

UNDP Management Response to the Recommendations of Terminal Evaluation Report on

UNDP-GEF “Elimination of obsolete pesticide stockpiles and addressing POPs contaminated sites within a sound chemicals management framework” full sized project

UNDP PIMS ID: 4905
GEF ID: 4737
Terminal Evaluation Completion Date: 30 November 2021
Date of Issue of Management Response: 30 November 2021

Prepared by:  **Gayane Gharagebakyan, Project Coordinator**

Contributors  **Hovhannes Ghazaryan, CER Programme Analyst /Team Leader**

Cleared by:  **Natia Natsvlshvili, UNDP Resident Representative in Armenia**

Overall comments: The Project Terminal evaluation (TE) reviewed the project’s design, performance, results, impact, relevance, efficiency and sustainability focusing on criteria in line with requirements of the Terminal Evaluation ToR. The evaluation entailed a systemic desk review of project-related documentation, data collection based on interviews with key stakeholders and analysis of information using triangulation.

The TE has recorded that the Project team and stakeholders - represented through Project Management Board (PMB), took a very adaptive and agile approach studying the feasibility of variety of available options, approaches and alternatives to achieve the project objective, namely the environmentally sound disposal of the Nubarashen POP/OPs waste abroad or in-country.

The TE revealed that the effective use of adaptive management by the project team and PMB was critical for dealing with the project issues, as well as for navigating through unpredicted political (“Velvet revolution” in Armenia in 2018), health-related challenges (COVID-19 pandemic emerged in early 2020), hostilities in and around NK in fall of 2020, with their practical negative impact on implementation of the project’s core activity to clean-up and dispose the POP/OPs waste from Nubarashen landfill. Meanwhile, as listed in the TE report, multiple interim results were successfully delivered enhancing country capacity in hazardous chemical waste handling. However, the above reflected challenges significantly affected achieving the project objective, the overall progress of the project was rated as “Moderately Unsatisfactory”.

In conclusion, the TE recommended to: i) Assemble all the knowledge products that have been generated by the project and handover to stakeholders; ii) Create a roadmap with financial plan for the way ahead for Nubarashen waste elimination; iii) Strengthen the existing Inter-Agency Committee on implementation of Stockholm Convention for facilitating institutional stakeholder engagement and coordination; iv) UNDP to support the Government in exploring new funding opportunities for addressing the subject waste disposal, not excluding GEF funding; v) Maintain stakeholder engagement for that purpose.

Terminal Evaluation Recommendation 1. Handover of Responsibilities and Knowledge

The first task and priority the project team should focus on is to organize a proper and smooth handover of responsibilities, materials and knowledge to respective government entities. This will require a few steps and actions to be undertaken by the Project Team with the support of project stakeholders:

- First, the project team should document the whole process and assemble all the knowledge products that have been generated in the course of the project (this includes studies, assessments, project notes, briefs and materials, presentations, tender documents, terms of reference, project correspondence, board meeting notes, etc.). All activities that were undertaken by the project should be carefully documented in order to preserve the institutional memory.
- As a second step, the project should identify the respective government entities to which it will hand over the process and documentation – including MoE, as the leading institution in this area, but also MES, MoA, DPMO, etc.

Management response:¹ **Accepted.** The decision made by the preceding Project Management Board (PMB) meeting on 11 May 2021, assigned the Project to transfer all the intellectual products to stakeholders to follow-up on project initiatives. The respective documents to address Nubarashen site POP/OPs waste elimination will be amended in compliance with the format of nationally used state budget planning proposal. The MoE as a responsible authority for the waste management, has pledged to promote this agenda.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking ²	
			Comments	Status ³
1.1 Systematize the project produced documentation and handover to the stakeholders.	20 December 2021	Project team		Initiated
1.2 Amend respective documents on Nubarashen POP/OPs waste elimination in compliance with the structure/requirements of state funding proposal (including costing) and submit to the Ministry of Environment. The latter will submit this package to the Government of Armenia for the state budget planning to address the subject waste.	20 December 2021	Project team		Initiated

Terminal Evaluation Recommendation 2. Charting the Path Ahead

Before the project ceases to exist, it will be crucial for the stakeholders to get together and take stock of the status quo and try to chart the way forward in this area. This evaluation recommends the organization of a closing workshop which should engage all relevant partners both within the government and in the civil society (including affected communities). This event should be used as an opportunity to maintain the momentum created by the project and as a way of creating a roadmap for the way ahead.

The project team and the PMB will have to do some preparatory work and based on consultations with all relevant government departments develop a clear vision for the process going forward based on the experience of the project. The project team is already preparing an exit strategy to this end. At the end of the closing event (workshop), the parties could ideally be able to adopt a unified vision on the way forward and a roadmap for how to achieve that vision. To be workable, this roadmap should be specific, concrete and with well-defined milestones. More importantly, such a roadmap should also identify the key decisions that will need to be made to push this process forward. If such a roadmap will be developed with the endorsement of all parties, it will also be important for the project team to work out a financial plan that specifies the financial envelope that will be needed and with potential sources of funding.

Management response: Accepted. The Project will hold a closing workshop with participation of all relevant stakeholders in a format of an extended PMB meeting, inviting all members of the project advisory committee (PAC) and other important stakeholders.

The financial plan/costing of expected works for Nubarashen POP/OPs waste elimination is an integral part of the project developed documents undergoing project supported amendment in accordance with the format of state funding proposal. The amended documents will be submitted to the MoE for further processing (as indicated under the 1.2 Action above).

