhanilkantha, the project supplied musical instruments for homestays operated by Tamang communities. The registration fee for trekking guide trainees from ultra-poor communities was waived in coordination with TAAN. These are only a few examples. Many individuals from these groups reported that they had more income from employment opportunities in the tourism sector, a change that enhanced their economic stability. Stakeholders reported that women's involvement in the program helped them voice and choose their preferences for training and jobs. Women's average empowerment is currently at the level of active participation, but many women are starting to influence decision-making processes. Targeted support and inclusive practices promoted social inclusion and strengthened community resilience, leading to tangible improvements in their overall well-being and quality of life.

5.6 Sustainability

1. *How well did the project interventions contribute to sustaining the results achieved, and how relevant is the exit strategy, including upscaling of project results and securing further resources for continued activities?*

Finding 20: The project effectively sustained its results by providing continuous support for entrepreneurship, policy advocacy, and community engagement and by fostering long-term resilience and local ownership. The project effectively leveraged 43% of its total resources through co-financing initiatives. A total of US$ 1,275,955 was mobilized from local governments for the reconstruction and development of tourism infrastructures as well as the capacity-building of tourism stakeholders. In addition, US$ 89,642 was mobilized from tourism associations. The project needs a formalized exit strategy and sustainability plan to scale up and embed successful practices. Efforts to secure additional resources and co-financing support are ongoing, but the limited funding for the O&M of infrastructure remains an area needing improvement. Although a contingency fund for O&M has been established, its use is not yet guaranteed due to the absence of a specific exit strategy. The infrastructure handover process, including the provisions for O&M, has commenced but not adequate. Future planning should focus on formalizing an exit strategy and enhancing resource allocation for the O&M needed to solidify and expand the project's impacts.

a. Project's approaches and interventions contribute to maintaining the achieved results effectively: The project's strategies and interventions effectively ensured that the outcomes achieved were sustained through strategic sustainability measures. These included continuous support for entrepreneurship development and capacity-building initiatives, both measures that contributed to the ongoing employment generation within the tourism sector. Persistent advocacy for favorable policies ensured the longevity of supportive frameworks, thereby enhancing long-term resilience. By prioritizing inclusive practices and community engagement, the project strengthened local ownership of project initiatives and commitment to maintaining positive socio-economic impacts. Stakeholders said that the project's integrated approaches had solidified gains and ensured that the benefits of tourism recovery initiatives would endure well beyond the project's initial phases, thus fostering sustainable tourism development. The project employed multiple strategies and approaches to uphold anticipated outcomes through planned interventions (Box 12 below).

These strategies and approaches not only bolstered the sustainability of project initiatives but also cultivated community ownership. Stakeholders underscored that project interventions aligned with sustainable tourism practices, and promoted the environmental, social, and economic sustainability of tourism infrastructures. At the federal level, robust collaboration and coordination were observed among key stakeholders including the MoCTCA, DoT, prominent tourism associations, and other relevant entities.

b. Relevance of the project's exit strategy to the scaling up of the project's results: The project's exit strategy and plan for sustainability, while not formalized into dedicated documents, is crucial for scaling up project outcomes and fostering long-term growth in Nepal's tourism sector. According to stakeholders, such strategies and plan, if formulated, help to embed successful interventions—such as training programs and policy reforms—within existing frameworks and partnerships. By empowering local stakeholders and promoting ownership, such a strategy helps to ensure that gains in short-term employment, entrepreneurship development, and policy advocacy continue to benefit communities beyond the project's tenure. To strengthen the resilience of the tourism sector, support ongoing growth, align with SDGs, and maximize the project's enduring impact, the formulation of an exit strategy is crucial.

To sustain the project's best practices and lessons learned, the project formulated Sustainable Tourism for Economic Prosperity (STEP), a new phase tourism project for the upcoming programmatic cycle with three overarching outputs.[26] These focused outputs underscore the project's dedication to advancing inclusive growth and sustainable development in Nepal's tourism sector.

c. Efforts to secure additional resources to continue project activities:
Efforts are underway to secure additional resources to sustain Nepal's tourism recovery initiative. These efforts include advocating for continued funding from government agencies, engaging with tourism associations and private sector partners for continuous support, and seeking grants and donations from international organizations and development partners. One key focus has been demonstrating the project's impact, sustainability, and alignment with national development priorities to ensure that financial and technical backing continues to be provided. These endeavors aim to guarantee that successful interventions in short-term employment, entrepreneurship development, and policy advocacy persist beyond the initial project phase, thereby benefiting local communities and the tourism sector well into the future.

> **Box 12: The project's multiple strategies and approaches**
> - Established strong partnerships and collaboration with local governments to ensure sustainability and mobilize additional resources.
> - Implemented community-led decision-making processes and capacity enhancement initiatives focused on recovery and resilience.
> - Adopted an integrated approach to develop small-scale tourism infrastructures and facilitate tourism recovery.
> - Standardized tourism service guidelines for replication.
> - Prioritized cost-effectiveness by utilizing local resources and materials wherever possible.
> - Emphasized digitization, sustainable tourism practices, and the creation of green jobs.
> - Utilized bioengineering, disaster management techniques, and weather information channels to mitigate risks.
> - Renovated and constructed sustainable trails and eco-friendly infrastructure to enhance environmental sustainability.
> - Promoted domestic tourism by establishing an enabling policy environment.
> - Aligned activities with national priorities and fostered partnerships with provincial and local governments, as well as relevant ministries.
> - Collaborated with the private sector and tourism associations to enhance the project's impact and sustainability.

During its implementation, the project effectively leveraged 43% of its total resources through co-financing initiatives. It was, for example, able to secure US$ 1,275,955 from local governments for the reconstruction and development of tourism infrastructures as well as the capacity-building of tourism stakeholders. In addition, US$ 89,642 was mobilized from tourism associations. This approach not only optimized project finances but also enhanced community ownership, sustained the ongoing initiatives through operation and maintenance (O&M) provisions, and facilitated the replication of successful practices in communities and neighboring local governments. The co-financing strategy aligned project interventions with local government priorities, integrating them into AWPs to ensure the long-term sustainability of project initiatives. Promoting civic engagement through public hearings enhanced accountability, transparency, and community ownership, thereby creating a robust framework for co-financing. The project's transparent

> **Remarks from stakeholders and target people during KIIs and FGDs**
> - *"...One of the project's strengths was its effective use of the resources, networks, and expertise of its partners, a fact which created a positive atmosphere for all involved…"*
> - *"…To sustain gender results, the project should design additional activities, such as using gender-friendly technology and innovations, to reduce workload and boost confidence, thereby enhancing gender and social inclusion…"*
> - *"…The project met basic sustainability criteria by conserving natural resources, managing waste, and preserving biodiversity. It also supported local economies, created jobs, and promoted fair income distribution. It also played a key role in preserving cultural heritage, and promoting local traditions through community involvement. These practices suggest that the project's benefits will continue even after its completion…"*

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[26] Creating tourism-based employment opportunities for women, youth, and marginalized communities through the development and enhancement of tourism infrastructures (Output 1); building the capacity of these groups for employment and entrepreneurship in tourism (Output 2); and improving the digitalization, strategic branding, and marketing of tourism destinations to promote and sustain Nepal's tourism industry (Output 3).

cost-sharing mechanism and innovative financial models further promoted shared responsibility and sustainability across its interventions.

The mechanisms that ensured financial, socio-economic, political/institutional, and environmental sustainability are outlined below.

- **Financial sustainability:** The project successfully secured resources from the government for various activities. Local government leaders have committed to providing additional funding in the future to implement the agreed plans and to contribute to the operation and maintenance (O&M) fund for tourism infrastructure. Women and youth are confident in continuing their livelihood initiatives. The project's key components have been integrated into the plans, policies, and programs of local governments, ensuring the sustainability of these efforts by leveraging government resources. Although the groups, committees, and clubs are still in their early stages, their enthusiasm and the work they have accomplished suggest that they will continue to serve as social platforms for sustainable livelihoods.

- **Socio-economic sustainability:** Infrastructure was built to enhance social services and reduce disaster risks. The combination of software and hardware activities not only encouraged local participation in the project's initiatives but also ensured the sustainability of its efforts. Women's groups have become more effective and now serve as "social platforms" for sustainable livelihoods, raising awareness about key project issues. The project also contributed to human capital development by training local resource persons through various capacity-building initiatives. It is noteworthy that those trained by the project, including those affected by the pandemic, are now valuable local assets that can be mobilized in times of need. Additionally, the project strengthened the institutional capacity of women's groups, tourism workers, and clubs, enabling them to lead community-level activities and advocate for socio-economic change. These groups and committees now meet regularly, making decisions aimed at actionable outcomes, further solidifying their institutional presence.

- **Political/Institutional framework and governance sustainability:** The project collaborated closely with local governments, tourism associations, wards, groups, and clubs. These groups and committees have been formally registered with the relevant municipal departments and are actively providing support. All groups are inclusive of gender and social diversity. As these institutions have become more established, they have gradually taken on greater responsibilities. Members of these groups and committees are in the process of drafting operational guidelines and constitutions (*bidhan*) that incorporate the communities' customary rules, regulations, norms, and practices.

- **Environmental sustainability:** The project safeguarded the local environment during implementation by utilizing protective mechanisms for small-scale infrastructure. Construction materials like stone, sand, and wood were sourced from safe areas to prevent environmental damage.

2. *To what extent did the project enhance the integration of resources with partner organizations, ensuring sustained impacts on the tourism sector?*

Finding 21: *The project effectively enhanced its impact on the tourism sector by integrating its resources with those of local governments, NGOs, and tourism associations. This collaboration enabled the efficient allocation of resources, addressed local needs, and promoted sustainability. These collaborations generated an additional US$ 89,642 for capacity-building programs benefiting tourism workers and entrepreneurs, particularly those most vulnerable to job losses. Key outcomes included successful livelihood recovery, capacity-building, and the creation of sustainable tourism clubs in schools. By embedding activities into local government plans, the project ensured that resource allocation for O&M would continue. This approach fostered community ownership, expanded outreach, and supported long-term growth and resilience in Nepal's tourism industry.*

a. Project integrated resources with partner organizations: The project effectively combined its resources with partner organizations to enhance collaboration and maximize impact. Partnerships with local governments, I/NGOs, and tourism associations ensured that resources were allocated efficiently, and that implementation was coordinated. For this reason, then, local needs were responded to efficiently and sustainability was promoted. Collaborating with tourism associations, the project supported livelihood recovery for worker members of these associations. These partnerships generated an additional US$ 89,642 for capacity-building programs benefiting tourism workers and entrepreneurs, particularly those most vulnerable to job losses.

Partnering with 85 local governments through LoA was pivotal in fostering ownership and ensuring the sustainability of tourism-based infrastructure projects. Tailored interventions addressed the specific needs and priorities of local governments and tourism stakeholders. In addition, the project established national sustainable tourism clubs in 150 schools and trained approximately 1,650 young tourism ambassadors. These ambassadors now lead local tourism initiatives. Moreover, the project successfully integrated its activities into local government plans, ensuring that resources were allocated for O&M needs even though

a dedicated fund had not been established for this purpose. This comprehensive approach effectively mainstreamed and sustained the project's initiatives within local governance frameworks.

To expand its impact on underserved regions, the project partnered with seven NGOs and tourism associations, using LVGAs. Stakeholders suggested that these partnerships were instrumental in leveraging resources, fostering synergy, and achieving impactful outcomes with strong community ownership. This collaborative approach enhanced outreach and supported efforts to promote sustainable tourism across diverse regions. It also helped increase the duration of positive impacts, thereby promoting long-term growth and resilience in Nepal's tourism industry sustainably.

3. *To what extent did the project interventions contribute towards sustaining the positive GESI results (based on the GRES Framework) in the country?*

Finding 22: The project effectively advanced GESI outcomes by offering equitable training and employment opportunities to marginalized groups, including women, Dalits, indigenous people, and PwDs. By integrating GESI principles into its design and advocating for inclusive policies, the project addressed socio-economic disparities and promoted diversity in Nepal's tourism sector. Embedding these principles into institutional frameworks and fostering local ownership resulted in the project's having lasting impacts on gender equality and social inclusion. Ongoing M&E ensured the sustainability of these results. The project has continued to focus on inclusive practices and capacity-building to support sustained socio-economic growth for marginalized communities. Expanding the project's eco-friendly tourism initiatives with a focus on women's leadership would add significant value. Prioritizing gender-responsive policies and incorporating gender considerations into product design and service packages, including gender-friendly technology and innovations, is crucial for inclusive development.

a. Project interventions contribute to achieving positive GESI results: The project made significant strides in achieving positive GESI outcomes by implementing targeted initiatives designed to ensure the equal participation and empowerment of marginalized groups. Specifically, it provided women, Dalits, indigenous people, and PwDs with fair access to training and job opportunities (even though their numbers are still small relative to their populations). Through inclusive policies and practices, the project addressed socio-economic disparities and promoted diversity within Nepal's tourism sector. Stakeholders noted that by enhancing skills, promoting entrepreneurship, and advocating for inclusive policies, the project effectively contributed to reducing inequalities and empowering marginalized communities, thereby fostering sustainable and inclusive growth in the tourism sector.

The project also prioritized inclusivity, gender equality, and social empowerment, paying specific attention to PwD and LGBTIQ+ from the outset. Gender equality, women's empowerment, and social inclusion were integral to the project's design and implementation. Collaborating with stakeholders, the project developed a comprehensive gender action plan focused on empowering women and vulnerable communities. An affirmative approach was taken to enhance the knowledge and skills of women, resulting in significant training and skill development opportunities. Stakeholders applauded this approach to reaching previously underserved groups and crossing gender stereotypes.

b. Sustainability of GESI results over time: The project's GESI results have had a lasting impact due to the project's ongoing emphasis on gender-responsive and inclusive practices, policy advocacy, and capacity-building. By integrating GESI principles into institutional frameworks and fostering local ownership, the project has been able to bring about lasting changes in attitudes and practices within the tourism sector. Continuous M&E by the PIU has ensured that progress in gender equality, social inclusion, and diversity has been sustained, albeit not to the fullest extent. The outcome has been the sustained empowerment of and continued socio-economic benefits for marginalized groups in Nepal's tourism industry.

4. *What could be potential new areas of work and innovative measures for sustaining the gender results in the respective interventions?*

Finding 23: To sustain and enhance gender results, future efforts should focus on advanced training for women leaders in tourism, particularly in the areas of digital marketing and sustainability. While women's presence in the tourism sector was initially limited, the project's affirmative approach increased women's participation in activities. Overall, women comprised 28% of the project participants. Key actions include expanding advocacy for gender-responsive policies, forging partnerships with women-led groups, skill training, networking and linkages for employment and enterprise creation and development and improving monitoring systems. Strengthening advocacy for gender-responsive policies, partnering with women-led groups, improving monitoring systems, and investing in research on gender dynamics are all crucial. Innovative measures such as digital literacy programs for women, gender-responsive tourism products, and virtual advocacy platforms are crucial. In addition, investing in green tourism products and conducting gender-focused research will support women's empowerment and leadership, driving sustainable growth in Nepal's tourism sector.

a. Potential new areas of work that could sustain the gender results achieved by the project: To further sustain the gender results achieved, it is essential to develop advanced training programs for women leaders in tourism, with a focus on digital marketing and sustainable practices. Such provisions were too limited within the scope of the project. Moreover, strengthening advocacy for gender-responsive policies, building partnerships with women-led groups, skill training for specific groups, networking and linkages for employment and enterprise creation and development, enhancing monitoring systems, and investing in research on gender dynamics will be crucial. These efforts will expand positive impacts and promote inclusive growth in Nepal's tourism sector.

Table 8: GRES outputs and their rationales

Outputs	Gender					Rationale
	Negative	Blind	Targeted	Responsive	Transformative	
Vulnerable tourism workers were offered short-term employment to meet immediate livelihood needs			◼			To increase the participation of targeted people using affirmative action and positive discrimination
Renovation and development of small-scale tourism infrastructures and products in major tourist destinations			◼			Some skill training is exclusive to address gender gaps and others are gender-inclusive.
The institutional capacities of tourism stakeholders, including the NTB, strengthen		◼				Policies, strategies, guidelines, and digitization of tourism destinations are gender-neutral.

Although the project did not include standalone activities specifically focused on gender empowerment, a Gender Action Plan was developed and implemented to ensure the participation of women and socially excluded vulnerable groups in the project's initiatives. This approach led to several "unanticipated effects." For example, increasing gender and social inclusivity unexpectedly improved community cohesion and overall resilience, as diverse perspectives contributed to more innovative problem-solving and decision-making. These efforts also empowered marginalized groups in ways that went beyond the project's original objectives, fostering broader social and economic benefits and enhancing the overall well-being of the community.

b. Implementation of innovative measures to enhance and sustain gender results: To enhance and sustain gender results in Nepal's tourism sector, several innovative measures can be implemented. Launching digital literacy programs tailored to women can boost their online marketing skills and market reach. Developing gender-responsive tourism products that highlight women's contributions and cultural heritage can create economic opportunities while preserving local traditions. Utilizing virtual platforms for advocacy and knowledge exchange among women entrepreneurs and encouraging impact investment in gender-focused tourism ventures will further promote women's leadership and empowerment, fostering sustainable development and resilience in Nepal's tourism industry. The project can also extend its initiative to develop eco-friendly and green recovery-based tourism products for domestic tourism in the lead role of women through the construction of hiking and cycling trails. This inclusive strategy has not only taught valuable skills but also created networking opportunities, significantly improving participants' chances of connecting with potential employers.

The project integrated GESI into interventions like short-term employment, training, tourism package standardization, small infrastructure support, and policy work. While women's presence in the tourism sector was initially limited, the project's affirmative approach increased women's participation in activities. Overall, women comprised 28% of the project participants. In summary, the Gender Result Effectiveness Scale (GRES) indicates that the project focused on gender-targeted programs (see Table 8). The project has to prioritize gender-responsive policy and strategy documents. It needs to actively integrate gender considerations into product designs and service packages. In addition, focusing on the gender-responsive digitization of databases and destination development is essential for creating decent jobs and supporting women in service-based businesses.

5.7 Cross-cutting issues
5.7.1 Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
1. *How effectively were GESI provisions incorporated in the project design and implementation, particularly in addressing the needs of women and other marginalized groups in the tourism sector?*

The project successfully integrated GESI provisions into both its design and implementation approach, thereby ensuring the participation of all individuals regardless of gender, caste, class, or well-being at every stage of the project. Consultations with stakeholders and the target population confirmed that the project created an inclusive environment for women, PwDs, LGBTIQ+, and other marginalized groups such as Dalit and Janjati. Although the project did not establish a GESI baseline, it did conduct extensive discussions and consultations to identify relevant issues with the stakeholders. GESI was prioritized across the project's three outputs and outcomes by adopting both integrated and targeted approaches. While some actions fell short of achieving transformational changes, there was notable progress in altering gender roles and norms. For example, women began taking on roles as trekking guides, tour guides, service vendors, cooks, homestay, and drivers, all roles previously inaccessible to them.

The project employed an affirmative action to select participants for skill development training, and an explicitly target training program, thereby enabling it to reach marginalized groups. Women from Janajati, LGBTIQ+, and Dalit communities participated in various trainings. Notable initiatives included women-focused trekking guide training in Karnali Province and Kathmandu, river guide training and homestay management training for women, and assistant trekking guide training for LGBTIQ+. The Gender Action Plan addresses the concerns of these groups, emphasizing participation and data collection at the beneficiary level. While tourism associations are GESI-friendly in participation and behavior, the content, delivery, and packages of training were not adequately responsive to GESI needs. Instead, rather than inclusive, they were often neutral.

Remarks from stakeholders and target people during KIIs and FGDs
- *"…the project is GESI-inclusive, a fact based on several factors. It created a significant number of jobs for women, ensuring equal pay for equal work. It also provided training programs specifically for women in areas like hospitality, rafting, tour guiding, homestays, and entrepreneurship. Women also held leadership positions within the project's UCs and groups. This evidence shows the project supported gender equality and social integration. That said, GESI practices are still being gradually incorporated through participations …"*
- *"…the project demonstrates social inclusivity through several key actions: (i) active participation of marginalized and indigenous communities in planning and decision-making, (ii) access to resources and opportunities for marginalized groups, and (iii) improved livelihoods and efforts to preserve the cultural heritages of marginalized communities. The project also fostered positive changes among women, PwDs, and other marginalized groups. The project did not, however, specifically focus on an 'equity approach' at the fullest scale to improve the socio-economic conditions of these groups…"*

2. *How successfully has the project promoted positive changes for women, persons with disability, and all types of marginalized groups in the context of gender equality and social inclusion?*

a. Promotion of positive changes for women and marginalized groups: The project successfully promoted positive changes for women by enhancing their skills, fostering entrepreneurship, and advocating gender-responsive policies and practices. Through targeted training programs and support for women-led enterprises, the project increased women's participation in project activities. Capacity-building initiatives bolstered their confidence and leadership skills, creating a more inclusive and equitable environment and empowering women both economically and socially. Short-term employment and skill development opportunities were provided, and participants were exposed to markets and enabled to earn wages. Women secured contractual jobs in trekking, rafting, and tour guide. Some even entered the international

market. However, more safety and social security initiatives, such as insurance and flexible working hours, need to be offered before women are firmly convinced to join the tourism sector.

The project also addressed socio-economic disparities and promoted cultural preservation, thereby contributing to equitable development and empowerment. Stakeholders reported that by promoting sustainable tourism practices that benefit local communities, the project amplified women's voices and contributions and, in this fashion, tangibly improved their livelihoods and overall wellbeing. Women played significant leadership roles in developing the Tourist Information Centre in Lumbini and protecting Tharu culture in Dang. In addition, the introduction of gender-responsive tourism products highlighting women's contributions and cultural heritage created economic opportunities while preserving local traditions. The project also provided social recognition for LGBTIQ+ by involving them in training programs.

b. Successes of the project in promoting positive changes for PwDs: The project effectively promoted positive changes for PwDs through capacity-building, policy advocacy, and short-term employment opportunities. It engaged PwDs in advocacy sessions for inclusive policies and provided accessible training, thereby enhancing their employment prospects and opportunities for entrepreneurship. Local governments are increasingly focused on making all their premises and infrastructure accessible to PwDs. While not all tourism infrastructures are PwD-friendly, the project's focus on improving infrastructures and promoting inclusive tourism practices has increased accessibility to tourist sites and services. Awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts have fostered a more inclusive tourism environment, and, in doing so, contributed to positive social change and improved the quality of life for PwDs.

