

**Final evaluation of UNECE UNDA project "[Strengthening national capacities for sustainable housing and urban development in countries with economies in transition](#)"
(UN Development Account, 9th tranche, [project code 1415AC](#)¹)**

EVALUATION REPORT

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Executive summary

The Project demonstrated it was relevant to the needs of the beneficiary countries as it supported building capacity of authorities working to address challenges of the deteriorating housing stock, underdeveloped rental markets and limited availability of social housing. The Project has effectively delivered more capacity-building outputs than initially planned as manifested by their outcomes in terms of the National Action Plans finalized and acted upon by the National Legislatures and Governments along with skills acquired and used by the beneficiaries. The efficiency of the Project's implementation was enhanced by the cost savings realized through its emphasis on partnerships with international, regional and national developmental organizations and agencies and mobilizing contributions in kind through those partnerships. While the full impact of the Project is hard to assess quantitatively at this junction, the available evidence such as NAPs adopted and laws enacted subsequent to them in Serbia and preparations for the NAPs' adoption started in Armenia, Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan, follow-up projects engendered by this Project and Guidelines and Lessons learned created allow to conclude that this Project made a significant step forward in the capacity development of beneficiaries especially taking into account that its impact is cumulative with the impacts of the predecessor and successor UNDA projects in this thematic area. The sustainability of its outcomes and impact should be enhanced by support to the implementation of the NAPs within the follow up, UNDA 10th tranche project as well as by employing more actively the online resources and dedicated web space for safeguarding its institutional memory.

¹ <http://www.un.org/esa/devaccount/projects/2014/1415AC.html>

The report contains four recommendations.

I. Introduction

1. This evaluation was commissioned by the Forests, Land and Housing Division of UNECE to fulfil the requirement that all projects funded by the UN Development Account have to undergo an end of project terminal evaluation and was conducted in accordance with the [UNECE Evaluation Policy](#) (October 2014) and the Terms of Reference as approved by the Head of the Programme Management Unit.

2. The subject of the evaluation is the UNDA Project "[Strengthening national capacities for sustainable housing and urban development in countries with economies in transition](#)"² that belongs to the 9th tranche of the [UN Development Account](#)³ which is a capacity development programme of the UN Secretariat aiming at enhancing capacities of relevant countries in the priority areas of the UN Development Agenda.

3. The scope of evaluation focused on the **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability** of the Project with emphasis on the assessment of the extent to which its expected accomplishments were realized. It took in consideration the factors that contributed to the results, whether intended or unintended, including: how well the activities were designed and implemented; what outputs were delivered; how processes were managed; what monitoring systems were put in place; and how the Project interacted with national partners and key stakeholders.

4. The Project is the precursor to the UNDA's 10th tranche project "[Evidence-based policies for sustainable housing and urban development in selected countries with economies in transition](#)"⁴ as they rely on the same pivotal tool of the UNECE Country Profiles on housing and land management that are employed in developing the capacities of the transition economies for formulating and implementing the evidence-based policies, including data collection and analysis, in achieving inclusive and sustainable housing and urban habitat.

II. Subject of the evaluation

5. The project [Strengthening national capacities for sustainable housing and urban development in countries with economies in transition](#) (hereafter referred to as "the Project") had the lifespan of close to 4 years (from March 2014 to the end of 2017) and the total funding of US\$533,000. The total funding for 46 projects of tranche 9 amounts to US\$28,298,800⁵; thus the project under evaluation (hereafter referred to as the Project) comprised, financially, 1.9 per cent of tranche 9 and was about 15% smaller than the average size of a project of this tranche. The budget of the Project comprises about 27% of the overall resources of UNECE Subprogramme 8 "Housing, land

² <http://www.un.org/esa/devaccount/projects/2014/1415AC.html>

³ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/da/>

⁴ See [A/70/6 \(Sect. 35\)](#) of 29 April 2015, page 69

⁵ See A/64/89 of 12 June 2009, Table 1.

management and population” for 2014-2017 and stands at the level of 12.4% of its regular budget funding⁶ in the same two biennia. The breakdown of the Project’s budget was as follows (in thousands of US\$): General temporary assistance - 20.0 or 3.8% of the total; Consultants - 160.8 or 30.2%; Travel 87.0 - or 16.3% of the total; Contractual services - 42.0 or 7.9%; Operating expenses 8.0 or 1.5% of the total; and Workshops/training - 215.2 or 40.3% of the total.