A roadmap on processing the state funding proposal within the MoE and line ministries for comments, then on necessary steps for submission to the Government for approval and inclusion into the 2022–2024 Medium-term Expenditures Framework will be developed and shared with PMB for endorsement.

¹Select one: Fully Accept, Partially Accept, Reject

²Status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre (ERC).

³Select one: Not initiated, Initiated, Completed, Completed, No longer applicable

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
2.1 Conduct a project closing workshop in the format of an extended Project Management Board meeting.	30 November 2021	Project team / PMB		Initiated
2.2 Develop a roadmap on processing of the state funding proposal for expected Nubarashen waste elimination works and share with PMB for endorsement.	18 November 2021	Project team / PMB		Initiated

Terminal Evaluation Recommendation 3. Strengthening Institutional Arrangements and Inter-Agency Coordination

Although the scope of the project was primarily environmental in nature, there were major components that were focused on foreign affairs, agriculture, justice, health, emergency responses, infrastructure, finance, and municipal affairs. Indeed, the components of the project determining success or failure were in the spheres of foreign affairs and finance. In this context, for projects that require significant coordination across several Ministries, as well as require large financial commitments from the government – it would be beneficial for central institutions such as the Deputy Prime Minister’s Office or Prime Minister’s Office to play a greater role.

This complexity of institutional mandates underlines the importance of having a functioning Inter-Agency Committee on implementation of Stockholm Convention (SC) which would facilitate stakeholder engagement and coordination, achieving collective decision making on key issues, as well as resolving key issues related to regulatory jurisdiction and authority. This Committee is a key government body responsible for overseeing the management of chemicals under the SC obligations. This body represents a great platform for facilitating institutional stakeholder engagement and coordination at a high government level but also to increase the visibility of the project.

Going forward, this area will benefit from stronger leadership and more effective coordination.

- First, Inter-Agency Committee needs to be strengthened and given the necessary resources and authority to exercise its mandate. The Committee should be given strong secretarial support and its work should be underpinned by a clear work plan – this function could be played by the roadmap mentioned above.
- Second, the government could designate a high-level official who has the authority to convene all relevant parties and make crucial decisions in cooperation with colleagues in all relevant areas (environment, safety, health, finance, etc.). This official could chair the Inter-Agency Committee and could be held accountable for progress in this area.
- Third, if a clear vision is developed on this process – as mentioned in the recommendation above – and if the necessary decisions to be issued by the government are identified clearly, the high-level official (champion of this matter) could exercise his/her authority to ensure that all the required decisions are taken in a timely manner.

Management response: Accepted. UNDP will request the Government to nominate a high-level official to the Inter-Agency Committee on implementation of Stockholm Convention (SC) iACISC (assuming the Government accepts this recommendation). The roadmap will be also shared with the iACISC for enhanced intersectoral coordination for future actions to address the Nubarashen POP/OPs waste.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Send a letter to the Government requesting to designate a high-level official to sit in the Inter-Agency Committee on Implementation of Stockholm Convention (iACISC)	10 December 2021	Project team / PMB	The letter will be finalized and sent upon PMB feedback on the TE report	Initiated
3.2 Transfer the project accumulated knowledge on Nubarashen POP/OPs waste and the roadmap on further actions for the waste disposal to the iACISC to be appropriately facilitated.	31 December 2021	Project team / Ministry of Environment		Initiated

Terminal Evaluation Recommendation 4. Continued Role for UNDP

UNDP has become a key stakeholder in this area in Armenia and it is recommended that, given its positioning, it should continue its support on this important matter. Going forward, UNDP should focus on two key matters.

- UNDP should start exploring funding opportunities for further support in this area. Communications with GEF should be maintained on this matter, as GEF now has a vested interest in this area given its long-standing engagement. Also, UNDP could find interest in IFIs, the EU or emerging donors for engagement in this area.
- UNDP should continue its engagement in this area by trying to keep the momentum alive through engagement and advocacy work with the main stakeholders within the Government. UNDP should lobby for strong leadership in this area, for continued action based on the foundations that have been created thus far and for financial commitments by the Government for this important area.

Management response: Accepted. UNDP supports the amendment of respective project produced documents into the proposal for planning the necessary funding for Nubarashen POP/OPs waste disposal in the state budget. Upon availability of funds, the MoE will address the waste cleaning/disposal at full scope. UNDP jointly with the government counterparts will seek for both GEF and non-GEF funding opportunities as co-financing to the state funding as available.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
4.1 UNDP will support the MoE in assurance of state funding, as well as GEF or non-GEF co-financing to address Nubarashen POP/OPs waste elimination works.	31 December 2022	Project team		Initiated

Terminal Evaluation Recommendation 5. Continued Stakeholder Consultations

This project supported stakeholder consultations, which were important given the nature of the project – with potentially negative impacts on human health and the environment. Given that the disposal has not been addressed definitely yet, it will be important to maintain stakeholder engagement. This work should be grounded on a clear plan and strategy, whose development can be supported by the Project Team before the closure of the project. Furthermore, UNDP has a lot of experience with information and awareness-raising campaigns, so it can provide substantive support in this area.

Management response: Accepted. As indicated under the Management Response to the TE recommendation #1, the package of documents will be made available for state funding proposal to address the Nubarashen POP/OPs waste. The roadmap will also be transferred to the iACISC. This will sustain the stakeholder engagement beyond the project completion.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
5.1 UNDP will support promoting the inclusion of Nubarashen POP/OPs waste disposal state budget application in the Government's 2022–2024 Medium-term Expenditures Framework (a preceding phase for consideration of state funding allocation). Respective roles and engagement of stakeholder institutions will be assigned in this Framework.	31 December 2022	Project team / Ministry of Environment		Initiated