3. *To what extent has the project promoted positive changes (leadership, empowerment) for women, persons with disability, and marginalized groups?*

Finding 26: The project significantly promoted leadership and empowerment among women, PwDs, and marginalized groups through targeted training, mentorship, and advocacy. Women assumed leadership roles, launched entrepreneurial ventures and increased their visibility and influence in the tourism sector. Although specific leadership training was not provided, skill-based training and employment increased women's economic confidence and social status. Inclusive policies, capacity-building, and support for entrepreneurship reduced socio-economic disparities, promoted cultural preservation, and fostered social inclusion and resilience. Women reported that they felt safe and happy and that there were no wage differences based on gender, caste, or class. Advocacy efforts also contributed to economic empowerment and reduced stigma and discrimination, particularly against Dalit communities.

The project significantly promoted leadership and empowerment among women, PwDs, and marginalized groups. Through targeted training programs, mentorship, and advocacy, women have assumed leadership roles and launched entrepreneurial ventures. Of the total UCs formulated for the project, 30% are led by women from marginalized communities who participated in short-term employment. While specific leadership training was not within the project's scope of work, skill-based training and employment contributed to women's empowerment, increasing their economic confidence and social status. Stakeholders reported that women had more visibility and influence in the tourism sector due to the project-introduced opportunities for skill development and networking. Women grew increasingly involved in advocating for gender-responsive policies and inclusive practices. Though women-led networks are still developing, women are growing increasingly empowered, and more women leaders are emerging. For example, with limited technical support from the project, women from Sirubari in Syangja trained the people of Dhading and Chitwan Districts in homestay management, showcasing their true leadership.

The project also empowered PwDs to advocate for their needs and contribute to the tourism sector. In Adhikhola Rural Municipality of Syangja, partnerships between the local government and community-based rehabilitation centers facilitated PwD involvement in tourism-related policy advocacy and training. Stakeholders confirmed that the project promoted the empowerment of marginalized groups through inclusive policies, capacity-building initiatives, and support for entrepreneurship. It was said that these efforts reduced socio-economic disparities and promoted cultural preservation, thereby helping these groups assert their rights, improve their livelihoods, and foster social inclusion and resilience. No issues related to workplace harassment, gender-based violence, or harmful practices were mentioned during the evaluation. Participants reported feeling safe and happy in project-related activities, with no wage differences based on gender, caste, class, or well-being. Advocacy sessions and interactions contributed to economic empowerment and reduced discriminatory behavior, particularly against Dalit communities, and LGBTIQ+ in the tourism sector.

4. *What measurable changes in (i) gender equality, (ii) women's empowerment, and (iii) social integration have occurred because of the interventions?*

Finding 27: The interventions led to measurable improvements in gender equality, women's empowerment, and social integration within Nepal's tourism sector. Gender equality increased as more women assumed leadership and entrepreneurial roles and were supported by gender-sensitive policies and better access to resources. Training programs enhanced women's market engagement and reduced gender gaps in socio-economic participation. Women's empowerment increased through their participation in training, infrastructure projects, and policy advocacy. As a result, they were able to make independent career decisions and actively voice their choices. Social integration improved, with marginalized groups gaining visibility and acceptance in tourism through enhancements in accessibility, capacity-building, and diversity-promoting policies, all of which foster a more inclusive and cohesive environment.

The interventions have led to significant changes in Nepal's tourism sector. In the stakeholder's views and as per the project's data, there has been an increase in the number of women holding leadership and entrepreneurial roles, facilitated by the implementation of affirmative action for gender equality that enhances women's access to resources and opportunities. There is also greater awareness and sensitivity to gender issues, with the result that there are more inclusive practices and policies across the sector. Training participants have demonstrated more market engagement, either through employment or by starting small enterprises. Both changes have contributed to reducing gender gaps in access to local resources and socio-economic initiatives.

5. *To what extent did the project address and respond to existing power dynamics and gender relations?*

Finding 28: The project effectively addressed power dynamics and gender relations by fostering short-term employment, skill development, and enterprise creation for women and marginalized communities, thereby empowering them to claim their rights. Despite the absence of specific gender mainstreaming programs in addition to its GESI Action Plan and affirmative action, the project positively impacted gender relations at the individual, family, and community levels. Stakeholders highlighted capacity-building, advocacy for inclusive policies, and enhancements in access to resources as key efforts in balancing power relations and promoting equitable participation. These initiatives reduced disparities, promoted inclusive governance, and addressed gender-specific barriers, contributing to measurable improvements in gender relations within the tourism sector.

The project did not have specific gender programs in its scope beyond its GESI Action Plan and 'affirmative action' for women and marginalized groups. However, it positively impacted power dynamics and gender relations by creating short-term employment, enhancing skill matching to the job market, and fostering the creation of enterprises for women and marginalized communities. These initiatives improved gender relationships at the individual, family, and community levels, empowering women and marginalized groups to engage in dialogue and claim their rights.

Stakeholders noted that capacity-building initiatives, advocacy for inclusive policies, and partnerships with diverse stakeholders aimed to balance power relations. By enhancing access to resources and opportunities for marginalized communities, the project worked to reduce disparities and promote equitable participation in tourism activities. Stakeholders claimed that these efforts contributed to a more balanced and inclusive approach to governance and development, addressing longstanding power imbalances within the sector. By fostering awareness and sensitivity to gender issues, the project has contributed to changing attitudes and behaviors and introduced measurable improvements in gender relations within the tourism sector.

5.7.2 Human rights

1. *To what extent have women, Dalits, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities (women, men, others), and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the project's work, and with what impact?*

Finding 29: The project effectively applied a HRBA, ensuring inclusivity and equality for women, LGBTIQ+, Dalits, ethnic minorities, and PwDs. By emphasizing dignity, equity, and empowerment, it provided these target people with equal access to training, mentorship, and leadership roles. The result was improvements in livelihoods and greater visibility in decision-making. The project engaged in fair labor practices and provided equitable working conditions. There were no reports of social discrimination or sexual harassment.

A review of the project's progress reports and interactions with multiple stakeholders revealed that the project adopted a human rights-based approach (HRBA) while collaborating with tourism associations and other partners. This approach respects social values and norms throughout the process such as demand collection, design, implementation, monitoring, and follow-up. The principle of "leave no one behind" was truly put into practice by the project. The project demonstrated the values of inclusivity and equality. There was not a single report of social discrimination or untouchability from any target people. The project's efforts have ensured that all partners, too, are gender-sensitive and inclusive in both words and actions.

Stakeholders proudly reported that women, LGBTIQ+, Dalits, ethnic minorities, and members of other disadvantaged and marginalized groups have equally benefited from the project's initiatives without any discrimination. In addition, Dalits, ethnic minorities, and PwDs have better livelihoods, more visibility, and a stronger voice in decision-making processes within the tourism sector.

2. *How well are human rights issues reflected in the new tourism recovery strategy, especially in consideration of the vulnerable groups targeted by the project?*

Finding 30: *The new tourism recovery strategy effectively integrates human rights principles by emphasizing inclusivity, accessibility, and social responsibility. It focuses on improving tourism services and infrastructures and ensures that access to benefits is equitable, culture is preserved, and communities are engaged. The strategy reflects human rights issues by addressing socio-economic disparities and empowering vulnerable groups through targeted policies, capacity-building, and advocacy. Stakeholders commend the project's commitment to human rights and ethical tourism practices.*

Policies and strategies developed by the project focused on improving the quality of tourism services. Its efforts included attention to branding, marketing, economic contributions to GDP, business environment enhancement, human resource development, infrastructure, institutional strengthening, cultural heritage conservation, natural resource conservation, and contributions to SDG 8 and 12. While none of these focuses explicitly mention human rights, they all addressed issues such as decent jobs, income generation, good-quality livelihoods, and poverty alleviation, all achieved through quality tourism. These inclusions suggest that HRBA issues are somewhat reflected in the policies.

The new tourism recovery strategy integrates human rights principles by emphasizing inclusivity, accessibility, and social responsibility. It ensures equitable access to tourism benefits for marginalized groups, including Dalits, ethnic minorities, and PwDs, through targeted policies and initiatives. The strategy promotes cultural preservation, respects indigenous rights, and enhances community engagement with a view toward mitigating the negative impacts of tourism on local populations and fostering sustainable tourism practices. Stakeholders praised the project's commitment to upholding human rights standards across Nepal's tourism sector and promoting an ethical and responsible approach to tourism recovery.

Remarks from stakeholders and target people during KIIs and FGDs
- *"…the project adopted a HRBA. It prioritized dignity, equity, and empowerment for everyone involved. It followed fair labour practices, ensured safe and equitable working conditions, and provided fair wages to all employees. No cases of sexual harassment were reported…"*
- *"…the project actively involved targeted groups in decision-making processes, respecting their rights and cultural heritages while fostering an inclusive environment. Human rights issues are gradually being reflected in new tourism recovery strategies and action plans…"*
- *"…the project effectively prevented exploitation and discrimination, thereby aligning itself with international human rights standards. This approach not only improved the wellbeing of the targeted groups but also set a standard for ethical and sustainable tourism practices. That said, collecting disaggregated data remains a challenge…"*

The recovery strategy also effectively considers the needs of vulnerable groups by prioritizing inclusivity and equitable access to tourism opportunities. It includes specific measures to support target populations through tailored policies, capacity-building programs, and advocacy initiatives. By addressing socio-economic disparities and enhancing participation in decision-making processes, the strategy empowers vulnerable groups, ensuring they benefit equitably from efforts to rejuvenate tourism in Nepal.

3. *To what extent have projects integrated the Human Rights based approach in the (i) design, (ii) implementation, and (iii) monitoring of the project? Have the resources been used efficiently to address Human Rights in the implementation (e.g. participation of targeted stakeholders, collection of disaggregated data, etc.)?*

Finding 31: *The project effectively applied HRBA across its design, implementation, and monitoring phases, emphasizing equality, inclusivity, and dignity. Design processes included targeted populations in making decisions and allocating resources to protect their human rights. Implementation prioritized non-discrimination, accessibility, and participation. It enabled marginalized groups to engage in training and advocacy. Monitoring involved collecting disaggregated data and transparent reporting, both steps that enhanced accountability. Despite some challenges in data collection, local governments and partners used resources efficiently and addressed socio-economic disparities conscientiously.*

The HRBA was effectively integrated into the project design, which emphasizes equality, inclusivity, and dignity for all vulnerable groups. Resources were allocated to facilitate inclusive decision-making, engage marginalized groups in program design and implementation, and advocate for the rights of the marginalized

within the tourism sector. By collecting and analyzing disaggregated data, the project identified specific challenges faced by vulnerable groups and tailored interventions, accordingly, enhancing transparency and accountability and enhancing its ability to promote human rights and social inclusion. During implementation, the project incorporated the principles of non-discrimination, accessibility, and participation, ensuring that policies and interventions were respected and human rights protected. By prioritizing the needs and voices of the target people, the project aimed to mitigate socio-economic disparities and empower these populations within Nepal's tourism sector. Participation in training, skill-based entrepreneurship, and policy advocacy was guaranteed. Tourism associations and other partners were given full authority to implement and monitor the project, including inviting their members or workers for training. Careful implementation fostered an inclusive and rights-respecting environment, generating positive social impacts among marginalized communities.

Local governments mobilized UCs by involving local youth and marginalized and disadvantaged groups during execution. At least 33% of UC members were women, and women, too, were included in short-term employment and monitoring activities as far as possible. The project monitored activities through social media, WhatsApp groups, and regular communication with focal persons. It also developed reports with mandatory sex and caste disaggregated data sheets for the target people. This efficient use of resources ensured that human rights were effectively addressed throughout the project's lifecycle.

6. Best practices and lessons learned

6.1 Best practices

a. Letter of agreements with local government: The project signed LoA with the local governments, establishing cost-sharing partnerships with 50:50 cost-sharing ratios and provisions for result-based payments. The partnership budgets were recorded and audited according to government norms. LoAs enhance ownership and human resource development across various sectors.[27] Based on the project's needs, local governments also formed UCs to implement specific activities. LoAs facilitated meaningful coordination, resource mobilization, and planning for large-scale tourism destinations. One key advantage of LoAs was their ability to leverage technical and financial resources from development actors.

b. Capacity-building initiatives led by tourism associations: As part of the training needs assessments and capacity gap analyses for tourism associations (rather than for individual workers), the project conducted rapid needs assessments in consultation with these associations. Based on the findings, customized training programs with detailed session plans were designed and delivered on a cost-sharing basis, with associations contributing between 10-40% of the total training budgets. This collaborative approach significantly enhanced the skills of the target people and addressed critical skill gaps in the market. The training was highly effective because the associations led in the processes of participant selection, course content design, session planning, training delivery, final skill testing, and linking trained individuals to job opportunities. The success of these training programs was also attributable to the use of the guidelines and manuals developed by the project and the NTB.

c. Honored with PATA Gold Award for innovative work in the tourism sector: The project was honored with the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Award three times for its creative and innovative initiatives. This prestigious award recognizes exceptional achievements in various aspects of the travel and tourism industry, including marketing, human capital development, and sustainability. The PATA Gold Award highlights responsible tourism practices that set new benchmarks for the industry, promoting excellence and inspiring others to adopt best practices (see Table 9 above).

Table 9: Year wise Theme of PATA Gold Award		
Year	Theme	Key Topic
2022	Tourism destination resilience	Acknowledging its efforts to support the livelihood recovery of the most affected tourism workers and the ability to showcase resiliency in tourism during COVID-19
2023	Women's empowerment initiatives in sustainable and social responsibility	Recognizing its significant impact on bridging gender gaps and promoting gender equality in the Nepalese tourism industry
2024	Community-based tourism	Celebrating its success in uniting communities and fostering thriving tourism practices

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[27] Rafting guides, village trekking guides, tour guides, mountaineering trekking guides, tourist vehicle handling, and hotel management (including housekeeping, cooking, and culinary arts).

d. Promoting green tourism: The project advanced eco-friendly and sustainable tourism by developing various green, foot, hiking, and cycle trails. Notably, it created the 15-kilometer Kirtipur-Chandragiri Adventure Cycle Trail in Kirtipur and Chandragiri municipalities. Emphasizing waste management along trekking routes protected the environment and controlled pollution. The project prioritized green, low-carbon technology, and local materials for destination development and incorporated environmental safeguards to reduce its impact. In addition, it planted hedges on the slopes of outer trails to help prevent landslides further protecting the environment. In Majubhanjyang, Syangja, the project collaborated with the Divisional Forest Officer to plant rhododendrons and develop water recharge ponds.

e. Enhancing market access through digitization: The project collaborated with international organizations to enhance market access by implementing a TSA, a tourism database, digitization, and destination branding. It emphasized digitizing tourism destinations and pioneered virtual tours, showcasing a forward-thinking approach and recognizing the importance of digital platforms in the evolving tourism landscape. In partnership with TAAN, the project developed an M&E database, created a dedicated digital portal with destination maps, and established a web-based M&E and reporting system. It produced, for instance, a destination video of Sabhapokhari and created 360-degree images and 3D videos of various tourism sites. Digital literacy training was instrumental in this process; thus, digitization was integrated into capacity-building programs for tourism stakeholders. In addition, the project developed a web-based portal for GIS data visualization using the Geo Node platform. This portal enabled tourism stakeholders to explore visual data for research, planning, and development. However, these small-scale digitization technologies still require some additional fine-tuning.

6.2 Lessons learned
Key lessons have been documented under the following headings:

a. Project design
- **Strategically mobilizing tourism associations can help explore concerns and issues within the tourism sector.** Tourism associations and various labor unions can play a key role in identifying concerns and issues within the tourism sector. In this project, their involvement was instrumental in gathering feedback from various tourism sub-sectors, mainstreaming this feedback into the project design to address real needs, and assisting in identifying and selecting project interventions.
- **Improving tourism destinations enables community-level economic momentum.** Focusing on a select few key tourism destinations for model development, rather than spreading efforts across emerging or scattered locations, can significantly boost local economic growth. This approach encourages the creation of value chains and supports circular economy initiatives. A focused strategy also gets multiple stakeholders to contribute to economic growth.
- **Implementing an integrated package effectively promotes tourism destinations.** Promoting tourism destinations as part of an integrated package is effective. Such a holistic approach combines economic, social, and cultural aspects, along with traditional art and architecture, to boost tourism and economic development. The resultant enhancements include better solid waste management, the installation of new signage and information boards, and the construction of tourism centers and rest shelters. Media involvement has also raised awareness, thereby attracting more tourists and fostering economic growth.

b. Participation/Partnership
- **Selecting demand-based schemes increases the participation of target individuals during implementation.** Selecting demand-based schemes as interventions increases the participation of target people in implementation. Choosing interventions based on actual needs ensures high engagement, fosters a sense of ownership, results in timely execution, and promotes transparency. Small-scale tourism infrastructure projects served as effective entry points for community mobilization and created local employment through labor-intensive work. In fact, even small infrastructural improvements can contribute to tourism destinations when they provide target people with opportunities for local employment and income generation.
- **Linking recovery initiatives with long-term resilience ensures the project's sustainability.** Connecting recovery initiatives with long-term resilience ensures that the project's initiatives can be sustained far into the future. While initially focused on short-term tourism recovery through employment, activities in 2023 and 2024 prioritized renovating and reconstructing tourism infrastructures and policy advocacy to enhance resilience. This approach emphasized the importance of sustainability in achieving the project's goals.
- **Partnering with local governments allows for resource leveraging and fosters a sense of ownership.** Partnerships with local governments helped leverage resources and create a sense of ownership. By capitalizing on matching funds, the project mobilized additional resources (both cash and in-kind), reaching more people and fostering local ownership. This approach also attracted other development partners to

share resources, create synergy, and avoid duplication. Projects can better mobilize local government resources by working in partnership with them and allowing local governments to take a leadership role.

- **Strategic involvement of tourism associations and professional agencies facilitates knowledge exchange, accelerates progress, and conserves time and resources.** The project benefited greatly from partnering with tourism associations, workers' unions, and professional agencies like the NMA. This collaboration facilitated knowledge-sharing, capacity-building, and policy advocacy through regular review sessions. This cross-pollination of ideas contributed significantly to the rapid survival, revival, and recovery of the tourism sector. Leveraging existing institutional platforms (tourism associations, NMA, and NATHM) accelerated progress and efficiently utilized time and resources. The involvement of these associations was crucial in sharing resources, identifying demand-based training needs, and selecting participants aligned with project goals. This approach ensured that the quality of training was high and that graduates were connected with job opportunities through certified agencies, thereby fostering ownership of capacity-building initiatives.

c. Awareness and understanding

- **Sustainable tourism clubs can mobilize members to act as tourism ambassadors and disseminate tourism knowledge.** The members of school level sustainable tourism clubs, when effectively mobilized, serve as tourism ambassadors. Students play a key role in sharing and spreading tourism knowledge, bringing what they learn to their families and communities and vice versa. This exchange of information enriches both home and school environments, reinforcing and validating tourism education.
- **Training is effective when participants are selected based on agreed-upon criteria.** Effective training hinges on selecting participants based on agreed criteria such as interest, age, gender, existing knowledge, and willingness to apply skills in the job market. Training needs to be offered regularly, in a continuous process, rather than as isolated events organized only once in a blue moon. Training customizing capacity-building initiatives to meet the specific needs and interests of participants further enhances learning outcomes.
- **Using an affirmative approach during skill development training supports breaking gender stereotypes.** Systematic skill development training, targeted specifically at groups like women and LGBTIQ+ effectively challenges gender stereotypes and reduces gender gaps. An affirmative approach empowers participants by boosting confidence, creating job opportunities, increasing income, and enhancing overall livelihoods.

d. Project monitoring/knowledge management

- **Mobilizing media and strategically erecting visibility boards foster the transparency of the project.** The project enhanced transparency through media reports and information boards. Information boards at project sites improved accountability. Signage, tourist information centers, and rest shelters, coupled with media coverage, attracted tourists and boosted local economies. Sharing plans, mandates, and budgets with communities before implementation began built trust and promoted coordination among stakeholders. Resource-sharing also fostered programmatic synergy. The project's politically neutral approach and reliance on public hearings to promote accountability also earned stakeholder trust and improved governance.
- **Systematic mobilization of media could address some gaps in monitoring.** The media is a powerful tool. The systematic mobilization of media can enhance monitoring. The radio, especially in remote areas, has an extensive reach because people listen to programs as they work. Broadcasting tourism-related initiatives and contributions from local governments and other development actors through radio can effectively reach and engage many people.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Relevance

Conclusion 1: The project was effectively designed to meet the specific needs of the target people through short-term employment, and skills-based tourism entrepreneurship. The project successfully provided short-term employment for 9,846 people, including 2,485 women, generating 162,437 person-days of work worth US$ 1,397,870. In addition, around 1,920 individuals have found sustainable income in the tourism sector by applying the skills they gained from the project's capacity-building efforts. Despite pandemic challenges and limited women participation, the project, in collaboration with local governments and tourism associations, achieved positive results. However, there were gaps in further refinement in training for human resources, post-training support, and long-term impact assessment. The project's design, in supporting tourism recovery, economic resilience, and livelihood diversification, was well-aligned with Nepal's political landscape, development priorities, and UNDP's strategic objectives. Although travel restrictions made assessing target people difficult and provincial governments and women-led agencies had limited involvement, the project effectively addressed the need to create jobs and build capacity *(Based on findings #1, 2, and 3)*.

Conclusion 2: The project integrated lessons from past disaster response initiatives and UNDP projects, focusing on infrastructure restoration, community-based tourism, livelihood diversification, and capacity-building. It addressed immediate COVID-19 impacts very successfully through short-term employment, the promotion of entrepreneurship, and policy advocacy despite a few design flaws and rather short duration. In line with its ToC and national priorities, the project ensured good governance and local ownership. Its two-phase approaches successfully bridged short-term recovery and long-term resilience. However, substantial support continues to be needed, in particular as 90% of tourism-dependent communities remain underserved. The project's objectives of enhancing employment and income among target people and entrepreneurs remain crucial in the post-pandemic context. Additional support is urgently needed to develop exit strategies and sustainability plans, and documentation for knowledge management, ensuring the long-term success of the project's initiatives *(Based on findings # 4 and 5)*.