6. The UNECE implementing partner – UN-Habitat - was allotted US\$69,000 but eventually used about 87% of this financial allotment. However, the UN-Habitat Moscow Office, working with different experts at UN-Habitat HQ in Nairobi depending on the needs in one or another Project country, complemented the project budget with its own considerable resources in kind, estimated during the project period of at least 100,000 USD, including its staff time, consultants work and travel.

7. The project was expected to attain the following three accomplishments⁷:

- Strengthened national capacity of beneficiary countries to develop policies for sustainable housing as measured by the National Action Plans for the implementation of sustainability measures in the residential sector in beneficiary countries being elaborated by the interministerial Steering Committees in cooperation with stakeholders and adopted by the Governments.
- Strengthened national capacity of beneficiary countries to implement policies for sustainable housing through inter-ministerial coordination as evidenced by the number of NAPs actually launched in the beneficiary countries and reflected in the end-Project policy paper that summarizes the lessons learned and best practices identified in the exercise.
- Strengthened national capacity of other countries in the ECE region to develop policies for sustainable housing through application of the project’s lessons learned”

8. These expected accomplishments were envisaged to be achieved through the delivery of **twenty-two** outputs: **four** national workshops to provide training in sustainable housing; **four** advisory missions on the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committees on the content and structure of the National Action Plans (NAPs); development of NAPs for sustainability measures in the residential sector in the **four** beneficiary countries in consultation with the inter-ministerial coordination group members; **four** national validation workshops with members of Steering Committees and relevant stakeholders in each beneficiary country to review draft chapters of the respective National Action Plans; **four** national workshops in the beneficiary countries to launch the national action plans, provide training and share best practices on implementation and monitoring of implementation of the action plans; development of the **policy paper** with best practices, lessons learned and guidelines on the preparation and implementation of National Action Plans for Sustainable Housing; and **one** concluding regional meeting to facilitate sharing lessons learned on the preparation and follow-up of national action plans and the

⁶ See [A/70/6\(sect.20\)](#), page 46, Table 20.26

⁷ See [A/68/6 \(Sect. 35\)](#) of 30 April 2013, "Programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015, Section 35 , Development Account " page 78-80

set-up of inter-ministerial Steering Committees between the beneficiary countries and other countries in the region.⁸

III. Evaluation methodology

9. This evaluation' methodology is guided by the UNECE "[Evaluation Policy](#)" (2014)⁹ and United Nations Evaluation Group's (UNEG) "[Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#)" (2016)¹⁰. Consequently, the following evaluation criteria undergirded this exercise:

- **Relevance:** the extent to which the outputs and outcomes of the Project correspond to the needs and problems of its beneficiaries.
- **Effectiveness:** the extent to which the Project has attained its envisaged objectives and fulfilled its expected results.
- **Efficiency:** an assessment of how well (how economically) resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) were converted into outputs.
- **Sustainability:** the factor that signifies that the overall impact of an output or of the sum of outputs will prevail in the foreseeable future and that its positive influence would be a lasting one.

10. To ensure that the objectives and activities of the Project correlate with the broader thrust of the relevant programmatic activities of UNECE, the evaluation used as the points of reference the following documents that enumerate the expected accomplishments, indicators and outputs of the Project and place it in a broader programmatic context:

- "Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015, Section 35, Development Account", Annex AC. "Strengthening national capacities for sustainable housing in selected countries with economies in transition", [A/68/6 \(Sect. 35\)](#) of 30 April 2013, page 78-80;
- "Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015, Section 20, Economic development in Europe", Subprogramme 8. Housing, land management and population ", [A/68/6 \(Sect. 20\)](#) of 12 April 2013, page 54-56;
- "Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, Section 20, Economic development in Europe", Subprogramme 8. Housing, land management and population ", [A/70/6 \(Sect. 20\)](#) of 6 April 2015, page 43-45;
- The [Project page](#) at the UNECE Project Management Tool¹¹;
- The [Project's page](#) on the UN Development Account website¹²; and
- "Programme performance report of the United Nations for the biennium 2014-2015" [A/71/75](#) of 22 March 2016, pp 189-199.

