

Annex VI. Terms of Reference of the evaluation

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Evaluation of the project

“Strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin” funded by the Government of Finland

I. Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is to review the implementation and assess the extent to which the objective of “Strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin” project (hereinafter “Project”) was achieved. The evaluation will assess the *relevance* of the projects for the beneficiary countries, *effectiveness* in reaching relevant outcomes, *efficiency* in the use of human and staff resources in reaching project objectives, *sustainability* of UNECE’s work in and *impact* on strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin. The results of the evaluation will support improvement of the future technical cooperation projects and activities implemented by UNECE. The results of the evaluation will be important for the discussion with donors and partner organizations for any future work by UNECE in the Central Asia region and beyond

II. Scope

The evaluation will be guided by the objective, outcomes, activities and indicators of achievement established in the logical framework of the project document. The evaluation will consider to what extent the project (a) strengthened institutional framework and expert network for bilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and (b) provided substantive and policy-relevant information for bilateral cooperation on hydrology and environment between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The evaluation will cover the full period of implementation from September 2015 to December 2018.

The evaluation will assess how gender considerations were included the projects’ design, execution and results. It will make recommendations on how gender can be included in the design of future projects in UNECE.

The full project documentation includes project design, monitoring reports, progress reports to donors, partnership arrangements with relevant actors. All relevant information will be made available, including documentation and interviews, activities of partner organizations, any previous relevant reviews or evaluations conducted, and any other information which pertains to UNECE efforts in the successful execution of the project will be included in the evaluation.

III. Background

Amu Darya is the largest river of Central Asia with a total length of nearly 2500 km and the drainage basin covering 0.5 million sq.km. Most of the river flow comes from the mountains of Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Environmental conditions of the Amu Darya upstream watershed, including state of glaciers and snow, vegetation, soil cover and human activities are important determinants of water flow and its quality. Growing population, agricultural, infrastructural and industrial development projects as well as global environmental challenges - such as climate change - are among the key factors influencing environmental conditions in the upper Amu Darya basin. The adequate knowledge and sharing of

information about natural resources and hazards are important for the sustainable development of both countries. In the case of the upper part of Amu Darya there is a lack of intergovernmental framework between the riparian states to facilitate proper governance of the river basin. As a consequence, the transboundary water management policies of the countries are lacking any formal agreement and are promoted without sufficient knowledge of the state, availability and quality of water resources, including flow forecast and flood control.

The project enabled the environment for wider transboundary natural resources cooperation in the upper Amudarya basin between riparian states. It has strengthened cooperation between Tajikistan and Afghanistan for the collection, exchange and dissemination of information on hydrology and environment in the basin and thus improving understanding of the need to better manage shared water and natural resources. Further, the two countries established a working group for hydrology cooperation. Through bilateral meetings countries agreed on initial activities in the area of hydrology that were reflected in the joint work plans and included: hydrological monitoring, disaster preparedness and risk reduction, biodiversity protection, glacier lakes monitoring and capacity building needs assessment. Bilateral trainings focused on good practices for soil and water management, climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation. Highly important to note activities on strengthening cooperation between the local communities residing in both sides of the river. Thus, two expeditions were organized with Afghan and Tajik participation in the shared basin.

Through the course of project implementation, the security situation in Afghanistan deteriorated which caused delays in the implementation. The final bilateral expert meeting on hydrology and environment cooperation and a training session was planned for November 2017. However, upon request by Tajikistan the meeting took place in May 2018. Therefore, the duration of the project was extended till December 2018 to allow disseminate the results of the project and conduct the project evaluation.

Result 1: Strengthened institutional framework and expert network for bilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan

Indicator 1 in the Logframe: *Strengthened mandate for the environmental work of the TTF has been agreed upon*

The draft MoU on environmental cooperation was developed in consultation with relevant national stakeholders in both countries including the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of both countries. The MoU provides legal basis for the states to strengthen cooperation in the area through: information exchange; conducting regular meetings; development and implementing joint projects; conducting joint monitoring activities; raising public awareness of the issues pertaining to the basin. The signing of MoU was planned to take place in November 2017 during a high-level meeting official of Afghanistan and Tajikistan. However, on the request by Tajikistan the meeting was cancelled. As of July 2018, Tajikistan is still undergoing internal procedures that are required to get governmental endorsement to sign the MoU. As it was pointed out above this is maybe due to a higher-level concern for broadening the formal cooperation with Afghanistan.

Indicator 2 in the Logframe: *Annual bilateral meetings of TTF have become a regular feature of cooperation*

Bilateral meetings played important role providing venue for maintaining the dialogue, setting the scene, identifying common concerns and emerging issues. Experts from the countries considered issues like: reviewing the progress on implementation of bilateral agreement on hydrology cooperation; problems related to hydrology information exchange; jointly developing the cooperation programme; etc. The project also supported bilateral meetings between the local communities settled along the river banks.