7.2 Coherence

Conclusion 3: By concentrating on small-scale infrastructure, skill enhancement, and community engagement, it promoted responsible tourism and resilience, aligning as it did with UNDP priorities; the SDG agenda, particularly SDGs 1, 5, 8, and 10; and national tourism policies. However, there are notable gaps, such as the need for a more equitable distribution of benefits, a robust M&E framework from the beginning, and minimizing the impacts of differences in the fiscal years of the government and UNDP. In addition, improvements in training assessments and content, as well as enhancements in stakeholder coordination and greater policy alignment with local realities could boost the project's effectiveness in achieving sustainable tourism recovery. The strategies developed by the project are still in draft form *(Based on findings # 6)*.

Conclusion 4: The intervention designed to promote tourism recovery during the 2020 pandemic remains appropriate. Even today, however, it is aligned with national priorities for economic recovery and sustainable tourism. It addressed immediate challenges while fostering long-term resilience through infrastructure improvements, capacity-building, and community engagement. The project adapted to evolving pandemic challenges by implementing flexible strategies, making safety adjustments, and enhancing digital capabilities. Collaboration with the NTB, local governments, DoT, MoCTCA, and previous UNDP projects effectively leveraged synergies to enhance destination marketing, infrastructure, and sustainable tourism practices. However, there is a need to streamline policy documents and facilitate the approval of tourism-related strategies, involve provincial governments and INGO-implemented and development partners assisted tourism projects more comprehensively, and formally engage academia in technology and innovation *(Based on findings # 7 and 8)*.

7.3 Efficiency

Conclusion 5: The project efficiently utilized financial, human, institutional, and technical resources to meet its objectives and address GESI inequalities. The project used a strategic approach to generate US$1.41 million in cash, US$ 0.32 million in kind, and US$1.37 million in material co- and parallel financing for generating synergetic impacts. A total of 282 small-scale tourism infrastructures were constructed and 99 were renovated, a measure that helped to revitalize local tourism destinations. It received substantial contributions from local governments and coordinated effectively with relevant stakeholders. However, not all NTB's departments engaged equally, and, without question, a cross-departmental review workshop could improve inter-departmental learning. Technical resources like digital platforms and data analysis enhanced efficiency, and the project promoted equitable opportunities for target people. There is an urgent need to accelerate the enhancement of tourism satellite accounts and the improvement of databases. That said, the project did not fully address the root causes of gender inequality and social exclusion. The project's management structure remained effective despite challenges such as turnover in the NPM and the absence of dedicated IT and GESI officers. When, toward the end of the project, the M&E system was in the process of upgrading with an online portal, it was able to effectively track impacts and performance. Future reporting has to integrate GESI considerations more thoroughly by mainstreaming GESI in programmatic cycle more strategically and combine current and cumulative progress to develop a comprehensive view *(Based on findings # 9, and 10)*.

Conclusion 6: The project's implementation strategy was both efficient and cost-effective. The expenditure rate for each output was good. The expenditure rate for each output was effective, with total expenditures for Outputs 1 to 3 reaching 97.11%, 96.23%, and 76.27% as of July 2024. To ensure value for money, the

project successfully mobilized at least 30% of its total budget resources from its partners. It was able to achieve its goals through strategic partnerships, adaptive management, and targeted resource allocation. By employing a parallel financing model and local co-financing, the project reduced costs and increased sustainability. The project successfully managed resources implemented cost-saving measures, and leveraged innovative approaches like digitization and bulk purchasing. The cost-sharing modality was highly effective: tapping into diverse stakeholder resources significantly enhanced the project's impact and promoted sustainable recovery in Nepal's tourism sector. Feedback emphasized the need for flexibility, targeted support for marginalized groups, and leveraging digital solutions for resilience. The challenges faced included limited training and planning time, insufficient funding for infrastructure, a lack of staff to monitor training action plans, the absence of a robust data system to improve monitoring, and the impact of differing fiscal years between the government and UNDP. Lessons learned highlighted the importance of making informed adjustments to planning, being adaptable, and enhancing support mechanisms *(Based on findings #11, and 12)*.

7.4 Effectiveness

Conclusion 7: The project successfully mitigated unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic by creating 162,437 person-days of short-term employment, worth US$ 1,397870, with an average income of US$ 165 per person. It notably benefited 2,485 women and ensured that over 35% of capacity development training participants were women. Despite challenges like monitoring difficulties, large project coverage, the harsh climate, election-related disruptions, and budget constraints, the project's inclusive approach and strong partnerships improved livelihoods and advanced gender equality. However, limited resources and insufficient logistical management hindered the project from fully achieving its goals. Collaboration with tourism stakeholders and local governments enhanced technical expertise and tourism infrastructure in collaboration with pivotal co-financing and support from local governments. An assessment of the effectiveness of skill development programs to identify and address any gaps, along with ensuring the operation and maintenance of infrastructure by local governments, is necessary. The mandates for women and Indigenous community participation ensured that there would be diverse perspectives and equitable benefits and strengthened sustainable tourism practices and cultural preservation *(Based on findings # 13, and 14)*.

Conclusion 8: The project advanced gender equality and women's empowerment by contributing to four key strategies providing women with leadership and economic opportunities: developing standards, enhancing compliance, and fostering policy dialogue. These efforts narrowed gender gaps by providing targeted training and awareness campaigns. However, challenges remain in achieving broad representation and full integration of gender equality in the tourism sector. Partnership with local governments was crucial for advancing local tourism development and supporting vulnerable communities because they helped facilitate infrastructure development and sustainable tourism practices and ensured that the project would align with local priorities. This collaboration created short-term jobs, improved social protection, and promoted inclusive development. However, challenges such as low literacy among the target people, coordination difficulties, and discrepancies in FYs, cumbersome administrative procedures, finding qualified human resources knowledgeable about the latest policy landscape limited the full realization of benefits, and approval of tourism-related strategies caused delays in project activities, *(Based on findings #15, and 16)*.

7.5 Impact

Conclusion 9: The project's initiatives yielded significant positive impacts. Specifically, the project fostered economic resilience and community development. The renovation of local tourism infrastructures under short-term employment schemes reduced vulnerabilities and enhanced pandemic resilience. Due to affirmative action and the implementation of a gender action plan, 26% of participants in short-term employment were women, and 36% of those involved in capacity development initiatives were women. Growth in tourism entrepreneurship via digital platforms and the use of sustainable practices boosted local economies, while skills development, employment opportunities, and infrastructure improvements contributed to long-term community resilience. Challenges included the dilution of resources due to the scattering of interventions and the unequal distribution of benefits, often to the disadvantage of marginalized groups, and assessment of effectiveness of skill development programs to address the gaps. Despite these issues, the project achieved substantial positive changes. At the same time, securing long-term benefits will require making strategic adjustments *(Based on findings # 17)*.

Conclusion 10: The project successfully delivered 104 skill-based training programs to 4,087 individuals and enhanced the capacity of 144 local government staff in tourism policy and planning. This empowered 15 local governments to develop effective tourism strategies, demonstrating the project's significant impact on local tourism development. The project's training programs had immediate impacts. These programs facilitated tourism recovery, created short-term employment, and enhanced the capacity of local governments. Long-term impacts included increased entrepreneurship, greater institutional capacity, and more policy advocacy, all steps that economically empowered the target people. With these initiatives, the project effectively contributed to revitalizing the tourism sector, by supporting the livelihood recovery of 9,846 workers. It significantly enhanced the capacity of NTB and other stakeholders to drive recovery efforts. Through the construction and renovation of small-scale tourism infrastructure, the project directly benefited 13,933 people and indirectly improved the quality of life for an additional 61305 individuals, achieving its overall outcomes. The project also promoted sustainable economic development, increased disaster and climate risk awareness, and improved market and service access. Despite criticisms regarding the duration and depth of the training sessions it offered, the project significantly bridged the human resource gap in the tourism sector, promoting resilience, inclusivity, and sustainable growth. A medium- to long-term tourism revival strategy is needed to retain trained human resources and create jobs and livelihood opportunities for local youths and returning migrant workers. It is also essential to expedite the approval of tourism-related strategies, assess skill development programs, and develop exit strategies and sustainability plans, and approach human resource capacity-building as an ongoing process rather than a one-time event *(Based on findings # 18, and 19)*.

7.6 Sustainability

Conclusion 11: The project effectively sustained its results by fostering long-term resilience and local ownership. The project effectively leveraged 43% of its total resources through co-financing initiatives. A total of US$ 1,275,955 was mobilized from local governments for the reconstruction and development of tourism infrastructures as well as the capacity-building of tourism stakeholders. In addition, US$ 89,825 was mobilized from tourism associations. However, the project needs a formalized exit strategy and sustainability plan if it is to be able to scale up and embed successful practices. Ongoing efforts to secure additional resources and co-financing support are essential. Limited funding for the O&M of infrastructure in particular remains a concern. While a contingency fund for O&M exists, its use will not be guaranteed unless there is a specific sustainability plan and exit strategies. Resources need to be allocated for O&M to solidify and expand the project's impacts. By integrating resources with local governments, NGOs, and tourism associations, the project efficiently mobilized resources, addressed local needs, and promoted sustainability, leading to successful livelihood recovery, capacity-building, and the creation of sustainable tourism clubs in schools. Embedding activities into local government plans ensured that resource allocation for the project's good initiatives would continue, foster community ownership, and support long-term growth and resilience in Nepal's tourism sector *(Based on findings # 20, and 21)*.

Conclusion 12: The project advanced GESI outcomes by offering equitable training and employment opportunities to women, Dalits, Indigenous people, and PwDs, integrating GESI principles into its design, and advocating for inclusive policies. This approach addressed socio-economic disparities and promoted diversity in Nepal's tourism sector. Embedding these principles into institutional frameworks and fostering local ownership had lasting impacts on GESI. While women's presence in the tourism sector was initially limited, the project's affirmative approach increased women's participation in activities. Overall, women comprised 28% of the project participants. Ongoing M&E ensured sustainability, especially as the project focused on inclusive practices and capacity-building for marginalized communities. Extending initiatives to develop eco-friendly, green recovery-based tourism products led by women would add significant value to the project. Prioritizing gender-responsive policies, integrating gender considerations into product designs, and using gender-friendly technology and innovations are crucial for ensuring that development is inclusive. Future efforts need to focus on advanced training for women leaders in tourism, particularly in digital marketing and tourism destinations, expanding advocacy for gender-responsive inclusive policies, and forging partnerships with women-led groups. Enhancing monitoring systems by using a robust data system, investing in research on gender dynamics, promoting digital literacy and gender-responsive tourism products are essential for supporting women's empowerment and leadership, and mainstream GESI in programmatic cycle more strategically. With these adjustments, the project can drive sustainable growth in Nepal's tourism sector *(Based on findings #22 and 23)*.

7.7 Cross-cutting issues
7.7.1 Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

Conclusion 13: The project successfully integrated GESI provisions, ensuring broad participation through extensive consultations and targeted approaches. It made significant strides in altering gender roles, enabling women to assume roles previously inaccessible to them, and providing notable training initiatives for women and LGBTIQ+ communities. These efforts created job opportunities for women with equal pay and gender-specific training programs, although the training content was often GESI-neutral. The project promoted positive changes for women, PwDs, and marginalized groups by enhancing skills, fostering entrepreneurship, and advocating for gender-responsive policies. Women's participation and leadership skills increased, with some securing jobs in the tourism sector, including international positions. Short-term employment opportunities involved many women and youths from marginalized communities, boosting their economic confidence and social status. Despite the absence of specific leadership training for these groups, the project reduced socio-economic disparities, promoted cultural preservation, and fostered social inclusion and resilience. Women reported feeling safe and empowered, with no noticeable wage differences based on gender, caste, or class. The interventions led to measurable improvements in gender equality, women's empowerment, and social integration within Nepal's tourism sector. However, despite these successes, the project's efforts to address socio-economic disparities were still inadequate, highlighting the need for more safety, social security measures, and a broader focus on inclusive governance. It is also crucial to accelerate the enhancement of tourism satellite accounts and database improvements, strategically integrate GESI into the programmatic cycle, and support the development of inclusive policies to ensure the sustainability of the project's successful initiatives *(Based on findings # 24-28)*.

7.7.2 Human rights

Conclusion 14: The project effectively applied a HRBA, ensuring inclusivity and equality for women, LGBTIQ+, Dalits, ethnic minorities, and PwDs. By emphasizing dignity, equity, and empowerment, it provided equal access to training, mentorship, and leadership roles for these groups, resulting in improved livelihoods and greater visibility in decision-making. The project maintained fair labor practices and equitable working conditions, with no reported instances of social discrimination or sexual harassment. The new tourism recovery strategy integrated human rights principles, focusing on inclusivity, accessibility, and social responsibility, which led to equitable access to benefits and addressed socio-economic disparities through targeted inclusive policies, capacity-building, and advocacy. Despite challenges in data collection, the project demonstrated a strong commitment to human rights throughout its design, implementation, and monitoring phases (using robust data system), leading to tangible improvements for marginalized communities and earning commendation for its dedication to ethical tourism practices and human rights *(Based on findings # 29-31)*.

8. Recommendations
8.1 For the remaining tenure of the project

1. Facilitate the approval of tourism-related strategies *(in coordination with government, UNDP, NTB, tourism association, and Project Board)*

The project developed four draft strategies and guidelines. While the project did incorporate elements from these strategies and guidelines into its training curricula and knowledge products, the integration was minimal. To expedite the approval process, the project should do the following:

- Develop and disseminate comprehensive policy briefs to relevant stakeholders.
- Improve stakeholder coordination through regular review-and-reflection meetings.
- Support modifications of these policies by adopting gender equality, an inclusive human rights perspective more holistic way, and conducting a thorough assessment *(Conclusions # 4, 8, 10, and 14)*.

2. Expedite the improvement of tourism satellite accounts and database improvement *(in coordination with government, UNDP, NTB, tourism association, and Project Board)*

Effective integration of tourism data with national accounts through TSAs is vital for evaluating the impact of tourism on GDP, employment, and investment. Coordination among stakeholders—including federal and provincial ministries, Nepal Rastra Bank, CBS, and the private sector—was complex and delayed the development of a tourism database and TSAs. This slow progress impeded the project's ability to identify trends, allocate resources efficiently, improve the sector's competitiveness, and engage in policy-making and strategic planning. To expedite the TSA process, the project should do the following:

- Create a detailed action plan focusing on the coordination of key agencies by assigning them defined roles and responsibilities using a matrix.

- Use advanced technologies like big data analytics, mobile tracking, GIS, and AI for the accurate, and real-time collection of gender-segregated tourism data.
- Develop concise guidelines to standardize TSA procedures and ensure high-quality data analysis.
- Regularly review and update TSA methodologies and ensure timely publication of reports to ensure the project continues to be relevant for policymakers and stakeholders.
- Develop a gender-sensitive tourism database, digitize tourism destinations, and segregate data to contribute to GDP through the TSA *(Conclusions # 5, and 13)*.

3. Evaluate the effectiveness of skill development programs, identify and address any gaps, and ensure the O&M of infrastructure through local governments *(in coordination with government, UNDP, NTB, tourism association, and Project Board)*

Skill development programs in the tourism sector, if organized properly, effectively enhance workforce competencies, improve service quality, and drive sector growth. By offering targeted training and certifications, these programs address skill gaps, boost employability, and advance the careers of marginalized groups. Such development, in turn, fosters a highly competitive and resilient tourism sector. To assess the effectiveness of skill development training, the project should do the following:

- Conduct a tracer study to gauge the involvement of trainees in the private sector and identify the benefits of skill development training and its overall impacts on the employment and incomes of targeted people.
- Compile a list of infrastructure along with their current status, and begin the formal handover process to local governments according to the LoAs to ensure future O&M.
- Facilitate the amendment of forest operational plans of community forest user groups to prevent future disputes over small-scale infrastructure renovations within forest areas, in coordination with Divisional Forest Offices *(Conclusions #7, 9, 10, 11, and 13)*.

8.2 For developing similar projects in the future

1. Develop exit strategies and sustainability plans *(in coordination with government, UNDP, NTB, and tourism associations)*

The project effectively integrated its activities into local government plans, securing the long-term allocation of resources. However, it missed the opportunity to develop an exit strategy and sustainability plan. Although a handover note developed by the project and agreed by the local government specified that O&M responsibilities would transfer to the local government, limited O&M budgeting and limited funding remain major concerns. A contingency fund exists for O&M, but unless there is a specific O&M plan, it is not sure it will be used. To address these sustainability issues, the project should do the following:

- Develop an exit strategy and sustainability plan with stakeholders to scale and embed successful practices from the start.
- Integrate O&M components into infrastructure design and budgets, and assign roles to stakeholders.
- Incorporate disaster and climate risk reduction features into the designs for small-scale infrastructures *(Conclusions # 2, 10, and 11)*.

2. The capacity-building of human resources *(in coordination with government, UNDP, NTB, tourism associations, and tourism professional agencies)*

Feedback highlighted several issues with the project's capacity-building initiatives: inadequate post-training support and impact assessment, outdated training content and assessments, and incomplete integration of GESI principles. Resource persons were unfamiliar with current policy and revenue protocols for protected areas. Trainings were event-based rather than process-oriented, and there were insufficient staff to monitor action plans. Misalignments of training themes, participant types, and session durations, coupled with short notice due to FY differences, administrative procedures and complicated planning. To address these issues, the project should do the following:

- Provide advanced tourism training for women and LGBTIQ+ in digital marketing and destination development.
- Improve monitoring systems, invest in gender dynamics research, and promote digital literacy and gender-responsive tourism.
- Conduct needs assessments and capacity analyses before creating training content and refine plans using pre-and post-tests and supervision of action plans.
- Offer post-training support to trainees and maintain a roster of resource persons.
- Use virtual platforms for advocacy to enhance women's leadership and empowerment *(Conclusions #1, 3, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 13)*.

3. Mainstream GESI in programmatic cycle more strategically *(in coordination with government, UNDP, NTB, tourism associations, and tourism professional agencies)*

Advocacy for gender-responsive policies, partnerships with women-led groups, and research into gender dynamics are limited, making it a challenge to address GESI issues. Training and employment opportunities for all genders were insufficient. While a robust inclusive strategy could provide valuable skills and networking opportunities, gender considerations are not yet prioritized in either policy or strategy documents, thereby affecting product design and service packages. Gender-responsive digitization and destination development are essential for creating decent jobs and supporting women in service-based businesses. Despite efforts, benefits are not adequately distributed across gender, caste, and well-being. To address these gaps, the project should do the following:

- Conduct gender assessments by setting gender-sensitive targets and indicators, using gender-responsive approaches, and enhancing GESI analysis with affirmative action.
- Develop inclusive planning and budgeting with scenario-based costing, fund allocation for equitable development, and expenditure monitoring.
- Use women's safety audits to raise awareness, evaluate safety measures, and advocate for inclusive policies and their implementation.
- Disburse funds based on progress in the project's GESI action plan *(Conclusions # 5, 12, and 13)*.

4. Improve monitoring using a robust data system *(in coordination with government, UNDP, NTB, tourism associations, and tourism professional agencies)*

The project's broad spread across many remote districts and limited number of PIU staff meant that monitoring was inadequate. Insufficient personnel prevented the effective oversight of training action plans, too. Ineffective M&E also made it difficult to identify emerging issues and adapt to changing conditions, causing delays in response and adaptation. To address these shortcomings, the project should do the following:

- Set clear, measurable objectives and indicators aligned with the project's goals.
- Develop a robust system for real-time collection of data on key outputs and outcomes.
- Upgrade the M&E portal to capture disaggregated data and integrate local data with national data systems, involving local governments and tourism associations.
- Focus resources on strategic project locations, ensure intensive monitoring for quality assurance, and build effective models *(Conclusions #6, 12, and 14)*.

5. Support for formulating inclusive policies *(in coordination with government, UNDP, NTB, tourism associations, and tourism professional agencies)*

The four strategies that the project facilitated the development of are not fully gender and socially inclusive and have a lot of room for improvement. Inclusive policies only ensure the mainstreaming of concerns and issues of poor and marginalized groups and the sharing of the benefits in an equitable approach. For this, the project should:

- Involve governments, CSOs, the private sector, and academia in the formulation and amendment of policy and identification of gaps.
- Apply a HRBA in policy development.
- Provide technical assistance by reviewing legal frameworks and toolkits with the NTB at the center.
- Clarify how revenue collected from the protected areas is distributed among the relevant agencies.
- Offer small research grants to university students for conducting case studies of inclusive development *(Conclusions # 12, 13, and 14)*.

6. Minimize the impacts of differences in the fiscal years of the government and UNDP *(in coordination with the government, UNDP, NTB, tourism associations, tourism professional agencies, and Ministry of Finance)*

Maintaining the planning and support calendar for infrastructure and skill development training was challenging due to differences in FYs. These differences delayed the completion of activities and synchronization of funding. This misalignment limited planning time, hindered resource mobilization, and disrupted financial planning and reporting. Consequently, the project faced delays in the disbursement and execution of funds, thereby complicating deadlines, coordination, and resource management. The ultimate impact was an undermining of overall progress and effectiveness. To address these shortcomings, the project should do the following:

- Create a coordinated financial planning framework with a joint calendar that aligns budget cycles and reporting and is approved by the project board.

- Implement regular coordination meetings and a unified financial management system to track expenditures and approvals.
- Develop flexible budget mechanisms to manage timing discrepancies and ensure the timely disbursement of funds, improving synchronization and reducing delays *(Conclusions # 3, 5, and 6)*.

7. Knowledge management *(in coordination with the government, UNDP, NTB, tourism associations, tourism professional agencies, and media houses)*

Sharing project-generated learning and best practices through various networks can enhance knowledge exchange and resource leveraging. To maximize the project's impact, it is crucial to mainstream these practices into the program development processes and future project designs of the NTB and the government. Currently, these initiatives are inadequate for achieving systematic organization and remain in their early stages. To address this, the project should do the following:

- Document best practices and lessons learned to facilitate replication and benefit other agencies.
- Host a learning-and-review workshop with the government, all of the NTB's departments, the project team, and other stakeholders to share and disseminate best practices.
- Develop a cost-effective knowledge management strategy to produce and distribute policy briefs, posters, flyers, tips, and case studies efficiently *(Conclusions #2, 5, and 6)*.

Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of reference

Duty station/location	Kathmandu, Nepal- travel to selected provinces and local governments (up to 50% could be home base)
Expected duration of the evaluation	60 person days (35 person days for 1 Team Leader and 25 person days for 1 Team member as GESI expert) spread over June-July 2024
Type of contract	Individual Contract (IC)- National consultants
Language required	Fluent in English and Nepali

1. Background and Context

COVID-19, a global pandemic, continues to spread across the globe, affecting more than 200 countries and territories. Billions of people around the world have experienced lockdowns (to varying extents), flows of goods and people have been severed and economic activities stalled. In Nepal, the lockdown of almost five months in a row from 24 March 2020 to 21 July 2020, with restrictions on movement and business operations, resulted in negative consequences across economic sectors, with the travel, tourism, and entertainment sectors hit particularly hard by the pandemic.

Nepal is a favorite destination for mountaineering and trekking, with thousands of tourists visiting Nepal every year - in 2019, 1.17 million tourists visited Nepal. These activities are a major source of jobs for hundreds of thousands of local people who serve as porters, trekking guides, or work in hotels, etc., most of whom come from poor backgrounds. It is estimated that at least one million jobs are associated with tourism, out of which, up to 40 percent might have been directly affected by the pandemic. Retaining these human resources – ensuring people return to their jobs – is a vital challenge to be addressed, not only to protect the livelihoods of those affected but also to protect the tourism sector as a major economic driver in Nepal beyond the crisis.

Tourism is among the hardest-hit sectors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Billions of earnings and hundreds of thousands of jobs are likely to be lost. Jobs associated with this sector are largely informal, without any social security measures. Hence, most of the workers who have lost their jobs and means of income have become vulnerable and require urgent support to meet their immediate livelihood needs. Considering the nature of the pandemic and the global scenario, this sector is less likely to be fully revived in the next year. With this, there is a risk of displacement of existing human resources from the sector. As such, there is a need to work towards a medium to long-term tourism revival strategy, not only to retain human resources but also to boost local economic development that can create additional jobs and livelihood opportunities for local youths and foreign migrant workers who are likely to return to Nepal.

Special attention is therefore needed to protect communities dependent on tourism and investments in the tourism sector. The Sustainable Tourism for Livelihood Recovery Project (STLRP) – a joint project of the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) – aims to support the revival of the tourism sector. Considering the need for immediate livelihood opportunities, the project will focus on providing short-term employment opportunities to vulnerable communities whose livelihood is dependent on tourism. In parallel, the project will also initiate activities to support the long-term revival of the tourism sector by creating sustainable jobs and livelihood opportunities in partnership with the private sector; developing human resource capacity; supporting the creation of tourism-based enterprises; strengthening sector-related data and information management and digitalization and articulating a comprehensive tourism recovery strategy. Aligned with sustainable tourism concepts, project activities will be oriented toward promoting a green economy.

NTB and UNDP jointly launched the "Sustainable Tourism for Livelihood Recovery project" in December 2020 as an initiative for tourism recovery to stabilize the livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable people who were hardest hit by COVID-19. The project will end in July 2024. The project aimed to cover the major trekking areas, river-based tourism sites (rafting, kayaking, canyoning, etc.), cultural heritage sites, and high-potential tourism destinations within the country. Considering the need to support immediate livelihood opportunities to tourism workers and promotion of domestic tourism via rehabilitation and construction of small-scale tourism infrastructures including capacity building of tourism stakeholders, the project is expected to achieve the following interlinked outputs mentioned below:

Output 1: Vulnerable tourism-dependent communities, particularly women and people from disadvantaged groups in the tourism sector, which have lost their jobs or income due to COVID-19 have received short-term employment opportunities to meet immediate livelihood needs.

Output 2: Entrepreneurs and other workers in the tourism sector have enhanced opportunities for employment and income generation through the renovation and development of tourism products in major tourist destinations.

Output 3: The institutional capacity of the NTB is strengthened through the formulation of a comprehensive tourism recovery strategy, as well as through increased digitization and other efforts for future disaster risk management.

Alongside working to achieve the above-mentioned outputs, the project intervention also directly contributes to the achievement of the following Sustainable Development Goals-1, 3, 5, 8 and 10.

As the Project approaches completion on July 31, 2024, UNDP is preparing to conduct a final evaluation to assess and document the results achievements, challenges, lessons learned, and best practices. The gender results will also be assessed using the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES). The outcomes of this evaluation will direct future actions and provide specific recommendations for subsequent interventions.

The brief project information of the project is depicted in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Project information

PROJECT/OUTCOME INFORMATION	
Project title	Sustainable Tourism for Livelihood Recovery Project (STLRP)
Atlas ID	00111755
Corporate outcome and output	CPD 2023-2027 Ooutcome: *By 2027, more people, especially women, youth, and the most marginalized and poor increasingly participate in and benefit from coordinated, inclusive, participatory, transparent, and genderresponsive governance, access to justice, and human rights at federal, provincial, and local levels.* *CPD Output 1.2. Expanded access to sustainable livelihoods and income for women, youth, poor, and other marginalized groups.*
Country	Nepal
Region	Asia and the Pacific
Date project document signed	11 Dec 2020
Project dates	Start: January 2021 — Planned end: July 2024
Project budget	US$ $ 3,265,385
Funding source	UNDP: US$ 1,700,000 Government of Nepal: US$ 1,565,385
Implementing party	Nepal Tourism Board

2. Evaluation purpose, scope, and objectives

In adherence to the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines 2019, the project design for the STLRP incorporated a planned final evaluation, which is intended to be carried out by independent evaluators. The current phase of the project is in its final year of implementation and UNDP has been engaged in discussions on the potential second phase. Hence, as included in the UNDP 2024 Evaluation Plan, the final evaluation is scheduled between April and June 2024.

The overall purpose of the final evaluation is to assess the achievements of the project results, including gender responsive results, against what was expected to be achieved, document lessons learnt and good practices. The evaluation should assess the implementation approaches of the project, results achieved against outputs, contribution to higher level outcome results including GESI responsive results, and issues/challenges encountered, as well as identify and document the lessons learnt and good practices and make specific recommendations for similar interventions in future. The final evaluation report should promote accountability and transparency and assess the extent of project accomplishments. The key audiences of the final evaluation report are UNDP, the Government of Nepal, Nepal Tourism Board, Tourism Associations, federal and provincial governments, local governments, development partners, and other national, provincial, and local level stakeholders. The results of the evaluation will be useful in making evidence-based decisions in relation to the future of the project, i.e. its potential extension or expansion. The final evaluation will also serve as an accountability and transparency and learning opportunity to provide guidance and recommendations for UNDP's continued support in reviving tourism development which was badly impacted by COVID-19.

The specific objectives of the MTR are the following:
- assessing the project's progression concerning its defined objectives, outputs, and indicators.
- to examine the approaches and interventions implemented by the project, ensuring alignment with the Theory of Change and the designated strategies for achieving desired outputs.
- delves into the examination of the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the project's interventions, with a particular focus on their contributions to the development of the tourism sector in collaboration with NTBs and other tourism associations.
- to identify and analyze key achievements, results, and their impact, extracting valuable lessons learned to inform and guide future action.
- to review and assess the risks and opportunities, document key results, learnings, and innovations; and recommend potential areas for future interventions in Karnali as well as other provinces considering the current federalism contexts.
- to evaluate each output of the project and assess whether they are gender negative, gender neutral, gender-targeted, gender-responsive, or gender transformative.

Scope of Evaluation

The final evaluation will cover the full scope of the STLRP project, including the full implementation period i.e. December 2020 to the time of evaluation, and targeted geopgraphic coverage, including at federal, provincial and local goverments. It should investigate the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the support provided by the project. It should indicate if the progress made so far is in the right direction towards achieving the outputs as planned by the project.

The key stakeholders of the evaluation include UNDP, Government of Nepal, Tourism Board Nepal, NATA, TAN, private sectors, federal, provincial and local level stakeholders. In addition, UNDP's other related projecs, selected development partners working in tourism sector, private sectors are key stakeholders.

In case of evaluation criteria, the evaluation will follow the OECD-DAC's revised evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability) along with additional cross cutting criteria. The evaluation will also assess how the intervention sought to mainstream gender equality and social inclusion with intersectionality lens including disability issues, application of the human rights-based approach, and the GRID approach, and alignment with transparency and accountability principles. In addition, the evaluation should also analyse the risks management and documentation of lessons, good practices and innovations.

The evaluation should cover at least following areas:

Relevance of the project: appropriateness of the project design, particularly project's objectives, Theory of Change, Results and Resource Frameworks, project management arrangement, as it relates to the achievement of project objectives, its linkages with the government's national strategic plans, UNSDCF, UNDP Country Program Document, and problems it intends to address, and relevance to beneficiaries need, including by considering LNOB aspects.

Effectiveness: assess the project's direct and indirect results (both short term and long term) and its contributions towards the achievement of the anticipated results, including any constraints on its effectiveness, and any unintended results, the reporting and monitoring system, assess the effectiveness of the project's management arrangements, analyse the underlying factors beyond UNDP control that affect the achievement of the project results.

Efficiency: assess the cost efficiency of the project intervention, the quality and timeliness of the project resources and approaches towards their efficient use.

Approach: Review the project's approaches, in general, and gender equality and social inclusion, with a particular focus on women and marginalized groups. Women and marginalized groups should not be treated as homogeneous but gender-disaggregated data among all categories need to be considered when collecting evidence-based data (for example women-headed households, widows, widowers, Dalit women, disabled women, disabled men, etc.) If women of different categories are hesitant to speak in mixed focused groups, it is important to have separate focus groups from each specific category so that their disadvantaged position/ barriers in sustaining livelihoods, and time poverty will be understood.

Impact of the project: Assess the positive changes, both direct and indirect, in the livelihoods of tourism sector workers engaged in short-term employment. Additionally, it includes an assessment of the status of participants who underwent various skill-based training facilitated by the project. The impact assessment also considers changes in income within areas undergoing small-scale infrastructure development and destination enhancement due to the project. Furthermore, it encompasses the assessment of capacity enhancement within

institutions and local government entities involved in the project. Lastly, it investigates the allocation of budgetary resources from local governments dedicated to supporting tourism development initiatives.

Coherence of the project: Alignment with key UNDP core documents such as the UNDP CPD, adherence to national priorities outlined in the 15th development plan and SDG Road map 2016-2030, as well as conformity with the National Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025 and Tourism Policy 2008. Furthermore, the evaluation considers the project's consistency with other relevant UNDP initiatives and projects undertaken in collaboration with development partners.

Sustainability of the project interventions: examining the sustainability of the system, mechanisms and capacity developed under the project and their continuity beyond the project life and opportunities for scalability.

Other areas:
- Assess the project's management and implementation structure, encompassing financial and human resource management, monitoring, and oversight. Additionally, assess partnership strategies, the Social and Environmental Safeguard Policy (SESP), and risk management strategies to gauge their impact on delivering project results in alignment with the Results and Resources Framework (RRF).
- Identify and examine key external factors beyond the project's control that have contributed to the program's successes and failures.
- Document the lessons learned in the design, delivery, management, and monitoring of the project that will add value to similar projects in the future.
- Assesses the impact of gender equality and social inclusion, providing recommendations to address gender gaps and enhance women's empowerment. Consider these aspects across effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and lessons learned, offering insights and guidance on improving gender equality and women's empowerment within the project's framework.

3. Evaluation Criteria and Guiding Questions

The final evaluation will adopt the six evaluation criteria by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) - Relevance, Effectiveness, Coherence, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability. Moreover, additional cross-cutting criteria such as Human Rights, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, Transparency and Accountability, and environment and resilience will also be included.

The evaluation will address the following main evaluation questions:
- What measurable positive changes or benefits can be observed in the vulnerable tourismdependent communities, entrepreneurs, and workers in the tourism sector because of the project's intervention? How significant are these impacts?
- How efficiently were the short-term employment opportunities, renovation, and development of tourism products, and strengthening of institutional capacity implemented to achieve the intended outcomes?
- How well do the outputs integrate and complement each other (e.g. UNDP priority, SDG agenda, National Tourism Strategy) in contributing to the overall goal of tourism recovery? Are there any inconsistencies or gaps in the project's approach?
- To what extent gender equality and social inclusion dimensions were integrated/mainstreamed in the project design and intervention and are there any positive direct changes in the situation of women and other marginalized communities?
- To what extent does the project intervention have a lasting and sustainable impact on the target communities and the tourism sector? What measures have been taken to ensure the continued positive effects beyond the immediate project period?

The criteria wise guiding questions outlined below in Table 2 should be further refined by the evaluators and agreed upon with UNDP and stakeholders before commencing the evaluation.

Table 2. Details of criteria and guidance questions

Criteria	Guiding Questions
Relevance	How well did the project design and approaches align with the specific needs and challenges faced by vulnerable tourism-dependent communities, entrepreneurs, and workers in the tourism sector, considering the outputs related to short-term employment opportunities and income generation?
	▪ To what extent was the project design relevant and appropriate in line with the political developments, national and sub-national development priorities of GoN, UNDP's strategic plan, UNDP CPD priorities and need of intended beneficiaries?
	▪ To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant and preceding projects and interventions incorporated in project design?
	▪ To what extent were the project interventions, structure, and implementation arrangements relevant and logical to the project's theory of change? Are they still
	▪ valid?

		In the context of a post-pandemic situation, how valid and relevant are the objectives of the program, especially regarding the enhancement of employment opportunities and income generation for entrepreneurs and workers in major tourist destinations?
Effectiveness	▪	To what extent did the project effectively address the immediate issue of unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly concerning the vulnerability of women and people from disadvantaged groups in the tourism sector? Provide the gendered/ GESI nature of addressing unemployment with insights from which ethnic/caste groups were targeted and sub-groups that changed their status of unemployment.
	▪	To what extent were the planned output results achieved, and what factors contributed to or hindered the realization of these intended results? Was affirmative action taken to ensure GESI results, especially for women?
	▪	How effective is the partnership and collaboration with major tourism stakeholders and local governments in achieving the project's objectives and intended outcomes? Are these men-led/women-led? How are indigenous men and women engaged?
	▪	To what extent has UNDP contributed to gender equality, women's empowerment, and social integration results through this project at the policy and implementation level? What was the change (narrowing certain gender gaps/ inequalities etc.)
	▪	How relevant and impactful was the partnership between the project and local governments in the development of tourism at the local level, particularly considering the engagement with vulnerable communities?
Coherence	▪	How well do the outputs integrate and complement each other (e.g. UNDP priority, SDG agenda, National Tourism Strategy) in contributing to the overall goal of tourism recovery? Are there any inconsistencies or gaps in the project's approach?
	▪	How well does the intervention fit in a changed context?
	▪	To what extent does the intervention address the synergies and interlinkages with other interventions carried out by the Nepal Tourism Board, Department of Tourism, Local Government, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, and UNDP's previous projects?
Efficiency	▪	To what extent were resources (financial, human, institutional, and technical) strategically allocated and efficiently used to achieve results promptly and address GESI inequality and root causes?
	▪	Was the existing project management structure, M&E system appropriate and efficient in generating the expected results, considering the renovation and development of tourism products and increased digitization efforts?
	▪	How efficient and cost-effective was the project's implementation strategy and execution, particularly in relation to achieving the outlined objectives?
	▪	Was the cost-sharing modality for the project intervention effective in achieving the desired results, and what lessons were learned in terms of feedback and learning incorporated into subsequent planning and implementation?
Impact	▪	To what extent do the project initiatives indicate that positive and negative changes, both intended and unintended, have been achieved, especially considering the impacts on vulnerable communities along tourism destinations?
	▪	What was the immediate and long-term impact of the training provided through the project, and to what extent did it contribute to bridging the human resource gap in the tourism sector?
	▪	To what extent did the STLRP project make a real difference to the people (men, women, marginalized women, Dalits, indigenous, persons with disability(living along the destinations where the project worked, particularly in terms of socio-economic impact?
Sustainability	▪	How well did the project interventions contribute to sustaining the results achieved, and how relevant is the exit strategy, including upscaling of project results and securing further resources for continued activities?
	▪	To what extent did the project enhance the integration of resources with partner organizations, ensuring sustained impacts on the tourism sector?
	▪	To what extent did the project interventions contribute towards sustaining the positive GESI results (based on the GRES Framework) in the country?
	▪	What could be potential new areas of work and innovative measures for sustaining the gender results in the respective interventions?
	▪	

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)	⬜ ⬜	How effectively were gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) provisions incorporated in the project design and implementation, particularly in addressing the needs of women and other marginalized groups in the tourism sector? How successfully has the project promoted positive changes for women, persons with disability, and all types of marginalized groups in the context of gender equality and social inclusion?
	▪	To what extent has the project promoted positive changes (leadership, empowerment) of women, persons with disability, and marginalized groups?
	▪	What measurable changes in gender equality, women's empowerment, and social integration have occurred because of the interventions?
	▪	To what extent did the project address and respond to existing power dynamics and gender relations?
Human rights	▪	To what extent have women, Dalits, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities (Women, Men, others), and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the project's work, and with what impact?
	▪	How well are human rights issues reflected in the new tourism recovery strategy, especially in consideration of the vulnerable groups targeted by the project?
	▪	To what extent have projects integrated the Human Rights based approach in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the project? Have the resources been used in an efficient way to address Human Rights in the implementation (e.g. participation of targeted stakeholders, collection of disaggregated data, etc.)?

4. Approach and methodology

The evaluation approach and methodologies provided below are indicative only. The evaluation team should review the methodology and propose the final methods and data collection tools in the inception report, following review of the project related documents and reports. The method and tools should be context-sensitive and adequately address the issues of human rights, gender equality and social inclusion.

The evaluation should build upon the available project documents, field visits, interviews, and discussions, which would provide an opportunity for more in-depth analysis and understanding of the STLRP project. The consultant is expected to frame the evaluation using the OECD-DAC criteria of the evaluation. The methods and tools should adequately address the issues of gender equality and social inclusion. The evaluation team must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable, and useful. The evaluation team should follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with government counterparts at federal, provincial, and local levels, the project team, UNDP Country Office, including the evaluation manager, and other critical stakeholders. Thus, the evaluation team is expected to work closely with the UNDP Country Office during the evaluation adopting the following data collection methods.

The evaluators will follow mixed methods of data collection, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods. The evaluation should build upon the data and information collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data may be collected through key informant interview (KII), focus group discussion, field observations, and consultation and interaction with stakeholders and beneficiaries. Secondary data will be collected through review of literature related to the project, including project document, results and resources framework, communication materials including case stories and media reports, visits, consultations with stakeholders and beneficiaries. The data and information thus collected should be analysed and ensure that the gender equality and social inclusion and other cross cutting issues will be captured adequately in all aspects of the evaluation. The data and information thus generated should be evidence-based, reliable, credible, and useful. The evaluation team should also ensure triangulation of the various data sources to maximize the validity and reliability of data. Given below is the summary of some of the relevant data collection tools that might be used in this evaluation. However, the evaluators will revise and update evaluation methods and tools in line with the evaluation purpose and objectives based on reference documents. GESI and human rights lens should be applied thoroughly during all stages of the evaluation to duly address gender, disability, and human right issues.

Indicative data collection methods include:

Document Review:

The evaluation team will undertake several activities during the document review phase. This will involve conducting a desk review of appropriate literature, encompassing program and project documents of the STLRP project, along with its Annual and Progress Reports. Additionally, the team will review various existing sources of information, such as the 15th National Plan, the National Tourism Strategy Plan spanning from 2016 to 2025, meeting minutes, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) from 2018 to 2022, as well

as study reports and knowledge products. These materials will provide valuable insights into the context, objectives, progress, and outcomes of the project, aiding in a comprehensive evaluation of its effectiveness and impact.

Review of Project Data:

Desk review of the project database to assess the project reach and progress against the target. The project beneficiaries data should be analysed using the appropriate statistical technique. The data should be analysed and presented as disaggregated data table while analysing the project results and gender responsiveness in the project's beneficiaries' reach.

Interview and Consultations:

The interview and consultation process will involve multiple focus group discussions with diverse project beneficiaries, including workers, training participants, and representatives from local governments across all provinces. At least one woman only and one LGBTIQ+ only focus group discussions will be conducted to assess the gender responsive results of the project. These discussions aim to gather comprehensive insights into the project's impact and effectiveness. Additionally, the team will conduct focus group discussions with key stakeholders in the tourism industry, such as the Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal (TAAN), Hotel Association Nepal (HAN), Nepal Association of Travel and Tour Agents (NATTA), Nepal Association of Rafting Agents (NARA), Restaurant and Bar Association of Nepal (REBAN), Trekking Union of Rural Gorkha Area Nepal (TURGAN), Nepal Tourist Vehicle Association (NTVA), Homestay Association/Network, and the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI). For key informant interviews, a semi-structured approach will be employed to conduct individual interviews with relevant stakeholders. The team will adhere to appropriate sampling techniques, ensuring a balanced representation in terms of gender, to gather nuanced insights and perspectives on the project's outcomes and challenges. This interview and consultation methodology aims to provide a holistic understanding of the project's impact from various perspectives within the tourism sector.

Field Visit:

The evaluation team should conduct field visits to selected municipalities from each province to observe the project results interact with the beneficiaries and conduct in-depth interviews and consultation with different stakeholders. The team will observe systems, products, and services delivered, as appropriate. Applicable travel costs and DSA during the field visit will be borne by UNDP.

Briefing and De-Briefing:

The evaluation team is required to organize briefing and debriefing sessions with UNDP, NTB, the project team, and relevant partners and stakeholders. Ensuring the triangulation of various data sources is crucial to enhancing the validity and reliability of the collected data. The final methodological approach, encompassing the interview schedule, field visits, and data utilized in the evaluation, should be clearly articulated in the inception report. This approach must be thoroughly discussed and mutually agreed upon by UNDP, key stakeholders, and the evaluators.

Gender Responsive Evaluation Scale (GRES) method:
The evaluation team should evaluate the project's contribution towards GESI responsive results using the Gender Result Effectiveness Scale (GRES). Evaluate each output of the project and assess whether they are gender negative, gender neutral, gender-targeted, gender-responsive, or gender transformative. It is important to consider the use of this scale as an assessment tool, but more so to inform potential opportunities that can inform a new project with key gender gaps strengthened.