⁸ See [A/68/6 \(Sect. 35\)](#) of 30 April 2013, page 78

⁹

http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/OPEN_UNECE/03_Evaluation_and_Audit/UNECE_Evaluation_Policy_October_2014.pdf

¹⁰ <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914>

¹¹ <https://www.unece.org/info/open-unece/pmt/regular-budget/1415ac-strengthening-national-capacities-for-sustainable-housing-in-selected-countries-with-economies-in-transition.html>

¹² <http://www.un.org/esa/devaccount/projects/2014/1415AC.html>

11. The evaluation used the adopted logical framework of the Project as both its *prima facie* benchmark and yardstick in assessing its performance. Project results were assessed on the basis of the following definitions:

- **Output:** A final product or service delivered by a programme or project to end users, such as reports and publications, which a project is expected to produce in order to achieve its expected accomplishments and objectives.
- **Outcome:** The measurable accomplishment or result (intended or unintended, positive or negative) of a programme or project. In UN usage, “outcome” is synonymous with accomplishment and result.
- **Impact:** The overall effect of accomplishing specific results. Impact is the longer-term or ultimate effect attributable to a programme or project, in contrast with an expected accomplishment and output, which are geared to the biennial time frame.

12. Regarding data collection, three conventional methods were used: (a) desk review of pertinent documentation both at the core and on the periphery of the Project; (b) online survey of the Project’s beneficiaries and stakeholders; (c) interviews in person with stakeholders of the Project, management and staff of the HLMU. All these methods and data comprise the records of this evaluation with clear audit trails. The evaluator also took advantage of the direct observation method by participating in the 78th session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management and Ministerial Meeting (8 - 10 November 2017, Geneva, Switzerland) and in the final regional workshop of the UNDA 9th tranche project “Strengthening national capacities for sustainable housing and urban development in countries with economies in transition” (10 November 2017, Geneva, Switzerland).

13. The initial desk review of all the web-based and hard copy publications and records pertaining to the Project was aimed at accumulating the sum of knowledge specific to the Project. It also served to formulate the informed and specific questions regarding the outcomes and impact of the outputs delivered. The evaluation used the [Google Forms](#) standard design for the online survey of the Project’s beneficiaries and stakeholders. They were administered to forty-four beneficiaries and stakeholders of the Project whose email addresses were made available to the evaluator by the management of the Project. The online survey was administered both in English and Russian for the convenience of the respondents. Fourteen responses were received which amounts to the response rate of 32%. Given that in general the response rate of the external¹³ surveys is always lower than the one for internal and averages around 10-15%¹⁴, this outcome was adequate for gleaning the beneficiaries’ views of the Project especially when supplemented by the records of the interviews. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with sixteen people listed in Annex 4.

¹³ That is those that are administered to an independent audience as was the case here. The internal surveys of a captive and motivated audience (such as employees at a seminar, for example, generally receive 30-40% average survey rate).

¹⁴ See “[3 Ways to Improve Your Survey Response Rates](#)”

14. Regarding the limitations and challenges, it should be underscored that this evaluation is not a comprehensive assessment of all the outcomes and the totality of impact of outputs produced by the Project and of the aggregate effectiveness of all its procedures and processes. Rather, it is a reasonably close approximation not only due to the time and resource limits and need for outcomes and impact to further gestate but also because it was possible to adduce the performance evidence on some but not all its outputs and procedures. Therefore, it focuses primarily on those elements considered of greatest relevance, by the stakeholders surveyed, for the sound implementation of the Project. The soundness of the evaluation data collection was affected by the unimpressive response rate of the online survey. However, this challenge was offset by the relatively large number of extensive in-person interviews conducted on-site. Access to the beneficiaries in some countries was limited due to logistical and financial reasons and the changes in the political appointments and movements of personnel. Nevertheless, the validity and credibility of evaluative analysis and findings was reasonably assured.

15. Overall, from the standpoint of this evaluator's experience, the limitations to this evaluation exercise were comparatively minimal mostly due to the forthcoming and cooperative attitude of the management and staff of the HLMU.

IV. Findings

(a) Relevance

16. In assessing the relevance of the Project, it should be recalled that the Terms of Reference for this evaluation require that the following four questions be answered:

- How relevant was the project to the needs and priorities of the beneficiary countries?
- Have the beneficiary Governments referred to the National Action Plans in improving their legislation, institutional framework, policies and projects on housing and urban development?
- Do Governments rate the developed National Action Plans as useful in promoting inter-ministerial cooperation?
- Are there any issues or topics that are not currently being addressed by the National Action Plans/but it would be useful to address?