Indicator 3 in the Logframe: *Work programme(s) for the TTF prepared jointly*

Thus, the technical working group on information sharing (TWG) was established in 2014. It included representatives from the ministries and agencies from both countries. During the period from 2014 to 2018 three meetings of the TWG were held. The Tajik Hydromet Agency data on hydrology is shared regularly with Afghan counterparts while the information flow from Afghanistan to Tajikistan is less regular. In June 2018 the bilateral meeting reviewed the progress of the MoU on hydrology and updated the Work Plan for 2018-2020. The revised Work Plan includes areas: research and monitoring of glaciers and snow cover, early warning and disaster preparedness; developing of a platform for information and data sharing.

Result 2: Substantive and policy-relevant information for bilateral cooperation on hydrology and environment between Afghanistan and Tajikistan available

Indicator 1 in the Logframe: Road-map for improved information and its dissemination available

The road map for sharing and distribution of environmental information, including indicator-based assessments on the state of the environment and a concept note for the establishment and development of an online platforms for the exchange of information on environment and water were developed. Both documents lay down a solid base for future activities to improve bilateral information management over the Pyanj River basin.

Indicator 2 in the Logframe: Existing/collected information made available in different forms and platforms (printed, web)

A bulletin on a joint expedition conducted in 2017 was produced and published by Khorog based NGO – Milal-Inter. In addition, the organization developed and published a report entitled Strengthening Cooperation in the Field of Hydrology and Environment Between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the Basin of Amu Darya/Panj. The report provides an overview of the cooperation between the countries in the Pyanj basin, achieved milestones under the project and recommendations for future actions. The report was shared at the High Level International Conference on International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” that took place in June 2018 in Dushanbe.

Indicator 3 in the Logframe: Jointly prepared/collected data through regular bilateral expert meetings and joint expeditions

In October 2017 hydrology and environment specialists from both countries conducted a hands-on study to identify and discuss issues related to the efficient use of water resources, land use, irrigation practices and biodiversity in the Pyanj river basin. Particularly experts explored the possibility of strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment by installing hydro-posts (water gauging stations) on both sides of the Pyanj River. The expedition visited adjacent settlements and studied how changes to environment (including the effects of global warming) affect the local population’s lives and provided relevant recommendations. An ensuing seminar contributed to the development and finalization of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Afghanistan and Tajikistan cooperation on environment and sustainable management of shared natural resource

Indicator 4 in the Logframe: Training events to facilitate cooperation on selected topics (selection made during project, topics can include hydrology data exchange, joint forecasts and flood warning mechanisms)

There were 3 capacity building events conducted on the subjects: experience exchange on improvement of hydrology monitoring systems and water quality and quantity (October 2016), expedition and a seminar on dialogue and partnership on issues of protection of environment and sustainable use of water resources on the upper Amudarya basin (September 2017); training session on issues of hydrology and environmental monitoring in the upper Amudarya basin (May 2018). A short field visit to two hydro posts (Aivadj and Lower Pyandj) in the Tajikistan territory was organized in October 2016. The field visit focused on identifying technical parameters of measuring equipment needed for both sites. The field visit

was attended by the specialists from the Russian Federation who shared their experience in hydrology monitoring, data and information exchange.

Indicator 5 in the Logframe: *Local web-based platform(s) for information exchange on hydrology and environment established or existing platforms strengthened*

Countries indicated their interest to improve public access and sharing of environmental information accumulated nationally. However, the lack of formal intergovernmental agreement on information sharing made it difficult to agree on a country to host the website.

IV. Issues

The evaluation will answer the following questions:

Relevance

1. How relevant was the project to the national needs and priorities of beneficiary countries?
2. How relevant was the design of the projects, in line with the achievements and outcomes of other initiatives, such as ADB project entitled Water Resources Management in Pyanj River Basin, UNECE project on support of Chu-Talas cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and other relevant projects and programmes in the region?
3. To what extent was the project design and development interventions relevant for meeting the project objective?
4. To what extent the project was relevant to the UNECE UNECE regular programme of work?

Effectiveness

1. To what extent were the expected accomplishments (outcomes) of the projects achieved?
2. What were the challenges/obstacles to achieving the project objective and expected accomplishments (outcomes)?
3. Has the project contributed to improving joint and sustainable transboundary management of water resources and the environment in the upper Amu Darya River basin?
4. Has the project improved capacity of key stakeholders to strengthen transboundary water cooperation?
5. To what extent were the planned activities sufficient to achieve the expected accomplishments (outcomes) and project objective?
6. To what extent implementation of the project supported the expected accomplishments of theof the UNECE regular programme of work under the Subprogramme 1 “Environment”?
7. To what extent the implementation of the project contributed to the overall objective of the Water Convention?