It is important to note that, beyond the aforementioned details, due to the nature and scale of the project involving diverse expertise and groups from its inception to completion, the evaluation process should incorporate extensive consultation. This consultation should be undertaken with key stakeholders engaged in the project, including those involved in its implementation such as NTB, Local Government, and Private Sector Tourism Trade Association. Additionally, engagement with key partners, both national and international, the program management team, provincial and local governments, as well as direct beneficiaries in the project areas, is essential for a comprehensive evaluation. The process/steps mentioned above should ensure that the most appropriate and relevant data are gathered for the above-mentioned objectives. Based on the analysis and findings, recommendations should be provided for the future direction of the project. The consultant will have to submit the final full report in English.

The structure and content of the report should meet the requirements of the UNDP Evaluation Guideline. The final methodological approach including interview schedule, field visits, evaluation matrix, and data to be used in the review should be clearly outlined in the inception report and fully discussed and agreed with UNDP. The

evaluator should select the respondents using an appropriate sampling technique. While selecting the respondents, the evaluator should ensure gender balance.

5. Evaluation products (deliverables)

Upon the completion of the evaluation period, the service provider is expected to provide the following deliverables:

- **Inception report,** outlining the evaluator's understanding of what is being evaluated, why it is being evaluated, and how (methodology) it will be evaluated. The inception report should also include a proposed schedule of tasks, evaluation tools, activities, and deliverables. This report should be developed following preliminary discussions with UNDP, after the desk review. It is to be produced and approved by UNDP prior to the commencement of the evaluation, preceding any formal interviews, survey distribution, or field visits.

- **Evaluation matrix**, including key criteria, indicators, and questions to capture and assess based on evaluation criteria.

- **Evaluation debriefing**. Immediately after completion of data collection, the evaluation team should provide preliminary debriefing and findings.

- **Draft evaluation report.** Based on data information, the evaluators will prepare a draft report for sharing with UNDP and evaluation reference group. The program unit and key stakeholders will review the draft evaluation report. They will provide a consolidated set of comments to the evaluator within a predefined period. Once the comments are received, the evaluators will address the comments and finalize the report adhering to the quality criteria specified in the guidelines.
- **Evaluation report audit trail,** including comments provided on the draft report and changes made by the evaluators in response should be retained by the evaluation team to show how they have addressed comments.

- **Final evaluation report** within stipulated timeline with sufficient detail and quality incorporating feedback from the concerned parties.

- **An exit presentation** on findings and recommendations of the evaluation with UNDP and government agencies.

Note: The final payment is dependent on the approval of the report by the UNDP. It is understood that if needed multiple drafts may be required until the final approval.

6. Evaluation team composition and required competencies.

The evaluation will be carried out by a team of two national consultants. The team composition will be gender-balanced to the extent possible. Team members involved in the design, management or implementation or advising any aspect of the intervention that is the subject of the evaluation will not be qualified. UNDP CO will select the evaluation team. The two consultants are expected to work as a team under the leadership of the team leader. In case of a difference of opinion, the team leader will make the final decision.
The evaluators are expected to possess the following qualifications, skills, and experiences:

National Consultant (Team Leader)
Total Working Days: 35

The National Consultant, serving as the Team Leader, will oversee and manage the final evaluation, assuming responsibility for its conceptualization, planning, and execution. This individual will ensure the timely delivery of high-quality evaluation reports and briefings to UNDP, with a particular focus on incorporating gender equality and social inclusion perspectives throughout the evaluation process and report.

Major Roles and Responsibilities:
- Finalizing and designing the detailed scope and methodology for the evaluation.
- Ensuring appropriate task division within the team.
- Incorporating gender equality and social inclusion perspectives throughout the evaluation process and the final report.
- Reviewing relevant documents and preparing an inception report, and evaluation matrix, including evaluation questions and data collection instruments.
- Conducting field visits in selected communities and interviewing target groups, partners, and stakeholders.
- Facilitating stakeholder discussions and focus groups to collect, collate, and synthesize information.
- Analyzing data and preparing a draft evaluation report in the prescribed format.
- Incorporating feedback and finalizing the evaluation report.
- Coordinating with UNDP CO for evaluation-related information.

Qualification and Competencies:
- Possesses at least a master's degree in economics, Tourism Management, Social Sciences, Environment management or any other relevant subjects.

- More than 7 years of work experience in conducting research activities, including mid-term/final evaluations of Government or Development Partners funded programs/projects.
- Demonstrates extensive knowledge of, and experience in applying qualitative research and evaluation methods.
- Excellent analytical and report writing skills, with thorough knowledge of different evaluation methodologies/instruments.
- Strong knowledge of GESI and GESI analysis.
- Proficiency in various data collection methods, including FGDs, KII, and social surveys.
- Adequate knowledge of gender-sensitive evaluation and experience in disability inclusion in development projects.
- Excellent English and Nepali communication and writing skills.

National Consultant- GESI Expert (Team Member)

Total Working Days: 25
The GESI Expert, serving as a Team Member, will focus on reviewing documents, and analyzing project progress, issues, and challenges. This individual will support the Team Leader in implementing the evaluation, including finalizing the methodology, drafting, editing, and ensuring gender equality and social inclusion dimensions are mainstreamed throughout the evaluation.

Major Roles and Responsibilities:
- Gathering and reviewing relevant documents.
- Providing technical inputs to the Team Leader in designing the gender-responsive final evaluation, including finalizing methodologies and data collection instruments.
- Conducting field visits and facilitating consultations and interviews with target groups, partners, and stakeholders.
- Facilitating stakeholder discussions and focus groups, especially related to livelihood interventions.
- Analyzing data and supporting the Team Leader in drafting, editing, correcting, and revising selected chapters of the evaluation reports, particularly those related to livelihood components.
- Assisting the Team Leader in finalizing the report and sharing it with stakeholders.

Qualification and Competencies:
- Master's degree in any discipline, preferably management, sociology, statistics, rural development, or social work.
- At least 5 years of demonstrated experience in conducting evaluations of projects related to preparedness and response.
- Demonstrated work experience in project implementation, monitoring, and/or project design in the reconstruction and development sectors.
- Experience and understanding of gender-sensitive methodologies for conducting mapping, assessments, and/or analyses of vulnerable groups.
- Strong knowledge of GESI and GESI analysis.
- Proficiency in various data collection methods, including FGDs, KIIs, and Social Surveys. ❖ Strong English and Nepali communication and writing skills.

7. Evaluation ethics
This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG's Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. Under ethical consideration, special care will be taken to respect the confidentiality of the information provided and the right to respond or not respond during the evaluation. The information and data assembled in this evaluation process will only be used for evaluation purposes and not for other any kind of uses without the express authorization of UNDP and partners. Consultants will be held to the highest ethical standards and are required to sign a Code of Conduct upon acceptance of the assignment.

8. Implementation Arrangements
The principal responsibility for managing this final evaluation resides with the commissioning unit -UNDP Nepal Country Office. As the commissioning unit, the UNDP Nepal CO will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision and the logistic arrangements within the country for the evaluation team. The Evaluation Manager (Programming Quality and RBM Analyst) will ensure overall management, quality, and independent implementation of the MTR with needful guidance from UNDP Nepal's Senior Management. The team leader will maintain all communication through the Evaluation Manager. The Evaluation Manager should clear each step of the evaluation. Evaluation team members should directly report to and maintain all the communication through the team leader.

The project team will be responsible for providing the required information, furnishing documents for review to the evaluation team under the leadership of the Portfolio Manager. The CO, jointly with the project team will be responsible for the final evaluation's logistic arrangements, setting up stakeholder interviews, arranging consultations, arranging field mission to implementing provinces and local governments, coordinating with the stakeholders, among others. After signing the contract, UNDP will brief the evaluation team upon commencing

the assignment on the final evaluation's objectives, purpose, and expected outputs. Key project documents will be shared with the evaluation team. The team should review the relevant documents and share the draft inception report before the commencement of the field mission for data collection. The team should revise the methodology, data collection tools and review questions. The final methodology and instruments should be proposed in the inception report, including the evaluation schedule and evaluation matrix that guides the final evaluation's overall implementation. The final methods and tools should be GESI responsive. The inception report submitted by the evaluation team should be approved by the Evaluation Manager (RBM Analyst) prior to the commencement of the evaluation process.

The evaluation will remain fully independent. Individual consultants involved in designing, executing, or advising any aspect of the intervention that is the subject of the evaluation will not be qualified. The consultant will maintain all the communication through the Evaluation Manager. The Evaluation Manager should clear each step of the evaluation. The final evaluation report will be signed by the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative. A mission wrap-up meeting should be conducted, during which comments from participants/stakeholders will be noted for incorporation in the final report. The draft report will be reviewed by the concerned stakeholders, including the evaluation reference group (ERG), who will provide their comments.

Representatives from the UNDP Nepal Country Office, the STLRP project, Nepal Tourism Board will serve as the evaluation reference groups. Stakeholders and the evaluation reference group will provide their feedback to the draft evaluation report. The evaluators should address the comments received in the draft report. All comments and feedback should be documented through an Evaluation Audit Trail which needs to be submitted by the evaluators at the time of final submission of the evaluation report.

9. Timeframe for the evaluation process
The evaluation is subject to be conducted in 60 persons days within the three months starting from the agreement date. The final report of this assignment is to be submitted no later than July 20, 2024. The proposed tasks/assignments are expected to be accomplished within the given time frame as suggested in the table.

10. Application submission process and criteria for selection
Both the consultants will be selected from LTA roster which was established by UNDP Nepal. The interested and appropriate candidates will be approached with the final ToR and due process will be followed to onboard the consultants.

11. Annexes
Relevant documents
- Project document of the STLRP project.
- 15th National Plan, National Tourism Strategic Plan (206-2025), Tourism Act 2065, Tourism Vision 2020, and Tourism Master Plans of Provincial and Local Government
- Review of the media coverage, case studies, and other knowledge products developed through the STLRP project.
- Meeting minutes (Project Board, Policy Coordination Committees and Technical Committees, and Review and Planning meetings).
- Annual progress reports.
- Annual work plan and budgets.
- UNDP Country Program Document, (CPD).
- Norms and standards developed for evaluation in the UN System.

Tentative list of key stakeholders and partners to be engaged during evaluation process
- Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation
- Department of Tourism
- Nepal Tourism Board, UNDP
- Tourism Ministries in all Provinces
- Tourism Association Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal (TAAN)
- Province and Local Governments
- Hotel Association Nepal (HAN)
- Nepal Association of Travel and Tour Agents (NATTA)
- Nepal Association of Rafting Agents (NARA)
- Restaurant and Bar Association of Nepal (REBAN)
- Trekking Union of Rural Gorkha Area Nepal (TURGAN)
- Nepal Tourist Vehicle Association (NTVA)
- Homestay Association/Network
- Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce, and Industry (FNCCI)
- Nepal Mountain Academy

- Province and Local-Level Elected Members and Government Officials.

Annex 2: Key evaluation questions

- What measurable positive changes or benefits were observed among vulnerable tourism-dependent communities, entrepreneurs, and workers due to the project's intervention? How significant were these impacts?
- How efficient were the short-term employment opportunities, the renovation and development of tourism products, and the strengthening of institutional capacity in terms of achieving the intended outcomes?
- How well did the outputs integrate and complement each other (e.g., UNDP priorities, SDGs, National Tourism Strategy) in contributing to the overall goal of tourism recovery? Were there any inconsistencies or gaps in the project's approach?
- To what extent were GESI dimensions integrated and mainstreamed in the project's design and interventions, and were there any direct positive changes in the situation of women and other marginalized communities?
- To what extent will the project's intervention have a lasting and sustainable impact on the target communities and the tourism sector? What measures have been taken to ensure that positive effects will continue beyond the immediate project period?

Annex 3: Evaluation matrix

The questions in the blue text are simpler and extended form, as sub-questions.

Relevance

Key evaluation questions/sub questions	Data sources	Data collection methods/ tools	Indicators/success standard	Methods for data analysis
1. How well did the project design and approaches align with the specific needs and challenges faced by vulnerable tourism-dependent communities, especially women and PwDs, entrepreneurs, and workers in the tourism sector, considering the outputs related to (i) short-term employment opportunities and (ii) income generation? *a) Did the project design address the specific needs and challenges of vulnerable tourism-dependent communities especially women and people with disability, entrepreneurs, and workers especially women, youth, marginalized and disadvantaged groups?* *b) How well did the project create short-term employment opportunities for these groups?* *c) How effective was the project in helping these groups generate income?*	• Project proposal • Reports of government and implementing partners (IPs) • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress/monitoring reports	• Desk review • KIIs • FGDs	Alignment of project design and approaches with the needs and challenges of vulnerable tourism-dependent groups, focusing on short-term employment and income generation.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach
2. To what extend was the project design relevant and appropriate in line with the (i) political developments, (ii) national and sub-national development priorities of GoN, (iii) UNDP's strategic plan, (iv) UNDP CPD priorities and (v) need of intended beneficiaries? *a) How well did the project design align with political developments and the national and sub-national development priorities of the Government of Nepal (GoN)?* *b) Was the project design in line with UNDP's strategic plan and UNDP Country Program Document (CPD) priorities?* *c) Did the project design meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries?*	• Reports of government and implementing partners (IPs) • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress/monitoring reports	• Desk review • KIIs, FGDs • Observation	Relevance and appropriateness of project design about political developments, GoN development priorities, UNDP strategic plan, UNDP CPD priorities, and beneficiary needs.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach
3. To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant and preceding projects and interventions incorporated in project design? *a) Were there any similar projects or interventions completed before this one?* *b) If so, what lessons were learned from those previous projects or interventions?* *c) How were these lessons incorporated into the design of the current project?*	• Media reports, case studies • Annual progress/monitoring reports	• Desk review • KIIs, FGDs • Observation	Incorporation of lessons from previous relevant projects and interventions into project design.	• Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools
4. To what extent were the (i) project interventions, (ii) structure, and (iii) implementation arrangements relevant and logical to the project's theory of change? Are they still valid? *a) How relevant and logical were the project interventions to the project's theory of change?* *b) How relevant and logical was the project structure to the project's theory of change?* *c) How relevant and logical were the implementation arrangements to the project's theory of change?* *d) Are the project interventions, structure, and implementation arrangements still valid?*	• Reports of government and implementing partners (IPs) • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress/monitoring reports	• Desk review • KIIs, FGDs • Observation	Relevance and logic of project interventions, structure, and implementation to the project's theory of change, and their current validity.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach
5. In the context of a post-pandemic situation, how valid and relevant are the objectives of the program, especially regarding the (i) enhancement of employment opportunities and (ii) income generation for entrepreneurs and workers in major tourist destinations? *a) How valid and relevant are the program's objectives for enhancing employment opportunities in a post-pandemic situation?* *b) How valid and relevant are the program's objectives for generating income for entrepreneurs and workers in major tourist destinations in a post-pandemic situation?*	• Reports of government and implementing partners (IPs) • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress/ monitoring reports	• Desk review • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Post-pandemic validity and relevance of program objectives for enhancing employment and income generation in major tourist destinations.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach

Effectiveness

Key evaluation questions/sub questions	Data sources	Data collection methods/ tools	Indicators/success standard	Methods for data analysis
1. To what extent did the project effectively address the immediate issue of unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly concerning the vulnerability of women and people from disadvantaged groups in the tourism sector? Provide the gendered/ GESI nature of addressing unemployment with insights from which ethnic/caste groups were targeted and sub-groups that changed their status of unemployment. a) *How effectively did the project address the issue of unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic in the tourism sector?* b) *How specifically did the project address the vulnerability of women and people from disadvantaged groups regarding unemployment?* c) *Which ethnic or caste groups were targeted, and which sub-groups saw a change in their unemployment status?*	• Reports of government and implementing partners (IPs) • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress/monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Effectiveness of the project's gendered/GESI approach in addressing unemployment during COVID-19, focusing on women and disadvantaged groups in the tourism sector, and changes in unemployment status among targeted ethnic/caste sub-groups.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools
2. To what extent were the planned output results achieved, and what factors contributed to or hindered the realization of these intended results? Was affirmative action taken to ensure GESI results, especially for women? a) *How much of the planned output results were achieved?* b) *What factors helped or hindered the achievement of these results?* c) *Was affirmative action taken to ensure GESI results, especially for women?*	• Reports of government and implementing partners (IPs) • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress/monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Achievement of planned outputs and contributing/hindering factors, including affirmative GESI actions for women.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools
3. How effective is the partnership and collaboration with major tourism stakeholders and local governments in achieving the project's objectives and intended outcomes? Are these men-led/women-led? How are Indigenous men and women engaged? a) *How effective is the partnership and collaboration with major tourism stakeholders and local governments in achieving the project's objectives and outcomes?* b) *Are the partnerships and collaborations led by men or women?* c) *How are Indigenous men and women engaged in these partnerships and collaborations?*	• Reports of government and implementing partners (IPs) • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress/monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Effectiveness of partnerships with tourism stakeholders and local governments, including gender and indigenous engagement.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools
4. To what extent has UNDP contributed to gender equality, women's empowerment, and social integration results through this project at the (i) policy and (ii) implementation level? What was the change (narrowing certain gender gaps/ inequalities, discrimination, etc.) a) *How has UNDP contributed to gender equality, women's empowerment, and social integration through this project at the policy level?* b) *How has UNDP contributed to these goals at the implementation level?* c) *What specific changes, such as narrowing gender gaps or reducing inequalities discrimination and, have resulted from these contributions?*	• Reports of government and implementing partners (IPs) • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress/monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	UNDP's contribution to gender equality, women's empowerment, and social integration at policy and implementation levels, including changes in gender gaps.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach Excel tools
5. How relevant and impactful was the partnership between the (i) project and (ii) local governments in the development of tourism at the local level, particularly considering the engagement with vulnerable communities? a) *How relevant was the partnership between the project and local governments for developing tourism at the local level?*	• Reports of government and implementing partners (IPs) • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress/monitoring reports	• Desk review • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Relevance and impact of the project's partnership with local governments on local tourism development, focusing on vulnerable communities.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach Excel tools

	Data sources			
b) How impactful was this partnership in engaging with vulnerable communities?	• Meeting minutes • Training report			

Coherence

Key evaluation questions/sub questions	Data sources	Data collection methods/ tools	Indicators/success standard	Methods for data analysis
1. How well do the outputs integrate and complement each other (e.g. UNDP priority, SDG agenda, National Tourism Strategy) in contributing to the overall goal of tourism recovery? Are there any inconsistencies or gaps in the project's approach? a) How well do the outputs of the project integrate and complement each other in contributing to the overall goal of tourism recovery? b) Are there any inconsistencies or gaps in the project's approach that need to be addressed?	• Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress/monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Contribution level assessment	Integration and complementarity of outputs towards tourism recovery goal, considering alignment with UNDP priorities, SDGs, and national tourism strategy, with identification of inconsistencies or gaps.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools
2. How well does the intervention fit in a changed context? a) How well does the intervention fit within the current context? b) Has the intervention been adjusted or adapted to suit the changed circumstances?	• Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress/monitoring reports	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation	Alignment of intervention with changed context.	• Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools
3. To what extent does the intervention address the synergies and interlinkages with other interventions carried out by the (i) Nepal Tourism Board, (ii) Department of Tourism, (iii) Local Government, (iv) Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, and (v) UNDP's previous projects?" a) To what extent does the intervention create synergies and connections with the efforts of the Nepal Tourism Board and the Department of Tourism? b) How does the intervention align with the initiatives of local governments and the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation? c) How does the intervention build upon or relate to UNDP's previous projects in the tourism sector?	• Reports of government and implementing partners (IPs) • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation	Addressing synergies with interventions by various stakeholders, including NTB, Department of Tourism, Local Government, MoCTCA, and UNDP's previous projects.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach Excel tools

Efficiency

Key questions	Data sources	Data collection methods/ tools	Indicators/success standard	Methods for data analysis
1. To what extent were resources (financial, human, institutional, and technical) strategically allocated and efficiently used to achieve results promptly and address GESI inequality and root causes? a) How strategically were financial, human, institutional, and technical resources allocated for achieving results promptly? b) How efficiently were these resources used to address GESI inequalities?	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation	Efficient allocation and utilization of resources to promptly achieve results and address GESI inequality and root causes.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach Excel tools

Key evaluation questions/sub questions	Data sources	Data collection methods/ tools	Indicators/success standard	Methods for data analysis
2. Was the existing project management structure, M&E system appropriate and efficient in generating the expected results, considering the (i) renovation and development of tourism products and (ii) increased digitization efforts? *a) Was the project management structure effective in generating the expected results for renovating and developing tourism products?* *b) How efficient was the M&E system in assessing the outcomes of increased digitization efforts?*	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Capacity gap analysis • National stakeholders • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation	Appropriateness and efficiency of project management structure and M&E system in achieving expected results, including renovation of tourism products and increased digitization efforts.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools
3. How efficient and cost-effective was the project's implementation strategy and execution, particularly in relation to achieving the outlined objectives? *a) How efficient was the project's implementation strategy in achieving its objectives?* *b) How cost-effective was the project's execution in relation to achieving its objectives?*	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation	Efficiency and cost-effectiveness of project implementation strategy in achieving objectives.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools
4. Was the cost-sharing modality for the project intervention effective in achieving the desired results, and what lessons were learned in terms of feedback and learning incorporated into subsequent planning and implementation? *a) How effective was the cost-sharing approach in achieving the desired results of the project intervention?* *b) What lessons were learned from the feedback received during the project?* *c) How were these lessons incorporated into planning and implementing subsequent projects?*	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation	Effectiveness of cost-sharing modality in achieving results and lessons learned for subsequent planning and implementation.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools

Impact

Key evaluation questions/sub questions	Data sources	Data collection methods/ tools	Indicators/success standard	Methods for data analysis
1. To what extent do the project initiatives indicate that positive and negative changes, both intended and unintended, have been achieved, especially considering the impacts on vulnerable communities along tourism destinations? *a) To what extent have positive changes been observed as a result of the project initiatives?* *b) To what extent have unintended consequences, both positive and negative, been identified from the project initiatives?*	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Extent of positive and negative changes, intended and unintended, in project initiatives, with focus on impacts on vulnerable communities in tourism destinations.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach
2. What was the (i) immediate and (ii) long-term impact of the training provided through the project, and to what extent did it contribute to bridging the human resource gap in the tourism sector? *a) What immediate impact did the training provided through the project have?* *b) What long-term impact did the training provided through the project have?* *c) To what extent did the training contribute to bridging the human resource gap in the tourism sector?*	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Immediate and long-term impact of project training on human resource gap in tourism sector.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools

Key evaluation questions/sub questions	Data sources	Data collection methods/ tools	Indicators/success standard	Methods for data analysis
3. To what extent did the project make a real difference to the people (men, women, marginalized women, Dalits, Indigenous, persons with disability (living along the destinations where the project worked, particularly in terms of socio-economic impact? a) To what extent did the project create positive socio-economic impacts for the people living in the project areas? b) How did the project specifically benefit men, women, marginalized women, Dalits, indigenous people, and PwDs in the project areas? c) What tangible differences or improvements were observed in the lives of these groups as a result of the project?	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Capacity gap analysis • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Impact of project on socio-economic conditions of people, including marginalized groups, living in project destinations.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools

Sustainability

Key evaluation questions/sub questions	Data sources	Data collection methods/ tools	Indicators/success standard	Methods for data analysis
1. How well did the project interventions contribute to sustaining the results achieved, and how relevant is the exit strategy, including up scaling of project results and securing further resources for continued activities? a) How effectively did the project interventions contribute to maintaining the achieved results? b) How relevant is the project's exit strategy, particularly regarding scaling up project results? c) What efforts have been made to secure additional resources for continuing project activities?	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Contribution of project interventions to sustaining results and relevance of exit strategy, including up scaling and securing further resources.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools
2. To what extent did the project enhance the integration of resources with partner organizations, ensuring sustained impacts on the tourism sector? a) How well did the project integrate resources with partner organizations? b) To what extent did this integration contribute to sustained impacts on the tourism sector?	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Extent of enhanced resource integration with partner organizations for sustained impacts on the tourism sector.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools
3. To what extent did the project interventions contribute towards sustaining the positive GESI results (based on the GRES Framework) in the country? a) How did the project interventions contribute to achieving positive GESI results? b) To what extent were these GESI results sustained over time?	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Contribution of project interventions to sustaining positive GESI results in the country.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools
4. What could be potential new areas of work and innovative measures for sustaining the gender results in the respective interventions? a) What are potential new areas of work that could further sustain the gender results achieved by the project? b) What innovative measures could be implemented to enhance and sustain these gender results?	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Potential new areas of work and innovative measures for sustaining gender results in interventions.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

Key evaluation questions/sub-questions	Data sources	Data collection methods/ tools	Indicators/success standard	Methods for data analysis
1. How effectively were gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) provisions incorporated in the project design and implementation, particularly in addressing the needs of women and other marginalized groups in the tourism sector? a) How effectively were GESI provisions incorporated into the project design? b) How effectively were GESI considerations implemented during the project's implementation phase?	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Incorporation of GESI provisions in project design and implementation, focusing on women and marginalized groups in tourism.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools
2. How successfully has the project promoted positive changes for women, persons with disability, and all types of marginalized groups in the context of gender equality and social inclusion? a) How successful has the project been in promoting positive changes for women? b) How successful has the project been in promoting positive changes for PwDs? c) How successful has the project been in promoting positive changes for other marginalized groups in terms of GESI?	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Effectiveness of GESI provisions in project design and implementation, especially for addressing women and marginalized groups in tourism.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools
3. To what extent has the project promoted positive changes (leadership, empowerment) of women, persons with disability, and marginalized groups? a) To what extent has the project promoted positive changes in leadership among women? b) To what extent has the project promoted empowerment among PwDs? c) To what extent has the project promoted empowerment among other marginalized groups?	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Extent of promotion of positive changes in leadership and empowerment among women, PwDs, and marginalized groups through the project.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools
4. What measurable changes in (i) gender equality, (ii) women's empowerment, and (iii) social integration have occurred because of the interventions? a) What measurable changes have occurred in terms of gender equality due to the interventions? b) What measurable changes have occurred in terms of women's empowerment due to the interventions? c) What measurable changes have occurred in terms of social integration due to the interventions?	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Measurable changes in gender equality, women's empowerment, and social integration due to interventions.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools
5. To what extent did the project address and respond to existing power dynamics and gender relations? a) How effectively did the project address existing power dynamics? b) How effectively did the project respond to gender relations within its scope?	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Extent of project's response to existing power dynamics and gender relations.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach • Excel tools

Human rights

Key evaluation questions/sub-questions	Data sources	Data collection methods/ tools	Indicators/success standard	Methods for data analysis
1. To what extent have women, Dalits, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities (Women, Men, others), and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the project's work, and with what impact? c) *To what extent have women benefited from the project's work, and what impact has this had?* d) *To what extent have Dalits, ethnic minorities, and PwDs benefited from the project's work, and what impact has this had?*	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Extent of benefits and impact for women, Dalits, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups from the project's work.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach Excel tools
2. How well are human rights issues reflected in the new tourism recovery strategy, especially in consideration of the vulnerable groups targeted by the project? a) *How well does the new tourism recovery strategy address human rights issues?* b) *How effectively does the strategy consider the needs of vulnerable groups targeted by the project?*	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Integration of human rights issues in new tourism recovery strategy, considering targeted vulnerable groups.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach Excel tools
3. To what extent have projects integrated the Human Rights based approach in the (i) design, (ii) implementation, and (iii) monitoring of the project? Have the resources been used in an efficient way to address Human Rights in the implementation (e.g. participation of targeted stakeholders, collection of disaggregated data, etc.)? a) *To what extent was the human rights-based approach integrated into the design of the project?* b) *How effectively was the human rights-based approach implemented during the project?* c) *Were project resources used efficiently to address human rights issues during implementation, such as ensuring the participation of targeted stakeholders and collecting disaggregated data?*	• Reports of government and implementing partners • Relevant policies and project document • Media reports, case studies • Annual progress and monitoring reports • Meeting minutes • Training report	• Desk review • Meeting minutes • KIIs, FGDs • Observation • Most significant change	Extent of Human Rights-based approach integration in project design, implementation, and monitoring, including efficient resource utilization.	• Quick scan method • Content analysis tool • Thematic approach Excel tools

Annex 4: List of people interacted

Sn	Name and caste	Male	Female	Position and organization
1	Dr. Dhanjaya Regmi	M		Ex CEO, NTB, NPD-STLRP
2	Dr. Nandani Tahpa		F	CEO, NTB, NPD-STLRP
3	Mani Ram Lamichane	M		Director NTB, ex NPC-STLRP
4	Shradha Shrestha		F	Director NTB, NPC-STLRP
5	Gun Raj Bhattarai	M		Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation
6	Prayash Bhattarai	M		Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation
7	Dharma swarnakar	M		Inclusive Governance Advisor, UNDP
8	Kalpana Sarkar		F	Portfolio Manager, UNDP
9	Bipana Dhimal		F	Policy Analysist/GESI
10	Dharma Dawadi	M		Act. NPM/Livelihood and enterprise Specialist, STLRP
11	Khagendra Khadka	M		Admin and Finance Officer, STLRP
12	Amit Bista	M		Engineer, STLRP
13	Manorama Sunar		F	Gender consultant, STLRP
14	Niranjan Tamrakar	M		Program Support Officer, UNDP
15	Lekhnath Lamichane	M		CEO, NTVAN
16	Shiva Adhikari	M		Chairperson, NARA,
17	Sanjeeb Gurung	M		President Mountain Guide Association,
18	Ganga Pd Nepal	M		Past President, NARA,
19	Ram Chandra Sedai	M		CEO of TAAN
20	Krishna Prasad Dahal	M		Vice president
21	TB Bhusal	M		Media consultant
22	Arjun Karki	M		Ward 4, Chairperson, Mechi municipality
23	Yub Rai Pokhrel	M		Ward Secretary Ward 4, Mechi municipality
24	Dhan Maya Khanal		F	Women member, Ward 4, Mechi municipality
25	Tirth Raj Nepal	M		Advisor Ward 4, Mechi municipality
26	Tara Nath Khanal	M		Advisor Ward 4, Mechi municipality
27	Lila Kattel,	M		Advisor Ward 4, Mechi municipality
28	Pabitra Pradhan		F	Homestay trainees in ward no 4, Mechi Municipality
29	Annu Karki		F	Homestay trainees in ward no 4, Mechi Municipality
30	Geeta Pradhan		F	Homestay trainees in ward no 4, Mechi Municipality
31	Shanti Pradhan		F	Homestay trainees in ward no 4, Mechi Municipality
32	Rupa Pradhan		F	Homestay trainees in ward no 4, Mechi Municipality
33	Meena Pokhrel Upreti		F	Deputy Mayor, Mechi Municipality
34	Gopal Chandra Budhathoki	M		Mayor, Mechi Municipality
35	Mani Kumar Syanbo	M		Chairperson, Rong Rural Municipality
36	Bishnu Maya Khawas		F	Vice Chair, Rong Rural Municipality
37	Prem Mukhiya	M		Media Advisor, Rong Rural Municipality
38	Khadge Ale	M		Media Advisor, Rong Rural Municipality
39	Bikram Sundas	M		Media Advisor, Rong Rural Municipality
40	Indra jit Mukhiya	M		Media Advisor, Rong Rural Municipality
41	Prem Adhikari	M		Media Advisor, Rong Rural Municipality
42	Matrika Baral	M		Ward chair -3, Korsang trail area
43	Ganesh Kumar Khadka	M		CAO, Ilam Municipality
44	Basu Dev	M		Infrastructure Engineer, Ilam Municipality
45	Kedar Thapa	M		Mayor, Ilam Municipality
46	Sajaruddhin Musalwan	M		Mayor, Lumbini Cultural Municipality
47	Ram Chandra Aryal,	M		Account Officer, Lumbini Cultural Municipality
48	Tulsi Ram Lamichhane	M		Chief, Coordination Section, Lumbini Cultural Municipality
49	Khursid Alam	M		Ward 5, Chairperson, Lumbini Cultural Municipality
50	Phadindra Kumar Pal			Incharge, Tourism Section, Lumbini Cultural Municipality
51	Ashish Kumar Yadav	M		Engineer, Lumbini Cultural Municipality
52	Dhruba Raj Ghimire	M		Incharge, Health Division, Lumbini Cultural Municipality
53	Sayed Mohammod Khan	M		Municipal Advisor, Lumbini Cultural Municipality
54	Manju Parajuli		F	Chairperson, User's Committee, Lumbini Cultural Municipality
55	Birendra Shah, Buddha, Chintan	M		Member, User's Committee, Lumbini Cultural Municipality
56	Purosattam Aryal,	M		Chairperson, Lumbini Hotel Association
57	Binor Ludh	M		Tourist Guide/Trainee
58	Lok Parajuli	M		Cook/Trainee
59	Ranjit Halwai,	M		Greater Lumbini Local Tourism Guide Association
60	Shanta Chaudhary		F	Vice Chair, Tharu Culture Protection Committee, Dang
61	Narendra Chaudhary,	M		Marketing officer, Tharu Culture Protection Committee, Dang
62	Chandra Bir Chaudhary	M		Advisor, Tharu Culture Protection Committee, Dang
63	Jharendra Kharel	M		Member Secretary, Tourism Dev. Committee, Tulsipur Sub-metropolitan City
64	Indra Bahadur Khatri	M		Tulsipur Hotel Association, Dang
65	Dilli Bahadur Rawat	M		Chairperson, ERDRC, Dang
66	Chakra Pani Aryal	M		Mayor, Banganga Municipality , Kapilvastu
67	Rita Kumari Chaudhary,		F	Deputy Mayor, Banganga Municipality, Kapilvastu
68	Sudip Poudel	M		Mayor, Kapilvastu Municipality

69	Madhav Acharya	M		Conservation Officer, Tilaurakot Kapilvastu
70	Pom Narayan Shrestha	M		President, Pokhara Tourism Council
71	Krishna Bhandari	M		Vice president, Pokhara Tourism Council
72	Hari Bhujel	M		Secretary, Pokhara Tourism Council
73	Gokarna Lamsal	M		Vice president, Pokhara Tourism Council
74	Deependra Pahadi	M		Member, Pokhara Tourism Council
75	Naresh Bhattarai	M		Member, Pokhara Tourism Council
76	Dharma Raj Panthi	M		Member, Pokhara Tourism Council
77	Laxman Subedi	M		Member, Pokhara Tourism Council
78	Hari kRam Adhikari	M		Member, Pokhara Tourism Council
79	Rara Nath pahadi	M		Member, Pokhara Tourism Council
80	Shesh Kant Sharma	M		Member, Pokhara Tourism Council
81	Ramesh Aryal	M		Member, Pokhara Tourism Council
82	Mamata Neupane		F	Member, Pokhara Tourism Council
83	Pawan Kaji Adhikari	M		Ward chairperson of I, Adhikhola RM
84	Bharat Kumar Pun	M		Chairperson, Annapurna Rural Municipality
85	Kamala Giri		F	Tour and Travel Business, TEWAN, President
86	Meena Baral Chetri Lama		F	Tourism and Banji jump Business Owner
87	Nista Buda		F	Trekking guide and Spa Operation, Owner
88	Kamala Gurung		F	Restaurant Business Owner
89	Gopu Krishna Aryal	M		Chief Administrative Office, Machhapuchhre RM
90	Indra Bahadur Gururng	M		Ward 1, Chairperson, Machhapuchhre RM
91	Hari Bahadur Chetri	M		Ward 9, Chairperson, Machhapuchhre RM
92	ParsuRam Chaudhary	M		Coordinator, Blue Diamond Society, Nepal
	Total	71	21	

Annex 5: Evaluation mission itinerary

Date	Description	Location
June 27, 2024	First meeting with the UNDP and project team	UNDP CO Pulchowk
July 2, 2024	Meeting with immediate past NPC/NTB	NTB
	Meeting with the Project team	NTB
July 2, 2024	Meeting with Hotel Association Nepal (HAN)	Gairidhara
July 3, 2024	Nepal Tourist Vehicle Association (NTVA)	Lazimpat
	Nepal Association of Rafting Agencies (NARA)	NTB
	Nepal Mountaineering Trekking Association (NMTA)	NTB
July 4, 2024	Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents (NATTA)	Gairidhara
	Media Consultant	NTB
July 5, 2024	Meeting with the Project team	NTB
July 7, 2024	Meeting with the Project team	NTB
	Visit to Kirtipur municipality meeting with the Deputy Mayor and observe some construction work	Kirtipur municipality
July 8, 2024	Meeting with ward 4- team, Mechi Municipality	Mechi, Bahunedada
	Field visit to Elephant Park	Mechi, Bahune dada
	FGD with trainees of homestay	Mechi, Bahune dada
	Meeting with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Mechi Municipality	Mechi Municipality office
	Meeting with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and team in Rong Municipality	Rong Municipality office
	Field observation	Rong
July 8, 2024	Meeting with the Mayor, CAO, and team in Ilam Municipality	Ilam Municipality
July 9, 2024	Stakeholder consultation at Lumbini Cultural Municipality	Lumbini
July 9, 2024	Lumbini Hotel Association Nepal	Lumbini
	FGD with skill trainees	Lumbini
	Travel to Dang	Dang
July 10, 2024	Meeting with tourism stakeholders in Dang	Dang
July 11, 2024	Tharu Cultural Protection Center (TCPC)	Dang
July 12, 2024	Banganga Municipality of Kapilvastu (explore tourism perspective: Tilarakot and Sagrahawa and Jagadishpur wetland)	Kapilvastu
July 12, 2024	Stakeholder consultation at Lumbini	Lumbini
July 13, 2024	Travel to Bhairahawa from Lumbini then fly to Pokhara	Pokhara
July13, 2024	Meeting with Pokhara Tourism Council	Pokhara
	Meeting with no 1 Ward chairperson of Adhikhola Rural municipality	Adhikola, Maaju Bhanjang
July 14, 2024	Field visit to Maju Bhanjang Park and trail up	Maaju Bhanjang
July 15, 2024	Meeting with the Mayor of Annapurna Rural Municipality	Pokhara
	Meeting with the team of TEWAN	Pokhara
	Meeting with ward chairs and CAO of Machhapuchhre Rural Municipality	Municipality office
July 16, 2024	Meeting with the Project Team	NTB
	Meeting with NPC, NTB	NTB
	Meeting with Ex- CEO of NTB	Kathmandu
	Meeting with APO, UNDP	Kathmandu
July 17, 2024	Meeting with MOCTCA officials	Ministry
	Meeting with the project team	NTB
July 22, 2024	Meeting with UNDP officials (Kalpana Sarkar, Dharma Swarnakar)	UNDP
	Meeting with Dr. Nanadini Thapa, Act, NPD	NTB
July 24, 2024	Meeting Bipana Dhimal	UNDP
July 25, 2024	Meeting with Parsu Ram Chaudhary	Blue Diamond society, Ktm

Annex 6: Tools and techniques used for qualitative data collection

a. Initial briefing and /or introductory meetings: The initial briefing session (27 June 2024) with representatives from the UNDP Country Office and the project team helped to clarify the primary objectives and areas of focus of the evaluation. The evaluation team received an overview of the project's current implementation status, partnership arrangements, and notable achievements. This meeting allowed the team to gain a comprehensive understanding of the project's strategy, its development process, activities conducted in various phases, and significant adjustments made.

b. Document review (desk study): The UNDP Country Office provided the evaluation team with a comprehensive set of project-related documentation. The team examined this secondary information through the lens of the key evaluation questions, themselves based on OECD-DAC criteria, using the "quick scan method" to identify missing information. This approach helped the evaluation team gain a thorough understanding of the project. In addition, the team developed tables to evaluate project results and gender responsiveness. These tables were filled in based on the secondary review and later triangulated during the field mission.

c. Key informant interviews: Based on the agreed checklist and guide questions, KIIs were conducted in a semi-structured manner. The interviews began with broad, open-ended questions to capture the essence of the key evaluation inquiries and were followed by more specific questions to explore core issues in greater depth. Based on the ToR, the evaluation team involved representatives from the evaluation reference group[28], the UNDP Country Office, and key project stakeholders. Efforts were made to ensure gender balance among interviewees, and the methods and tools used were gender-responsive, meaning they took into account gender equality, women's empowerment, and other cross-cutting themes. A GESI and human rights lens was applied throughout the data-gathering process. To delve deeper, discussions were also conducted to capture women's experiences and measure the sustainability of the initiative, considering prevailing societal norms and values.

d. Focus group discussions: FGDs were conducted with project beneficiaries, including daily wage workers, trainees, local community user groups, local tourism promotion committees, and representatives from local governments. These discussions helped evaluate the project's progress and assess significant changes, particularly in terms of effectiveness and impact. The team's assessment of GESI mainstreaming covered all aspects of governance systems, procedures, processes, and policies, from the conceptualization of programs and projects to their implementation and M&E.

> **Box-3: Addressing cross-cutting themes during data collection and analysis**
>
> The evaluation team considered gender and human rights throughout the process of data collection, analysis, and reporting by using the following methods.
> - Conducting FDGs both with men and women thoroughly explore women's specific issues and concerns.
> - Ensuring that ethical considerations and tailored methods of data collection were integrated.
> - Employing gender-inclusive language and being aware of potential gender bias in evaluation questions and checklists.
> - Securing informed consent from all FGD participants, clearly explaining the evaluation's purpose, data usage, and procedures before collecting any data.
> - Formulating questions and checklists in a manner that enabled participants to openly share their experiences and perspectives regarding gender and human rights.
> - Avoiding framing questions in a way that assumes the absence of gender or human rights issues.
> - Creating a supportive environment in which participants could comfortably share their experiences, especially when collecting sensitive data on topics like gender-based violence and discrimination.
> - Ensuring that the data collection approach was culturally sensitive and respected human rights principles.

e. Direct observation: During the field mission, the evaluation team employed both participant and non-participant observation methods to assess the tangible outcomes of physical developments. These observations helped the team gain insight and physically verify schemes using direct observation guided by a checklist.

f. Most-significant-change technique: The team employed the "most significant change" technique to evaluate the project's overall accomplishments and measure the extent of change. It considered the project's complex institutional and implementation structure and the diverse range of stakeholders involved. This technique was instrumental in identifying both the intended and the unintended outcomes and impacts resulting from the project's implementation. The tool was used during KIIs and FGDs.

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[28] Comprise of government representatives, at least one donor representative and UNDP representatives

Ethical considerations: The evaluation team incorporated the perspectives of both men and women from various agencies. All information was acquired only after securing informed consent from respondents. The data generated in discussions was kept anonymous, and data collection adhered to UNEG guidelines and UN standards of conduct.

g. Gender result effectiveness scale method: The project's contribution to GESI-responsive results was measured using the GRES. Each project output was evaluated as either gender negative, gender blind/neutral, gender-targeted, gender-responsive, or gender transformative. The team used this scale as an assessment tool to identify potential opportunities for developing new projects aimed at addressing key gender gaps.

Source: Adapted from the Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, IEO, UNDP, 2015
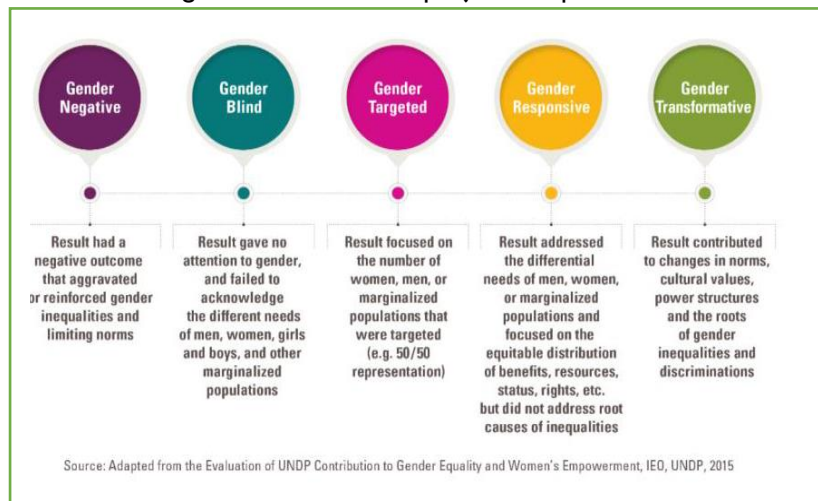
h. Competency analysis: The team also employed a competency analysis tool to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) as part of KIIs and FGDs.

