

## **Terms of Reference for the Evaluation of the Project 1213AA**

### **Strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate legitimate border crossing, regional cooperation and integration**

#### **I. Background**

Despite a number of international agreements, border crossing remains a major obstacle to the transport of goods. Developing countries and countries with economies in transition could benefit from increased and more secure international inland transport. The lack of effective and efficient risk assessment methods remains one of the key factors leading to long waiting times at border crossings and the use of customs escorts.

Currently, the supply chain is largely computerized but customs mostly rely on paper documents to obtain the information required for the assessment of risks. Often countries still rely on regulations, procedures, as well as data and technical requirements which are not internationally harmonized.

To respond to these challenges, UNECE, - in cooperation with ESCAP, ESCWA, ECA and ECLAC, - developed the project *Strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate legitimate border crossing, regional cooperation and integration* with the aim to improve legitimate border crossing by facilitating the exchange of information between customs administrations and by means of secure information and communication technologies.

This United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project includes six activities consisting of, *inter alia*, a number of inter-regional and national workshops, expert groups and seminars, technical assistance to national experts, and the development and deployment of an IT exchange platform, which allows the secure exchange of electronic transit-related data between customs administrations.

The pilot countries, i.e. Georgia, Morocco (and other Arab Maghreb Union – UMA – countries), Tunisia (and other parties to the Agadir Agreement), Kyrgyzstan and Costa Rica, were selected in consultation with other regional commissions on the basis of gap analyses prepared by independent consultants. The project started at the beginning of 2013 and is expected to be finalized by 30 June 2016.

#### **II. Purpose**

The purpose of this evaluation is to review the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the project *Strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate legitimate border crossing, regional cooperation and integration*, with a particular focus on the development and tailoring of methods and technology for information exchange between national customs offices in the pilot countries selected under this project. The results of the evaluation will be used for similar projects in the future.

### III. Scope

The evaluation will focus on results obtained in the pilot countries and the neighbouring countries which took part in the capacity building activities. It will also consider the impact on other countries that benefited from the project, including by having access to the project results and by taking part in the project workshops and Seminar for the Promotion of Electronic Exchange of Customs Information and the Adoption of Standard Electronic Messages.

The evaluation will cover the full project implementation period, from January 2013 until its expected finalization in June 2016.

The scope of the review shall be limited to the activities described in the project document of the project, as approved by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

The evaluation will assess activities covering the following thematic areas addressed by UNECE: customs transit procedures, trade and transport facilitation as well as C2C electronic data exchange.

Gender and human rights aspects will be also covered by the evaluation, taking into account guidance provided by the United Nations Evaluation Group on the matter (available at <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/980> and <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1452>).

### IV. Issues

The evaluation will seek to report on the *effectiveness* of the project in achieving its objectives and its *sustainability*; the *efficiency* of the project, in particular to evaluate how the inputs and resources were utilized in achieving the outputs, and the *relevance* of the project to the priorities and needs of its recipients and the consistency with the attainment of its overall objective. Key questions that the evaluation seeks to answer include:

#### *Effectiveness*

1. To what extent the objective of the project was achieved?
  - 1.1. How did the project contribute to the facilitation of legitimate trade and transport from and to developing countries with economies in transition?
  - 1.2. How did the project increase cooperation between Customs authorities and C2C electronic information exchange?
2. To what extent the expected accomplishments of the project were achieved? In particular:
  - 2.1. To what extent did the project increase the capacity of the five pilot countries to exchange secure electronic C2C transit information with trade partners?
  - 2.2. To what extent did the project increase the capacity of the five pilot countries and their neighbouring countries in utilizing international standard electronic messages in the field of transit procedures, in particular B2C information?

3. To what extent the planned activities contributed to achieving the objective and the expected accomplishments?
  - 3.1. How did the first inter-regional Expert Group meeting contributed to the assessment of the legal and technical needs of candidate developing countries and countries with economies in transition to extend the exchange of electronic information with other countries?
  - 3.2. In what way were the linkages with major existing national and regional computerized systems assessed and explored?
  - 3.3. To what extent did the project develop and deploy a secure C2C versatile electronic exchange platform as planned?
  - 3.4. To what extent the technical assistance to national experts in at least five pilot countries contributed to link national or regional Customs IT systems to the C2C exchange platform or helped to develop Action Plans to set out the steps needed to introduce a new C2C platform to exchange information and ensure its sustainability over time?
  - 3.5. How did the five technical workshops help to build capacity of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to maximize the benefits offered by the C2C exchange platform, to increase the exchange of electronic information with neighbouring countries and to adopt international standards for electronic messages?
  - 3.6. To what extent did the second inter-regional expert Group Meeting succeeded in evaluating the results achieved in the five pilot countries?
  - 3.7. How and to what extent did the seminar help to promote the C2C electronic exchange of transit data and the adoption of standard electronic messages?
4. What were the challenges/obstacles to achieving the expected results?
5. What has prevented to achieve the desired results?

