**UNDP Management Response**

**Project # 00081828 PIMS 5372 SUPPORTING GREEN URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED CITIES IN BELARUS**

**Terminal Evaluation**

Date: October 2021

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**Overall comments:** The Terminal Evaluation of the GEF funded project “Belarus: Supporting green urban development in small and medium-sized cities in Belarus”, PIMS 5372 was conducted in mid-2021 by a team of experts comprising of one international and one national consultant in accordance with GEF requirements and the respective UNDP evaluation guidelines, rules and procedures. In general, the evaluation team managed to capture the key project related aspects. However, the evaluators have focused mainly on the project failure to meet the GHG reduction targets and largely missed or ignored the project achievements in other areas. Some recommendations are formulated in a way that is difficult to understand and to propose practical and implementable follow-up actions.

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| **Evaluation Recommendation 1:** Project designers and managers could be encouraged to include, within ToRs related to the development of plans and strategies, the identification of short-term low-cost actions for immediate or future implementation, so that the project’s sustainability does not rely only on the availability of resources for investments. | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Partially accepted (i) many strategic documents have established official templates and UNDP should follow the respective template; (ii) many programme/strategic documents developed with UNDP support include low-cost short-term actions, as well as long-term and more costly options; (iii) even low-cost options require funds to implement them. Implementation of almost any action actually depends on funds availability and infrastructure related developments are often the most expensive type of developments. There is no lack of national short-term plans with required budget indicated. What is often missing is a long-term integrated vision of local development for a particular district, municipality, etc. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking\*** | |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 1.1. Continue including short-term and low-cost options as well as long term vision into plans and strategies developed with UNDP projects support. | Nov 2021 – May 2023 | UNDP, National Implementing Partner (NIP), PIU | Ongoing |  |
| **Evaluation Recommendation 2:** In future urban projects, consider including in the PMU a long-term position with strong expertise in different countries in the design and implementation of disruptive GHG mitigation measures, such as a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Accepted. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 2.1. In developing new projects consider suitable options to engage strong international expertise for designing and implementing disruptive GHG mitigation measures. | Nov 2021 – May 2023 | UNDP | Ongoing | CC related expertise is rather limited in the local market. The project will further use UNDP roster or tendering for involvement of. international expertise in the project. Modality of involvement will be defined based on the availability of the expertise (global market restrictions) project needs and budget available. |
| **Evaluation Recommendation 3:** In future projects, the UNDP CO executive level is recommended to intervene at the proper political level whenever there are signs of insufficient political commitment from national, regional or local governments. | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Accepted | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 3.1. Timely identify the cases of insufficient political commitment from national, regional or local governments and escalate the cases to the attention of the CO senior management with their subsequent intervention on a higher political level. | Nov 2021 – May 2023 | UNDP, respective PMUs | Ongoing | The project and portfolio will track records of commitments from the onset of the project development through implementation stages and duly inform the management for high level interventions. |
| **Evaluation Recommendation 4:** PIRs should pay more attention to the assessment of the actual involvement and commitment (including co-financing) of key stakeholders- particularly the national government- and to include mitigating measures if necessary. The materialization of co-financing can be facilitated by a specific focus on this issue and the inclusion in the PMU of experts with experience and skills in raising and monitoring co-financing. | | | | |
| **Management Response:**  Accepted. The new PIR template provides enough attention to the cofinancing. It will be ensured that all the upcoming PIRs have the up-to-date information on cofinancing. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 4.1. Ensure cofinancing data is collected and presented in projects APRs and PIRs. | Dec 2021 – Oct 2022 | UNDP, PIUs | Ongoing | The respective PIU will collect co-financing related information on a regular basis and will include this information in PIR and APR annually. |
| 4.2 In cases of insufficient national stakeholders’ involvement in project implementation, conduct consultations with the respective stakeholder to identify the cause for this insufficient involvement. If deemed necessary, bring these cases to the attention of a respective project board for discussion and identification of mitigation measures. | Nov 2021 – May 2023 | UNDP, PIUs, NIP | Ongoing | The involvement of the key stakeholders in the project implementation process will be assessed by PIU, UNDP and NIP. If necessary, consultations will be conducted with the key stakeholders to identify reason(s) for the stakeholders not participating. Based on the consultations, correction actions will be suggested/introduced. When required, such cases will be brought to the attention of Project Board. |
| **Evaluation Recommendation 5:** Consider undertaking, early enough and prior to implementation, independent assessment by international consultants of project’s deliverables critical to the achievement of core targets such as GHG emission and energy reductions. | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Partially accepted. The practical value of the recommendation is questionable. It is a mutual responsibility of the PIU, UNDP CO, NIP and Project Board to identify and focus on the actions important to achieving project’s core targets. The added value of the engagement of a special international consultant is unclear. At the same time, it is important that the critical project activities and deliverables are identified at the very beginning of project implementation and focused on through the implementation process. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 5.1. Conduct a meeting with all the PIUs focusing on the key project deliverables and the respective actions required to achieve the critical targets. | Nov 2021 – Feb 2022 | UNDP, PIUs, NIPs | Ongoing | It will be implemented for the ongoing projects with involvement of the respective NIP. The results will be presented to the respective PBs. |
| 5.2 Conduct such an exercise for every new project at the beginning of project implementation process. | Nov 2021 –May 2023 | UNDP, PIUs, NIPs | Not initiated | It will be implemented for new projects. |