Annex 7: List of documents reviewed
1. Annual progress report, 2021, 2022, 2023; Sustainable tourism for livelihood recovery project (STLRP)
2. Annual workplan, 2021, 2022, 2023,2024: Sustainable tourism for livelihood recovery project (STLRP)
3. Domestic Tourism Promotion Strategic Action Plan, April 2023; Draft
4. Financial Audit Report, 2021, 2022, 2023; Sustainable tourism for livelihood recovery project (STLRP)
5. Green Tourism Strategy for Sustainable Development, 2023; Draft
6. Meeting minutes (Project Board, Policy Coordination Committees and Technical Committees, and Review and Planning meetings).
7. National Strategy for Recovery of Tourism, December 2021; Draft
8. National Tourism Strategic Plan, 2016; Ministry of Culture, tourism and Civil Aviation, Nepal
9. Norms and standards developed for evaluation in the UN System.
10. Project document, 11 Dec 2020; Sustainable tourism for livelihood recovery project (STLRP)
11. Review of the media coverage, case studies, and other knowledge products developed through the STLRP project.
12. Sixteenth Plan 2024/25-2029/30, 2024, National Planning Commission, Nepal
13. Tourism Policy, 2065, Ministry of Culture, tourism and Civil Aviation, Nepal
14. UNDP Country Program Document, (CPD).

Annex 8: Evaluation checklist and guide questions

For key informant interview (KIIs)

Introductory questions
1. What role do you play primarily in this project?

Evaluation related specific questions (with additional questions for probing)[29]
2. How closely did the project's design and strategies match the specific needs and challenges of vulnerable communities, entrepreneurs, and workers in tourism? Did it effectively create short-term job opportunities and boost income generation of the targeted groups? (R)
3. How well did the project's design fit with current political developments and the development priorities (SDG, 15th and 16th periodic plan) of the GoN? Did it align with UNDP's overall strategic plan and priorities, as well as the specific needs of the beneficiaries it aimed to serve? (R)
4. To what degree were the lessons learned from previous projects and interventions applied in shaping the design of this project? (R)
5. How well did the project's actions, structure, and execution match the planned theory of change? Are these elements still effective and relevant? (R)
6. Given the post-pandemic scenario, how appropriate and meaningful are the program's goals, particularly concerning increasing job opportunities and income for entrepreneurs and workers in key tourist spots? (R)

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[29] The letters in the brackets refer to: **R**-relevance, **C**-coherence, **E**-effectiveness, **FF**-efficiency, **S**-sustainability, **I**-Impact, **HR**-human rights, **G**-gender for the coding purpose.

7. How well did the project tackle the urgent problem of unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially focusing on the vulnerability of women and marginalized groups in tourism? Can you provide insights into how different ethnic/caste groups were targeted and which sub-groups saw changes in their unemployment status? (E)
8. How successful were the planned outcomes of the project, and what influenced their achievement or hindrance? Were deliberate steps taken to ensure GESI outcomes, particularly for women and with their intersectionality? (E)
9. How well does the project collaborate with key tourism stakeholders and local governments to achieve its goals? Is there a predominant gender leadership in these partnerships? How are indigenous men and women involved? (E)
10. How much has UNDP contributed to gender equality, women's empowerment, and social integration through this project, both in terms of policy and implementation? Have there been noticeable changes such as narrowing gender gaps or reducing discrimination and inequalities? (E)
11. How significant and pertinent was the collaboration between the project and local governments in promoting tourism development at the grassroots level, especially in engaging vulnerable communities? (E)
12. How effectively do the project's outputs work together to support tourism recovery, aligning with UNDP priorities, SDGs, and the National Tourism Strategy? Are there any inconsistencies or gaps in the project's approach that need to address? (C)
13. How well does the intervention adapt to the current situation? (C)
14. To what extent does the intervention coordinate with efforts by the Nepal Tourism Board, Department of Tourism, Local Government, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, and previous UNDP projects? (C)
15. Were resources like money, people, institutions, and technical support used wisely to promptly achieve results and address GESI inequalities and their root causes? (FF)
16. Did the project's management structure and monitoring system effectively produce the expected outcomes, especially regarding the renovation and development of tourism products and the increased use of digital tools? (FF)
17. How well did the project execute its plans, and was it efficient and cost-effective, especially in achieving its stated objectives? (FF)
18. Was the cost-sharing approach effective in achieving the desired results for the project, and what lessons were learned from feedback to improve future planning and implementation? (FF)
19. To what degree have the project's efforts led to both intended and unintended positive and negative changes, particularly concerning their impact on vulnerable communities in tourism destinations? (I)
20. What immediate and long-lasting effects did the project's training have? And to what extent did it help fill the human resource gap in the tourism sector? (I)
21. How much did the project really impact the lives of people living in the areas where it operated, including men, women, marginalized women, Dalits, indigenous people, LGBTIQ+ and PwDs, especially in terms of socio-economic changes? (I)
22. How much did the project activities help maintain the achieved results, and how fitting is the exit plan, including expanding the project's accomplishments and securing additional resources for ongoing efforts? (S)
23. To what degree did the project improve the collaboration and resource integration with partner organizations, ensuring that the impacts on the tourism sector continue over time? (S)
24. How much did the project actions help uphold the positive GESI outcomes in the country, as per the GRES Framework? (S)
25. What are some potential new areas of focus and innovative approaches to maintaining the gender-related outcomes in the project interventions? (S)
26. How well were GESI considerations integrated into the project design and implementation, especially in meeting the needs of women and other marginalized groups in the tourism sector? (G)
27. How effective has the project been in fostering positive changes for women, LGBTIQ, PwDs, and other marginalized groups in terms of promoting gender equality and social inclusion? (G)
28. How much has the project contributed to empowering and fostering positive changes in leadership among women, LGBTIQ, PwDs, and marginalized groups? (G)
29. What noticeable changes have occurred as a result of the interventions in terms of (i) gender equality, (ii) women's empowerment, and (iii) social inclusion? (G)
30. How effectively did the project acknowledge and tackle existing power dynamics and gender relationships? (G)
31. To what extent have women, Dalits, ethnic minorities, PwDs, and other disadvantaged groups benefited from the project, and what has been the impact of these benefits? (H)
32. How thoroughly are human rights concerns addressed in the new tourism recovery plan, particularly regarding the vulnerable groups that the project aims to support? (H)
33. To what degree has the project incorporated a Human Rights-based approach into its (i) design, (ii) implementation, and (iii) monitoring? Have resources been efficiently utilized to address Human Rights concerns during implementation (e.g., involving targeted stakeholders, collecting disaggregated data, etc.)? (H)
34. What is your overall feedback and what recommendations do you have for designing future projects of a similar nature? Which actions should be continued, which should be discontinued, and what additional activities or processes should be included to achieve greater impact?

For group discussions/interactions
Introductory questions

1. Introduction of the participating members, name, caste, location, age groups, participated in which program.

Name	Sex	Caste	Age group	Participated project's activities

2. How many individuals are on your committee/group/network, categorized by gender and any other special designations? How many women members hold significant or leadership positions?

3. What are the primary objectives of this committee/group/network? In addition, could you elaborate on the roles and activities you have undertaken as part of this project?

Evaluation specific questions (with additional questions for probing)

4. What are the activities of the project? What activities are you involved in? What kind of results/outcomes have they produced? How successful were these results/outcomes, and what factors influenced their effectiveness (E)? Please provide some examples.
5. What were the processes and procedures used in selecting the communities, target people/groups, and types of interventions/activities for the project? Are you satisfied with these selection processes? If so, what were the reasons for your satisfaction? If not, what challenges did you encounter, and how did the project address those challenges? What alternative approaches can be taken to avoid these challenges?
6. From your perspective, what are the significant advantages of promoting gender equality and empowering women? How much progress has the project made in these areas, particularly in addressing the needs of youth and vulnerable groups, at both the output and outcome levels (E)?
7. In your view, what are some noteworthy good practices observed as a result of this project (E)?
8. What valuable insights have been gained regarding project design, implementation, management, monitoring, and gender mainstreaming, which could be beneficial for similar projects in the future (E)? Please provide evidence and examples.
9. What early indicators suggest the potential sustainability of project outcomes beyond the project's timeframe, at both the community and governmental levels (S)? What factors contribute to ensuring the continuation of the project's successful practices? What risks are involved, and how can they be minimized?
10. Have government and project stakeholders allocated their resources to ensure the success of the project? How dedicated are they to sustaining the outcomes of project support and ongoing initiatives (S)?
11. What are the key observable/transformable changes in people's lives, livelihood, and overall well-being as a result of this project (I)? Can you provide some solid examples?
12. How comprehensively has the project integrated gender equality and women's empowerment throughout its design, implementation, and monitoring phases (G)? Could you offer evidence and examples?
13. To what extent have disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including the impoverished, Indigenous peoples, PwDs, women, men, and youth, LGBTIQ+ benefited from this project (HR)? Please present evidence and examples.
14. Do you think the project is welcoming and supportive towards women and people with disabilities in terms of behavior, environment, infrastructure, and WASH facilities?
15. What is your overall feedback and what recommendations do you have for designing future projects of a similar nature? Which actions should be continued, which should be discontinued, and what additional activities or processes should be included to achieve larger impact?

FGDs with training participants

Introductory questions

1. Introduction of the participating members, name, caste, location, age groups, participated in which program.

Name	Sex	Caste	Age group	Participated project's activities

Evaluation specific questions (with additional questions for probing)

2. What are your thoughts on the training program? Do you enjoy the sessions? Could you provide a brief overview of the training program?
3. What have you learned from the training sessions? Do you think these trainings have been beneficial to your work?
4. Do you feel safe during the training program? If yes or no, could you describe the environment, trainers, course content, and the overall behavior of your colleagues?
5. What are you currently doing? Is it a full-time or part-time job? How much do you earn per month or day?
6. Do you feel that you are in your current position because of the training and other support provided by the project?
7. Do you have any recommendations for improving the training program in the future?

Thank you.

FGDs with short term employees

Introductory questions

1. Introduction of the participating members, name, caste, location, age groups, participated in which program.

Name	Sex	Caste	Age group	Participated project's activities

Evaluation-specific questions (with additional questions for probing)

2. Where do you find employment or for what purpose? How are you selected for short-term employment? Is there an affirmative action policy for selecting women, or is it random?
3. How many men and women were employed for that particular job?
4. Do men and women receive the same pay for the same work?
5. Do you feel safe and free from discrimination at work for being female, LGBTIQ, or from disadvantaged groups?

6. Is the workplace friendly to women, PwDs, and LGBTIQ+ individuals in terms of WASH (toilets, changing rooms, and water supply), working hours, and the behavior of supervisors and colleagues?
7. Have you experienced any harassment while at work?
8. Have you learned anything from your short-term employment?
9. After completing the training program, did you secure a regular job? If yes or no, please explain.
10. Would you recommend this type of opportunity to other projects? If yes or no, please provide reasons.
11. Do you have any further recommendations for the project or supervisors to improve short-term employment opportunities at the local level?

Annex 9: Additional data that gauze the project's performance

Table 1: Planned and actual budget allocation by output

Output	Planned budget (US$)	Actual budget (US$)	Reason for variation	Any implications or synergies with such variation
1	666,000	737,300	An additional US$ 50,000 allocated by UNDP in the year 2021 for short term-employment to provide additional short-term employment for those tourism workers who were left behind due to budget limitations. Similarly, US$ 25,000 repurposed for output 1 especially on short term employment from output 3 (tourist database) in the year 2021.	STLRP has provided short-term employment opportunities to additional tourism workers.
2	1,669,105	1, 667,285	No variation	
3	468,850	421,915	US$ 40,000 from the tourist database (activity) repurposed in output 1.	Development of the Tourist database system has not been initiated due to difficulty on making a common framework from multiple stakeholders like MoCTCA, MoHA, and NTB respectively.
4 (Operation)	461, 430	456,885	Including GMS (13.99% Operation cost including GMS) (Program Support Cost US$ 384,335, and GMS US$ 47,619)	
Total	3265,385	3265,385		

Table 2: Output-wise planned and actual expenditure of the budget

Output	Planned budget	Actual expenditure (As of July 2024)	Reason for variation	Implication in the project's overall outputs
1	737,300	715,995 (97.11%)	Due to the higher demand for short-term employment, the Project Executive Board endorsed repurposing the budget from unspent activity (output 3) for short term employment in the year 2021.	No such implication in the project's overall output.
2	1, 667,285	1,604475 (96.23%)	Ongoing: Payment of ongoing activities till December 2024.	No such implication in the project's overall output. All targets are achieved.
3	421,915	321808 (76.27%)	Activities are ongoing and expenditures are reported till June 2024 so under this heading US$ 115307 payment yet to be made for ongoing activities.	Activities are ongoing and will be completed in December 2024 during the no-cost extension period.
4 (Operation)	456,885	423,837 (92.77%)	Ongoing. The project has been extended till December.	

Table 3: Earlier footprint of UNDP and other projects in tourism sector

Name of earlier program/projects	Project tenure	Donors	Project's partners	Synergies
Establishing a Partnership for Quality Tourism Project (PQT)	1996-1997	UNDP	NTB, MoCTCA	This project recommended having an exclusive private sector entity for promotion of the Nepalese tourism. Nepal Tourism Board was formed as per the recommendation of PQT.
Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Program (TRPAP).	2001-2007	UNDP, DFID	NTB	TRPAP is a program designed to contribute to the poverty alleviation objective of the government by demonstrating sustainable tourism development models in rural areas of Nepal. Product development, skill enhancement, knowledge product development.
Community Infrastructure for Livelihood Recovery Project (CILRP)	2015-2020	Government of Mauritius, International Medical Corps (IMC), Bridge Head Limited, Qatar Red Crescent, Royal Thai Government, UNDP.	NGOs (Multiple)	Scaling up re/construction of small-scale tourism infrastructure in a matching fund modality

Table 4: Planned vs. actual dates of human resource management

Staff position	Planned recruitment (MM/YY)	Actual recruitment (MM/YY)	Reasons for this variation	Impacts on the overall project's performance
National Project Manager	May 2021	July 2021	Delay in deputation of NPD from the NTB board	National Project Manager
Livelihood/Enterprise Specialist	May 2021	July 2021	Delay in deputation of NPD from the NTB board	Livelihood/Enterprise Specialist
Admin Finance Associate	March 2021	April 2021		Admin Finance Associate
Admin Finance Officer	March 2023	June 2023		Admin Finance Officer
Driver 1	March 2021	April 2021		Driver 1
Driver 2	March 2022	June 2022	Delay in arrival of the vehicle	Driver 2

Table 5: Human resource management, turn-over and re-recruitment

Type of staff as per the ProDoc	Actual staff managed (any modification if yes, WHY?)	Turnover of staff (if any) during the project's tenure, which position	When (left the project?) (mm/yy)	New recruitment for the same position or made an alternative arrangement
National Project Manager	Resigned	National Project Manager	August 2022	NA
Livelihood/Enterprise Specialist	Authorized as an Acting NPM			
Admin Finance Associate (AFA)				
Admin Finance Officer (AFO)			June 2023	Promotion of AFA position to AFO
Driver 1				
Driver 2	Resigned	Driver	February 2024	Short-term driver hired for 130 working days.

Table 6: Turnover of PB members

Number of PEB member that turned over during the project tenure	When (MM/YY)	New PEB member recruited (MM/YY)	Nomination (months)
Mr. Tara Prasad Adhikari, JS MoCTCA	August 2021	November 2021	4
Mr. Tok Raj Pandey, JS MoCTCA	May 2022	March 2023	13
Mr. Gyan Prasad Dhakal, JS MoCTCA	March 2023	July 2023	4
Mr. Rajendra Kumar KC, JS MoCTCA	July 2023	December 2023	5
Mr. Saroj Kumar Pokharel, US MoCTCA	Dec2023	July 2024	7
Ms. Indu Ghimire, JS MoCTCA			
Ms. Tirtha Neupane, Section Officer, MoF	April 2021	August 2021	4
Mr. Bibek Rijal, Section Officer	August 2021	January 2022	6
Mr. Tilak Chapagain, Section Officer, MoF	January 2022	March 2023	14
Mr. Muktiram Acharya, US MoF	July 2023	December 2023	5
Mr. Kanchan Basnet, US MoF	December 2023	July 2024	7
Mr. Hom Prasad Parajuli, Section Officer, MoF			
Dr. Dhananjay Regmi, CEO, NTB	January 2024	March 2024	2
Ms. Nandini Lahe Thapa, Officiating CEO, NTB	March 2024		
Mr. Bernardo Cocco	August 2023	August 2023	
Mr. Julien Chevillard			

Table 7: Number of PB meeting

Year	Planned PB meetings	PB meeting	Mode (Physical/On-line)	Major strategic decisions
2021	2	4	One is Online and One is virtual	• Approval of Purchase of additional vehicle and hiring one additional driver. • Approval for direct procurement for the project for agreement to implement the activity 3.1.6 Provide support to organize the international conference on sustainable tourism with a change as "Sustainable Summits 2021 Film Project Production • Revision of Annual Work Plan (AWP) with an additional US$ 50,000 and Fourth Quarterly Work Plan
2022	2	2		
2023	2	3	One is virtual	• Extension of project duration from September 2023 to July 2024 with an additional budget of US$ 600,000 from UNDP and NPR 735,00,00 from NTB.
2024	2	1		• Approval of project duration (Aug-Dec) 2024 including plan of extension period without any financial obligations from NTB.

Table 8: Modification of project's activities (August 2023)

Activity code	Original plan / activity	Revised/modified plan / activity	Reasons for modification	Any impacts on the project's performance with this modification	Any value addition of this modification
Output 2	Beneficiaries benefited from skill training / Vocational Training (100 in each province)	Tourism based enterprise development- individual and or communal	Specify the entrepreneurship target in the revised result frameworks.	Target specified for the reporting.	Entrepreneurship development program conducted with more focus.
		# of people from local government/tourism stakeholders capacitated on sustainable tourism, tourism promotion, and policy-related issues including trail audit training.	The local government's understanding of tourism especially on their priority on annual planning seems weak, which necessitates the need for this capacity-building training for the local government.	Enhanced understanding of TOURISM planning and polity by local government, increased networking with NTB, MoCTCA, Provincial tourism ministry of local government, and development of a draft tourism promotion strategy.	Local governments are equipped with required skills, knowledge, and tools required to play a pivotal role in shaping their community into a thriving and sustainable tourism destination.
Output 2	Re/construction of small-scale tourism infrastructure.	Development of Tourism Destinations/products- at least 1 from each province.	For focusing on developing destinations from learning of small-scale infrastructure to create a cohesive and sustainable tourism industry.	This approach allows for better resource allocation, improved infrastructure, and effective marketing strategies that can attract a higher volume of tourists.	Destination developed and or promoted
Output 3	Policy intervention on Domestic Tourism Awareness, Promotion including international conferences	Establishment of sustainable tourism clubs in schools	Establishing a Sustainable Tourism Club in schools fosters environmental stewardship, cultural awareness, and responsible travel practices among students. It promotes eco-friendly habits and enhances knowledge of local heritage.	Project outreach and visibility enhanced	NTB as well as UNDP reached directly 130 schools across schools

Table 9: Evidence of cost-sharing mechanism with other agencies/similar nature of project (cost efficiency)

Name of project's activities	Location	Collaborated with other XYZ agencies	% of the total amount collaborated by XYZ agencies	Synergies in works
Community Connect Event	Kathmandu	Community Homestay Network (CHN)	5% cost sharing by STLRP especially for community connect events.	Networking among tourism business service providers in rural areas.
InnoFest 2023 in Pokhara	Pokhara	Accelerator Lab/UNDP Pokhara Metropolitan City (PMC) and KOICA		Bringing together innovative companies and initiatives operating locally in PMC that promote green job creation and circular economy.

Table 10: Co-funding from project partners (if provision)

Sn	Project partners	Planned amount	Actual amount	Variation	Reason for variation	Impacts on the project's overall performance
1	Local Government	1000,000	1275,955		Initially, we estimated 30% co-financing from local government however in the year 2023 project ensured around 50% co-financing from local government.	Resource leverage and infrastructure development work efficiency increased.
3	User Committee	N/A	32090			
2	Private Sector Tourism Trade Association	50,000	89,826		Encouraged Private Sector Tourism Trade Association	The higher number of training

						beneficiaries reached.
3	NGOs	0	56,000			
	Total US$		1453,870			

Table 11: Number of project's beneficiaries (planned vs. actual)

	Total population served			Program
Men	Women	LGBTIQ+	Total	
7361	2485	0	9846	Short term employment
2555	1409	25	3989	Training
9916	3894	25	13835	

Table 12: Number of events organized to ensure transparency and accountability mechanism

# of the public hearing	# of project related Information board installed in different project's locations	Review and reflection sessions with community stakeholders.	Other approaches to foster transparency and accountability
85 (One event conducted at the end of the project completion by the local government)	Around 200 information boards were installed on each project site.	Following review and reflection mechanism ensured. • Orientation at the beginning while designing and estimation • Training beneficiary selection • Weekly follow-up in WhatsApp.	Regular local government-level site visits and field monitoring. The project also conducted regular field monitoring visits at project sites.