Efficiency

1. Were the available resources appropriate to the scale of the project and the needs identified by beneficiary countries?
2. Were the human and financial resources allocated to the project used efficiently and commensurate to the project results?
3. Were the resources (financial and human) appropriate to the design of the project?
4. Were the activities implemented according to the planned timeframe?

Sustainability

1. To what extent will the results of the project continue after completion of the project in the beneficiary countries?

2. Do each of the two countries have a plan for further cooperation to support strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin?
3. Were the measures to enhance sustainability of project results given sufficient attention during the preparation and implementation phases?

Impact

1. To what extent have the project impacted on the legal framework challenge of transboundary water and environment cooperation between the riparian states?
2. To what extent the project impacted effective decision-making and information exchange between Afghanistan and Tajikistan?

I. Methodology

The methodology for the evaluation will include the following:

1. Desk study of project materials: all relevant project documents, including project descriptions, reports, publications, etc. and other information will be provided to the evaluator.
2. Interview with key stakeholders (face-to-face, via telephone and skype) including: Committee of Environment Protection of Tajikistan and its Hyrdoromet Agency, Ministry of Energy and Water Resources of Afghanistan, OSCE Center in Dushanbe, UNDP Tajikistan Country Office, Zoi International Network
3. Some of the interviews, particular with representatives of water management authorities from Tajikistan and Afghanistan, will be conducted by the evaluator at the FIN Water Regional Conference planned for 28-29 September 2018 (Issyk-Kul). In addition, the event will provide an opportunity to meet and discuss the project implementation and results with donor and partner organizations dealing with the water management issues in the region.
4. Interviews with key stakeholders to take place during the workshop, via skype/telephone (list of contacts to be provided).
5. An electronic survey of internal and external stakeholders, conducted in both English and Russian.

UNECE will provide all documentation, support and guidance to the evaluation consultant as needed throughout the timeline of the evaluation. The consultant shall be provided with the UNECE Evaluation Policy, evaluation report templates and checklists as guidance for the requirements for evaluation reports in UNECE.

The evaluation report of maximum 15-20 pages will summarize the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation. An executive summary (max. 2 pages) will summarize the methodology of the evaluation, key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the UNECE Evaluation Policy. The consultant shall be provided the evaluation report templates and guidance for the requirements for evaluation reports in UNECE. The evaluation will comply with the UNEG Norms and Standards, including due consideration of the gender aspects of the project's design and implementation. UNECE will provide all documentation as needed throughout the timeline of the evaluation. UNECE will provide support and further explanation to the evaluator as needed.

Based on these terms of reference the evaluation consultant will write a report of maximum 15 pages (plus possible annexes such as interview summaries) with a 2-page self-standing executive summary of the evaluation results.

II. Evaluation Schedule

The evaluation schedule follows:

1. Desk review of all documents provided by UNECE to the Consultant 1-15 September 2018
2. Developing and preparing interviews 15-24 September 2018
3. Participation in Issyk-Kul workshop, interviews 28-29 September 2018
4. Follow-up skype interviews and studies 1-15 October 2018
5. Delivery of Draft Report 30 October 2018
6. Comments back to the evaluator after review by project manager and selected project participants 20 November 2018
7. Delivery Final Report 20 December 2018

III. Resources

Resources available for the evaluation is \$10,000 inclusive of all costs.

The Project Manager (Batyra Hajiyev) will manage and provide guidance during the course of the evaluation. The Programme Management Unit (PMU) will provide guidance to the Project Manager and evaluator as needed on the evaluation design, methodology and quality assurance of the final draft report.

IV. Intended Use/Next Steps

The evaluation will be consistent with the UNECE Evaluation Policy. Following the receipt of the final report, UNECE will develop a management response, and action plan for addressing recommendations made by the consultant. The results of the evaluation shall be considered, together with other project evaluations conducted during 2018, by senior management in UNECE to address systemic inefficiencies or challenges to effective project implementation in UNECE.

V. Criteria for Evaluators

Evaluators should have:

- An advanced university degree or equivalent background in relevant to the projects disciplines;
- Minimum 10 years of relevant experience. Working experience related to projects or issues in water management in Central Asia is highly desirable;
- Specialized training in areas such as evaluation, project management, social statistics, advanced statistical research and analysis;
- Demonstrated relevant professional experience in design, management and conduct of evaluation processes with multiple stakeholders, survey design and implementation, and project planning, monitoring and management;
- Demonstrated methodological knowledge of evaluations, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for end-of-cycle project evaluations;
- Fluent in written and spoken English and Russian.
- Good computer skills (especially Microsoft office applications).

Evaluators should declare any conflict of interest to UNECE before embarking on an evaluation project, and at any point where such conflict occurs.

Annex: Project documents