#### *Sustainability*

6. Could the results be further sustained?
  - 6.1. In particular, to what extent will the benefits of the project continue after completion and without overburdening recipient countries and stakeholders?
  - 6.2. How is the stakeholders engagement likely to continue, be scaled up, replicated or institutionalized after funding ceases? In case, how will the capacity built to ensure that institutions will take over and sustain the benefits?
  - 6.3. To what extent do the partners and beneficiaries 'own' the outcomes of the work?
  - 6.4. How has the project built in resilience to future risks?
  - 6.5. What were the major factors which influence the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the project?
  - 6.6. How will the established electronic exchange platform be easily maintained at the end of the project by means of a minimal fee-per-use? How will the project

bring more countries to exchange transit data electronically on the basis of international standards?

6.7. How will the project pave the way for the full computerization of international transit procedures such as the TIR procedure?

### *Efficiency*

7. Were the resources sufficient for achieving the results? Were the results commensurate with the resources?
8. Were the results achieved on time?
9. Were all activities organized efficiently and on time?
10. To what extent the resources were used economically? How could the use of resources been improved?
11. Where there any alternatives to achieve the same results? If yes, which ones?
12. Was the project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives? In particular, how do the costs and use of resources compare with other similar projects (within UNECE or by other UN agencies)?
13. How was the difference between planned and actual expenditure justified (if any)?

### *Relevance*

14. To what extent did the project respond to the priorities and needs of the beneficiary countries? How relevant was it to the target groups' needs and priorities?
15. To what extent is the project aligned with the policies and strategies of the recipient pilot countries?
16. How relevant was the project for the regions' needs and priorities?
17. What is the relevance of the project for the work of 5 Regional Comissions?
18. To what extent are the objectives of the project still valid? How can the project be replicated in other contexts?
19. To what extent are the activities and outputs of the project consistent with and relevant to the overall objective and expected accomplishments?

20. To what extent are the activities and outputs of the project consistent with and relevant to the intended impacts and effects?

## V. Methodology

The evaluation will be carried out based on an extensive review of relevant literature on the problem addressed as well as the project documentation as well as on questionnaires and interviews targeting project beneficiaries, project focal points in regional commissions, consultants and focal points in pilot countries.

*Desk review of the following project documents:*

- Project documents;
- Progress reports;
- Project output (e.g. gap analyses of the candidate countries, events agendas/programs, presentations, documents as well as conclusions and recommendations, evaluations report of the events, Action Plans, pilot projects documentation, etc.).
- Review of similar projects

### *Questionnaires and interviews*

Tailored questionnaires and interviews will be used to collect information from the following stakeholders:

- Project focal points/Customs administrations in pilot countries;
- Consultants which have been involved in the preparation and deliver of the project activities;
- Project focal points in all Regional Commissions;
- Participants in events (including when possible representatives of member states and international and non-governmental organizations) .

The questionnaire will use a combination of closed and open questions and will be distributed in English. For the analysis, both quantitative and qualitative methods will be used accordingly.

A series of interviews with the involved stakeholder will be conducted to further explore responses for the questionnaire. The interviews will take place by phone or Skype.

Information about the project administration can be obtained from the project manager or other relevant UNECE transport division staff.

## VI. Evaluation Schedule

<b>Task</b>	<b>Information</b>	<b>Time/Deadline</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Preparation of the evaluation	Project document	Nov. 2015- Apr. 2016	Terms of Reference for the Evaluation	Project manager

			(ToR)	
Hiring of the Consultant	ToR	31 May 2016	Selection of the Consultant; Consultancy contract signed.	Project manager
Preliminary research	Documents available on project website	30 June 2016	Desk study	Consultant
Data Collection	Interviews and questionnaires; ToR	15 July 2016	Questionnaires completed; transcription/summary of interviews	Consultant
Data Analysis and Draft Report	Desk Studies, completed questionnaires, summary of interviews	15 August 2016	Draft evaluation report	Consultant
Comments on draft report	Draft evaluation report; ToR	15 August 2016	Commented draft evaluation report	Project manager
Final Report	Draft evaluation report with comments from the project manager	15 September 2016	Final evaluation report	Consultant

## VII. Resources

The evaluation will be completed by an external independent consultant in line with the schedule detailed under chapter VI (maximum budget for the evaluation: USD 14,700). The project manager will prepare, manage and comment the evaluation. Project focal points (in pilot countries and in other RC) will respond to questionnaires and (when necessary) take part in interviews.

## VIII. Intended Use/Next Steps

The evaluation will be used to ensure that this project will provide maximum benefits to the pilot countries and other relevant stakeholders, to organize follow-up activities and to improve the preparation, planning and implementations of future similar projects. The evaluation report will be posted on the UNECE website.

## IX. Criteria for Evaluators

Evaluators should have:

- An advanced university degree or equivalent background in relevant disciplines, with specialized training in areas such as evaluation, project management, social statistics, advanced statistical research and analysis.

- Good knowledge of and experience in inland transport, possibly with knowledge of border crossing related issues
- Relevant professional experience in design and management 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.
- Working languages (written and spoken proficiency): English and French.

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