Table 13: Types of knowledge and communication products

S.N	Type of knowledge/ communication products generated by the project	Types/ number	Print/ Electronic	The key message of each of the product
1	A Reference Book for Trekking Guides (2021)	1000	Print	Tourism, geography, and geology of the country, environment, history of the religion of Nepal, cross-cultural tourism behaviors, trekking and mountaineering, safety and security in trekking, risks associated with trekking; snow and avalanche, communication skills, conflict management, leadership skill, financing and accounting, ropes and knots, equipment.
2	A resource book on river rafting	1000	Print	This covers eligibility, terminology, equipment, handling techniques, river hydrology, rapid scouting, safety, campsite management, rope tying, photography, social media, guide duties, map reading, trip leadership, NARA membership, and provides resources and an overview of the Nepal Association of Rafting Agencies.
3	A Training Manual for Tour Product Development, GDS/Airline Ticketing and Customer Services	1000	Print	Training manual for tour product development, online ticketing, and customer service. Major contents: Tour Product Development, GDS/Airlines Ticketing, Customer Service.
4	Resource Book for Basic Culinary Arts	1000	Print	Creating a resource book for basic culinary arts is a valuable investment in culinary education, skill development, and cultural preservation. It empowers individuals with the knowledge and confidence to cook effectively, healthily, and creatively.
5	Resource Book for Basic Food and Beverage Services	1000	Print	Publishing a resource book for basic food and beverage services is essential to standardize training, enhance service quality, and ensure consistency in the hospitality industry. It equips staff with fundamental skills, promotes best practices, improves customer satisfaction, and supports professional development, ultimately driving success in food and beverage operations.
6	Tourist Vehicle Standard Guidelines		Digital	The document has suggested relevant and necessary guidelines for vehicles and drivers with a kind of checklist to follow. The suggested maintenance cycle is also highlighted in the document. These guidelines are expected to be useful for the operators, drivers, and monitoring authorities and this initiative can certainly enhance the image of the destination.
7	A Pocketbook of Ropes and Knots	3000	Print	This book will guide the trekking guides, expedition guides, and porters, especially on outdoor activities such as camping, hiking, rock climbing, sailing, or mountaineering, knowing how to tie various knots is crucial. Knots are used for securing equipment, setting up shelters, and ensuring safety in various outdoor situations. In emergencies or outdoor adventures gone awry, knowing how to tie the right knots can be essential for creating makeshift tools, shelters, or rescue devices.
8	Minimal Impact Travel		Print	Minimal Impact Travel (MIT) is a comprehensive guideline documented to minimize the negative impacts of Tourism in Nepal and to promote sustainable tourism in Nepal based on the existing local regulations and protected area management rules. This guideline was based on the principles of environmental conservation and sustainable tourism.
9	Tour Guide Manual for Janakpur (Published in 4 languages; English, Nepali, Hindi and Maithili)	2000	Print	The Janakpur Dham tour guide manual will be useful for tour guides who are working in the Janakpur areas including tourism stakeholders of Janakpur Dham. The primary audience for the Tour Guide Manual includes local and international tour guides, travel agencies, and individuals involved in promoting tourism in Janakpur Dham.
10	Buddhist Heritage Sites of Kathmandu		Ongoing	Publishing a book on Kathmandu's Buddhist heritage is crucial for preserving and promoting its rich cultural and spiritual legacy. It serves as a historical record,

			educates readers, and supports sustainable tourism, benefiting local communities and conserving these sites. The book bridges cultural gaps and enhances global recognition of Nepal's treasures.
11	A guide to Lumbini	Ongoing	The tour guide manual will be useful for tour guides who are working at the Lumbini areas. The primary audience for the Tour Guide Manual includes local and international tour guides, travel agencies, and individuals involved in promoting tourism in Lumbini.
12	SPA and Wellness Operation Procedures (2024)	Digital	This will be a national common guideline for the operation of SPA and Wellness.
13	Tourism Strategy and Action Plan Guideline	Digital	This is designed to increase the capacity of all local governments across the country. The document designing is ongoing and will be shared to all local governments for a comprehensive understanding, especially on the development of a Palika-level tourism strategy and action plan.

Table 14: List of PB meetings

Year (duration)	Date (YY/MM/DD)	Key decision made by PAC
2021	27 January 2021 (1st PBM)	Approval of the proposed programs and budget for 2021, Human Resource Plan, Procurement Plan, Purchase of additional vehicle, and hiring one additional driver. Opening and management of Project Bank Bank Account- to be operated by NPD or NPC from the implementing agency (NTB) and NPM or AFA from the project. Management of office space for the project in NTB premises.
2021	8 April 2021 (2nd PBM)	Approval of the progress made in the Quarter- I Approval of the proposed programs and budget for Quarter- II with a total budget of US$ 300,000
2021	25 August 2021 (3rd PBM)	Approval of Progress achievement during the period from April to August 2021 General Revision of Annual Work Plan (Jan- Dec) 2021 and approval of quarterly work plan.
2021	28 November 2021 (4th PBM)	Revision of Annual Work Plan (AWP) with an additional US$ 50,000 and Fourth Quarterly Work Plan Project Progress Report
2022	7 January 2022 (5th PBM)	Approval of Annual Progress Report of the year 2021, endorsement of Substantive Revision of AWP (Jan- Dec 2022), approval of AWP 2022 (Jan to Dec 2022), approval of First Quarter Work Plan (Jan- March 2022).
2022	20 May 2022 (6th PBM)	Approval of General Revision of AWP 2022 Approval of the vehicle handover
2023	20 March 2023 (7th PBM)	Endorsement of Substantive Revision of Annual Work Plan (AWP) 2022 Extension of project duration from September 2023 to July 2024 with an additional budget of US$ 600,000 from UNDP and NPR 735,00,00 from NTB. Review and Approval of Revised Framework, Revised Multi-Year Work Plan, and Revised Annual Work Plan 2023. Review and Approval of Procurement Plan and Human Resource Plan. Approval to recruit an Administrative and Finance Officer from the UNDP roster.
2023	3 July 2023 (Virtual PBM)	Approval to sign the LVGA partnership agreement with TAAN. General Revision of AWP, 2023 with changes of responsible party.
2023	27 December 2023 (8th PBM)	Approval of Annual Progress (Report) for the year 2023. Endorsement of General Revision of Annual Work Plan 2023. Review and Approval of Annual Work Plan 2024 Approval to recruit one driver from the UNDP roaster. Change of Bank Account Signatory of NPC.
2024	4 July 2024 (9th PBM)	Approval of project duration (Aug-Dec) 2024 including the plan of extension period without any financial obligations from NTB. Transfer of a vehicle to other projects of UNDP (66-1-1750 Scorpio and Bike 66-1-945)

Table 15: Monitoring visits from different agencies

Agencies	When (MM/YY)	Where (States)	What they monitored (activities)?
UNDP CO			
RR	July 2024	Mechinagar Municipality and Rong Rural Municipality	Project developed small scale tourism infrastructures
DRR		Chandragiri-Kirtipur Cycle trail	Project developed small scale tourism infrastructures
ASG	June 2022	Kirtipur Cycle trail	Project developed small scale tourism infrastructures
Communications team	June 2022	Chandragiri-Kirtipur Cycle trail	Project developed small scale tourism infrastructures
Portfolio, Operations, field office	Nov-2023 and June 2024	Ramaroshan Rural Municipality, Dhankuta Municipality, Pakhribas Municipality, and Rong Rural Municipality	Project developed small scale tourism infrastructures
Portfolio Manager	March 2024	Training program to LGs for tourism strategic action plan at Sauraha	Observation of the Training program to LGs for tourism strategic action plan at Sauraha.
UNDP field Office- Janakpur	June and July 2024	GESI Analysis Janakpur, Mechinagar Municipality and Rong Rural Municipality	
UNDP field Office- Butwal	2022, 2023, 2024	Lumbini Cultural Municipality	Project developed small scale tourism infrastructures

Agencies	When (MM/YY)	Where (States)	What they monitored (activities)?
PB Members	January 2024/ March 2024	Mr. Gobinda Karki, Joint Secretary- Training program to LGs for tourism strategic action plan at Sauraha, Mr. Saroj Kumar Pokhrel- Training program to LGs for tourism strategic action plan at Pohara.	As a resource person and observer of Training program to LGs for tourism strategic action plan at Sauraha and Pokhara.
Joint monitoring (PB and UNDP)		Mr. Bernardo Cocco, DRR UNDP Kalpana Sarkar, Portfolio Manager	Inauguration of Cycle Trail
National/international media visit to project's States		Media visibility link	
Other (*Pls add.*)		FAM trip with Media journalists, representatives of MoCTCA, DoT, and NTB to Api Himal base camp	Project developed small-scale tourism infrastructures

Table 16: Fund release from NTB to UNDP

Installment	Planned date of fund disbursement *(based on agreement)* (mm/yy)	Actual date of disbursement (mm/yy)	Variation in months	Reason for variation in disbursement, if any	Any impacts on the project's implementation because of such variation?
First	Within one month of signing of the financing agreement (11-12-2020)	5 July 2021	7	Delay in deputation of NPD from the Board of NTB.	Delay in implementation of project activities
Second	By 1st August 2021	29 October 2021	3	Delay in approval of NTB annual budget.	
Third	By 1st August 2022	09 December 2022	5	Delay in approval of NTB annual budget.	
Final	By 15th February 2023	27 September 2023		Delay in approval of extension from the Ministry of Finance (MoF)	This affected the implementation of planned activities which were later completed in a very limited period.

Table 17: Fund release from UNDP to STLRP

Installment	Planned date of fund disbursement *(based on agreement)* (mm/yy)	Actual date of disbursement (mm/yy)	Reason for variation in disbursement, if any	Any impacts on the project's implementation because of such variation?
First 2021	May 2021	June 2021		
Second 2021	October 2021	November 2021	Delay in the transfer of NTB contribution.	This caused the delay in payment of remuneration to short-term workers during the time of the festival.
First 2022	January 2022	February 2022		
Second 2022	May 2022	May 2022		
Third 2022	October 2022	December 2022	Delay in the transfer of NTB contribution.	This caused a delay in the release of funds to implementing partners.
First 2023	January 2023	February 2023		
Second 2023	May 2023	June 2023		
Third 2023	September 2023	November 2023	Delay in the transfer of NTB contribution.	This caused a delay in the release of funds to implementing partners.
First 2024	January 2024	March 2024		
Second 2024	June 2024	July 2024		

Table 18: Project key milestones vs. actual dates (2021-2024)

Sn	Important events	Planned date	Actual dates	Reason for this variation and its impacts on overall performance
1	PIF approval	3 December 2020	3 December 2020	(MoF Approval date)
2	CEO endorsement	11 December 2020	11 December 2020	
3	LPAC meeting- project endorsement	10 December 2020	10 December 2020	
4	ProDoc sign (project start date)	11 December 2020	11 December 2020	
5	Inception workshop	20 December 2020	20 December 2020	
6	First disbursement	January 2021	5 July 2021	The delay in the operation of the project.
7	Mid-term review	2023	19 January 2024, and 10 July 2024	

Table 19: Letter of agreement (LoA) with partners

Sn	Agencies	Planned date of LoA	Actual date of LOA	Reason for variation	Impacts on the project's overall performance
1	Local Government	13 March 2022	21 March 2022	Some local governments experienced delays because their municipal executive committee meetings and R/Municipal council meetings took longer to approve the necessary measures.	Delay in the completion of project activities
2	Local Government	5 September 2022	17 September 2022		
3	Local Government	6 September 2022	14 September 2022		
4	Local Government	31 July 2023	16 August -30 Sept 2023		
5	Local Government	15 Aug 2023	18 August -18 October 2023		

Table 20: Planned vs. actual partners

Planned Partner	Actual partners
Local Government (LG)	Local Government (LG)
NGO (LVGA)	NGO (LVGA)
Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN)	Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN)
Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN)	Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN)
Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents (NATTA)	Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents (NATTA)
Nepal Association of Rafting Agents (NARA)	Nepal Association of Rafting Agents (NARA)
Nepal Cannoning Association (NCA)	Nepal Cannoning Association (NCA)
Restaurant and Bar Association of Nepal (REBAN)	Restaurant and Bar Association of Nepal (REBAN)
Tourist Guide Association of Nepal (TURGAN)	Tourist Guide Association of Nepal (TURGAN)
Nepal Tourist Vehicle Association (NTVA)	Nepal Tourist Vehicle Association (NTVA)
Himalayan Rescue Association Nepal (HRA)	Himalayan Rescue Association Nepal (HRA)
Nepal Mountain Academy (NMA)	Nepal Mountain Academy (NMA)
Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM)	Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM)
	Mountain Guide Association of Nepal (MOGAN)
	Nepal Tourist Vehicle Association (NTVA)
	Hotel Professional Federation Nepal (HPFN)
	Kathmandu Environmental Education Project (KEEP)
	National Forum of Photojournalist (NFPJ NEPAL)
	The National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC)
	Tourism Research & Training Institute (TRTI)
	Community Homestay Network

Table 21: Gender diversity table

Sn	Agencies	Men	Women	LGBTI	Total
1	UNDP CO (Specific to this project)	3	3	-	6
2	PMU	5	0	-	5
3	Project Board	13	3	-	16

Table 22: Target vs. achievements (Output 1)

SN	Activities	Target	Achievements				Total
			2021	2022	2023	2024	
1	# of people benefitted from short-term employment. (#men and # women)	10534	5645	1389	2665	147	9846
2	# of installation of waste management plants or bins	1000	205	0	1185	0	1390
2.	# of bridges renovated/constructed	15	11				11
3.	# of Km of drainage and/or stone stairs renovation	100	74.25	4.6			78.85
4.	# of signage installation and maintenance	1806	177				177

Table 23: Target vs. achievements (Output 2)

SN	Activities	Target	Achievements				Total
			2021	2022	2023	2024	
1	Small-scale tourism infrastructure	225	36	76	170		282
	Wooden bridge-Built	48	7	13	19	2	41
	Wooden bridge-Renovated	20	11	3	1		15
	Resting places-Built	23	6	12	58	1	77
	Resting places-Renovated	7	0	4	0		4
	Waste Management Systems-Built	30	0	11	8		19
	Waste Management Systems-Renovated	10	0	6	0		6
	Installation of Signage	1530	0	182	1526		1708
	Foot trail/hiking trail/cycle trail-numbers	21					

	Stone Stairs-Built (km)		74.1			74.1	
	Stone Stairs- Renovated (km)		74.25			74.25	
	Tourism Information Centers		1		6	7	
2	Development of Tourism Destinations / products- at least 1 from each province.	10			16	16	
3	Beneficiaries benefited from skill training/ Vocational Training (100 in each province)	2000	0	1464	2288	85	3837
4	Tourism based enterprise development- individual and or communal	200		28	385		413
5	People from local government/tourism stakeholders capacitated on sustainable tourism, tourism promotion, and policy-related issues including trail audit training.						

Table 24: Target vs. achievements (Output 3)

SN	Activities	Target	Achievements				Total
			2021	2022	2023	2024	
1.	Preparation of a comprehensive national strategy for the recovery of the tourism sector	1	1				1
2.	Standardization for tourism services guidelines	15	2	6	3	4*	15
3.	Preparation of Tourist Database*	1			1	1	
4.	Tourism Satellite Account (TSA)**	1					
5.	Policy intervention on Domestic Tourism Awareness, Promotion including international conferences. • Policy intervention • International conference.	1	1				
6.	Establishment of sustainable tourism clubs in schools	100		18	112	20	150
7.	Digitization of tourism destination***				1	5	
8.	South-South Cooperation (exposure/learning/ collaboration opportunities)						

* Visualization of tourism database and National Trekking Trail Profile- Dedicated website, ** Ongoing. *** Documentary video / Travel Episode

Annex 10: Risk Log Matrix

Description	Date identified	Type	Impact & Probability (1 Low – 5 High)	Countermeasures Management response	Responsible party
The COVID situation continues to disrupt socioeconomic life for the longer term.	October 2020	Operational	*Probability = 2 Impact =5*	The project will ensure the implementation of project activities following the standard norms developed by the government of Nepal and adapt the project activities according to the situation.	NTB
Local governments may be fully occupied to fulfill their core functions so may not be able to actively engage in the implementation of the project.	October 2020	Organizational	*Probability =1 Impact =4*	The project will actively engage with the local governments and provide necessary technical support to ensure their full and active engagement.	NTB
NTB Contribution in AWP 2023 may not be expended in the FY 2079/80 (July 15, 2023).	April 2023	Operational	*Probability =2 Impact =4*	Regular follow up and immediate approval of extended period and amount.	NTB

Probability: (1 Limited, 2- Low, 3- Moderate, 4-High, Extreme).
Impact: (1-Not likely, 2-Low likelihood, 3- Moderately likely, 4-Highly likely, 5- Expected

Annex 11: Results Framework

Intended Outcome as stated in the UNSDCF/Country [or Regional] Program Results and Resource Framework: By 2027, morepeople, especially women, youth, and the most marginalized and poor increasingly participate in and benefit from coordinated, inclusive, participatory, transparent, and gender-responsive governance, access to justice and human rights at federal, provincial, and local levels.

Output 1.2. Expanded access to sustainable livelihoods and income for women, youth, poor, and other marginalized groups.

Outcome indicators as stated in the Country Program [or Global/Regional] Results and Resources Framework, including baselineand targets: Proportion of informal employment in total employment (SDG-8.3.1)

- Baseline: 62.2% (2017/18)   - Target: 30% (2025)

Applicable Output(s) from the UNDP Strategic Plan: 1.3 Access to basic services and financial and non-financial assets and servicesimproved to support productive capacities for sustainable livelihoods and jobs to achieve prosperity.

Project title and Atlas Project Number: Sustainable Tourism for Livelihood Recovery; 000111755

EXPECTED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT INDICATOR	Unit	DATA SOURCE	BASELINE		Cumulative Target	Cumulative Achievement till Dec 2023
				Value	Year	2021-2024	2021-Dec 2023
Output 1 - Vulnerable workers particularlywomen and people from disadvantaged groups in the tourism sector that have lostjobs or income due to COVID-19 have received short-term employment opportunities to meet immediate livelihoodneeds							
	# of people benefittedfrom short-term employment. (#Male and # female)	Number	STLRP M&E Database	0	2022	10,534	9699 (7,277 men, women 2,422 (25%), and 10 single women which comprises 8% Dalit, 60 % Janajati, and 32% others
	# of installation of Waste Management Plants or Bins)	Number		205	2022	1000	1,390
	# of Bridges Renovated	Number		0	11	10	11
	KM of Drainage and/ orStone Stairs renovation	Km		74.25	2022	100	79
	#Signage installationand Maintenance	Number		177	2020	1806	1,885
Output 2 - Entrepreneurs and other workersin the tourism sector have enhanced opportunities for employment and incomegeneration through the renovation and development of tourism products in majortourist destinations.							
	# of small-scale tourisminfrastructure built, renovated, and reconstructed.	Number		36	2022	250	282
	# of tourism destinations/products developed (# 10, at least 1 from eachprovince)			Not in Place	2022	10	16
	# of people benefited from skill-based trainingin tourism (Beginner, Licensed, and Refresher)					3100	3752 (1322 females (37%), 2405 men (67%), 25 LGBTIQ people(1%), 4% Dalit, 55% Janajati, and 46% others)
	# of tourism-based enterprises created /ecotourism.	Number		0	2020	200	413
	# of people from local government/tourism stakeholders capacitated on sustainable tourism, tourism promotion, andpolicy-related issues including trail audittraining.	Number		Not in Place	2022	300	184 {170 men, 14 women (7.6%)}
Output 3 - The institutional capacity of the NTB is strengthened through the formulationof a tourism recovery strategy, as well as through increased digitization and other							
	# of guidelines/tools onstandardization for tourism services. '(# of knowledge products, earnings, bestpractices, and stories published).	Number		Not in Place	2020	12	11
	# Tourist database in place.	Number		Not in Place	2020	1	1

	Finalization of Tourism Satellite Account (TSA)	Number		Not in Place	2020	I	Ongoing
	# Policy intervention fordomestic tourism promotion / Domestic	Number		Not in place	2020		I

Annex 12: Audit report 2021 to 2023

2021

Outputs	Total budget	Expenditure	Differences	Percentage
I	737300	715992	21308	
2	99000	94500	4500	
3	54150	36993	18156	
Program Implementation Support Unit	159550	112927	46623	
Total	1050000	959412.64	90587.36	91.37%

Auditor's remarks

Activities and Budget heading	Risk level	Recommendation
4.1.3. Expenditure not booked in account code as per AWP	Low	care of account code while booking of expenditure
4.3.1. LOA with LGs Activity wise and total budget mismatch Funded to Khumb Pasanglhamu RM- total expenses is in one activity	Medium	Revise the budget as alterations are to be made. Record the expenditure as per the approved activity-wise budget
4.5.1. Petty case fund transection from personal account	Low	Maintain separate vault
Field visit note: TDS not deducted on wage rate	Medium	Strict compliance with the Income Tax Act
No information board on site	Low	Place the information board in a conspicuous place on the site

2022

Outputs	Total budget	Expenditure	Differences	Percentage
I				
2	391000	387275.25	3724.75	
3	30700	29853.75	846.25	
Program Implementation Support Unit	138300	172378.96	(34078.96)	
Total	560000	589507.96	(29507.96)	105.27%

Auditor's note:

Activity 4: PISU- Expenditure variance		Payment of the previous year's commitments of 40486.40
4.2.1. none insurance of non-expendable assets	Low	Procure appropriate insurance policy in UNDP consultation
4.2.2. Procurement related documents not numbered	Low	Ensure the pre-numbered PR, PO and GRN
4.3.1. Noncompliance with the provisions of Value Added Tax and rules	Low	Make consistency to hold 30% of VAT amount applicable for a transaction made.
Delay in verification of withheld tax returns	Medium	Withhold tax amounts are deposited and tax returns are verified within 25 days from the end of the month.

2023

Outputs	Total budget	Expenditure	Differences	Percentage
I				
2	1057985	993037.42	64947.58	
3	183065	92356.15	90708	
Program Implementation Support Unit	124335	110052	14282.30	
Total	1,365,385	1,195,446.27	169938.73	87.55%

Auditor's remarks

4.2.1. Registration with the Social Security Fund not yet done 4.2.2. Not provided gratuity equivalent to 8.33% of the monthly basic salary and festival	Low risk	Respect the norms

allowance equivalent to one month of basic salary to the employees. Project donot provide encashment for any unused annual and sick leave to employees		
4.3.1. LOA with LGs Expenses reported without completion of the project activities as per the statement of expenditure submitted by the LOA partners.	Medium	Ensure the activities to be completed before payment. Management should ensure the share of expenditure as per percentage of work completion basis for ongoing projects. Separate financial and program monitoring will be conducted to ensure highest standard of financial integrity, accountability and quality assurance of the activities as per agreement in all LGs before the handover the scheme to the LGs.
4.4.1. Delay in the verification of withheld tax returns	Low	Taxes should deposit and the tax returns are verified with 25 day from the end of month.
Field visit to Ramaroshan Rural municipality: Incorrect funding source mentioned in the signage boards Funding agency is written as USAID instead of UNDP.	Medium	Proper coordination with LGs and replacement of boards reflecting the correct fund sources
Field visit to Tilagufa Rural Muncipaltiy, Kalikot The project activities are yet to be completed.	Medium	Ensure the activities to be completed before payment. A separate financial and program monitoring will be conducted to ensure the highest standards of financial integrity, accountability and quality assurance of activities as per agreement with all LGs before the handover the scheme to the LGs.
Field visit to Sabhapokhari Rural Municipality, Sankhuwasabha The project activities are yet to be completed.	Medium	

Annex 13: Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form

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

Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form
Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system: Sustainable Tourism for Livelihood Recovery Project (STLRP)

Name of Evaluators: Dr. Dhruba Gautam and Nigma Tamrakar
Name of Consultancy/organization: N/A

We confirm that we have received and understood and will abide by the United national Code of Conduct for Evaluators:
Signed at: Kathmandu on Jan 26, 2024