| **Evaluation Recommendation 6:** The UNDP CO is recommended to integrate a social and gender perspective within ToR for technical assistance in future projects, particularly for those without a Gender Action Plan, based in proper research on the state of affairs. | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Accepted. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 6.1. Conduct a gender analysis at the preparation stage of every new GEF funded project. | Nov 2021 – May 2023 | UNDP | Ongoing |  |
| 6.2. Based on the analysis, develop a project specific gender action plan and ensure its implementation. | Nov 2021 – May 2023 | UNDP | Ongoing |  |
| **Evaluation Recommendation 7:** Urban projects would benefit from strengthening the role of working groups of a technical nature at the local and national levels. If open to the permanent participation of CSO and NGOs (including those representing women and other disadvantaged groups), they could also facilitate the integration of gender and social dimensions during implementation. | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Accepted. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 7.1. Establish thematic working groups within a project, when it is beneficial and feasible. | Nov 2021 – May 2023 | PIU, UNDP, NIP | Ongoing | The majority of the ongoing projects already have various thematic working groups established and operational. |
| **Evaluation Recommendation 8:** In future projects, make sure that the risk matrix is regularly discussed at the PB and updated, and that changes to PRF after MTR are approved by the PB and included in the PIRs. | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Accepted. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 8.1. Regularly review and update the respective project risks and issues and record those in project risk logs. Bring the discussion on key risks and issues to the respective Project Boards. | Nov 2021 – May 2023 | PIU, UNDP, NIP, PB | Ongoing | Project risks and issues are regularly discussed at Project Board meetings of all the UNDP projects. Project risks and issues logs are updated regularly. |
| **Evaluation Recommendation 9:** Strengthen knowledge management tools to facilitate access to the project’s deliverables, e.g., by developing a database with a logical structure and providing basic information of the most relevant documents produced by the project, so that it can serve as an essential knowledge management tool after project termination. Such database could be integrated in the project website. | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Accepted. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 9.1. Develop a database to store the key project knowledge-based products. | Nov 2021 – May 2023 | UNDP, PIU, NIP | Ongoing | The overwhelming majority of the projects have their websites were all the project knowledge-based products are placed. The main issue is to store valuable information after a project ends. In some cases, the products are handed over to national partners to be placed on their web-based platforms. UNDP Belarus is now considering developing a database for storing key project information, including knowledge-based products. |
| **Evaluation Recommendation 10:** In future projects, make sure that the ToR of the communications specialist includes regular monitoring of dissemination activities with adequate metrics and include these metrics in annual PIRs. | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Accepted. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 10.1. Include into communication specialist ToR for future projects requirement for regular monitoring of dissemination activities with adequate metrics and include the metrics in annual reporting, whet it is relevant. | Nov 2021 – May 2023 | UNDP, PIU, NIP | Not initiated | This requirement will be included into the respective ToR when new projects will be hiring communication specialists. |
| **Evaluation Recommendation 11:** In future GHG mitigation projects, make sure that MRV tools are established early enough to properly assess and monitor the GHG savings from the project’s pilots and to regularly report to the PB and PIRs. | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Accepted. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 11.1. For the on-going GHG mitigation projects, review the respective MRV tools used by the projects to monitor the project GHG savings. | Nov – Dec 2021 | UNDP, NIP, PIUs | Ongoing | The results of the review will be presented to the respective Project Boards. |
| 11.2 Make the required corrections to the used MRV tools, when required. | Jan – Apr 2022 | UNDP, NIP, PIUs | Not initiated | Corrections, if required, will be made based on the MRV tools review |
| 11.3 In future GHG mitigation projects, establish an effective MRV tool during the first year of project implementation. | Nov 2021 – May 2023 | UNDP, NIP, PIUs | Not initiated | It will be done for new projects. |
| **Evaluation Recommendation 12:** To facilitate future replication, the project final report could highlight the results from pilots, including an estimate of actual GHG emissions saved and beneficiaries, and provide guidance to municipalities for implementation of the GUDPs, SECAPs and ISUMP delivered by the project. It is recommended to produce a final declaration signed by the cities participating in the project- that could also be opened to the MoNREP and other stakeholders- stating their support to the GUD principles and their commitment to implement the remaining project’s actions and recommendations. | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Partially accepted All the project final reports, as well as progress reports, present the results of the respective pilots, implemented by a project. The GUDPs, SECAPs and ISUMP and other strategy-type documents already include information on implementation of a strategy. The GUDPs, SECAPs, ISUMP and other strategy-type documents are developed based on a request from the respective national partner. The vast majority of these documents are subsequently officially adopted by the respective national authorities. Producing the proposed declaration will not bring any additional buy-in from the national partners. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 12.1. Continue highlighting the results from pilots, including an estimate of actual GHG emissions saved and beneficiaries, in the respective project final and progress reports. | Nov 2021 – May 2023 | UNDP, NIP, PIUs | Ongoing |  |
| **Evaluation Recommendation 13:** Consider including in the final project report a summary of the project’s recommendations on PT reforms and non-infrastructural improvements based on the Feasibility Study on PT in Polotsk and Novopolotsk. This can help cities to recover PT in the post-COVID period. | | | | |
| **Management Response: A**ccepted | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** | |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 13.1. Compile a summary of PT related recommendations as a separate document and disseminate this document widely among national partners, including the project pilot municipalities of Polotsk, Novopolotsk and Navahrudak. | Nov 2021 – Apr 2022 | UNDP | Ongoing | The summary should be shared nation-wide, not only to the project pilot municipalities |

\* The implementation status is tracked in the ERC.