17. In regard to the first question, it should be underscored that the Project was relevant to the needs of the beneficiary countries as they cope with the intertwined challenges of the deteriorating housing stock, underdeveloped rental markets and limited availability of social housing coupled with limited capacity of formulating and implementing practical and potent government policies aimed at achieving sustainable, inclusive housing offering a choice of housing types and tenures at reasonable cost. The capacity development thrust of the Project was aimed at tackling this challenge in partnership with all key stakeholders, national, regional and international. There was consensus between the beneficiary countries that the chosen instrument in addressing this conundrum was the formulation of the National Action Plans for Sustainable Housing, which will outline the reforms of the beneficiary countries' housing sectors along with building national capacities in formulating and implementing the sustainable housing policies at different levels of governance. Developing NAPs became the core deliverable of the Project.

18. The relevance of the Project was reinforced by the fact that it was informed by the strategic analysis and specific conclusions and policy recommendations of the UNECE Country Profiles on the Housing Sector. The Project was equally pertinent to building up the ability of the beneficiary countries to face such pressing housing challenges as lack of expertise of the governments in strategic planning of housing and urban development, insufficient policy coordination between stakeholders at national and subnational levels, underdeveloped rental markets, low housing affordability due to a limited provision of social housing and subsidy systems, and low standards of energy efficiency in housing.

19. Furthermore, the relevance of the Project was corroborated by the opinion of the majority - 86% - of the respondents to the online survey that the needs of their government/department were fully taken into account in formulating and implementing the Project completely or to a decisive degree.

20. The relevance of the Project was heightened by the logical framework and deliverables of the Project being in close concert with the goals of the UNECE Subprogramme 8 (Housing, Land Management and Population) of the Strategic Framework for 2014 – 2015¹⁵ and 2016-2017¹⁶ such as improving capacity for policy formulation and implementation in housing, planning and land administration in the UNECE member countries and strengthening implementation by them of the ECE guidelines on housing and land management, including on energy efficiency, informal settlements, transparency in land and real estate markets and on improved safety in buildings.

21. In regard to the second question, the situation varies among the four beneficiary countries: while in Serbia the NAP was adopted and followed up relatively shortly by Law and administrative issuances, in other countries the process is somewhat slower: the NAP is reportedly scheduled for adoption by the Governments in the next months in Armenia and Tajikistan but its adoption is on hold in Moldova due to the major overhaul of the country's government structure. Evaluation of the role of the NAPs in improving institutional frameworks, policies and projects cannot be performed as yet; this can be assessed in several years after NAPs adoption.

22. Concerning the third question, while there were no official Government's ratings of the usefulness of NAPs *per se*, firstly, the *prima facie* evidence of their usefulness is that without interministerial cooperation the NAPs would not have been formulated, it was specifically for the purpose of preparing the NAPs that the interministerial coordinating committees were created under the aegis of the Project in the first place; secondly, there is sufficient collateral evidence for responding positively to the question. Such evidence includes the following:

- (a) The National Action Plan for Serbia is regularly discussed by the interministerial coordinating committee and amended annually to reflect the changing milestones in the implementation of the country's housing policies. The main result of the implementation of this action plan was the [Law on Housing and Maintenance of Buildings](#), adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia on 22 December 2016.

¹⁵ [A/67/6 \(Prog. 17\)](#)

¹⁶ [A/69/6 \(Prog.17\)](#)

(ii) The National Action Plan developed under the Project was posted on [the website of the State Urban Development Committee of Armenia](#).

(iii) The usefulness of NAPs in promoting interministerial cooperation is evidenced by the interview and online survey responses which stressed that “the Project helped to formulate more comprehensively, more inclusively the tasks that sectoral ministries of the housing sphere face, to approach them from the new point of view”, that “the project reinforced the collaboration and built trust with other agencies as well as countries in the realm of housing policies”, and “new cooperative style now prevails in joint efforts with the partner ministries.

(b) Effectiveness

23. In judging the effectiveness of the Project implementation, this evaluation focused, inter alia, on two questions presented in its TOR:

- To what extent were the expected accomplishments of the project achieved?
- What were the challenges/ obstacles to achieving the project objective and expected accomplishments?

They are addressed in detail below.

24. The departure point for assessing the extent to which the Project has attained its expected accomplishments was taking stock of the outputs actually delivered. As noted above, the Project was envisaged to deliver 22 outputs. The evaluation ascertained that the following 28 outputs were actually delivered in full and on schedule as listed below chronologically:

- 1) Advisory mission to Yerevan, Armenia, 11-17 October 2014 which led to the establishment of the Steering Committee for NAP.
- 2) Workshop [Strengthening National Capacities for Urban Planning, Housing, Energy Efficiency and Disaster Risk Reduction, 13-14 October 2014, Yerevan](#)
- 3) Advisory mission to Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on 26-30 October 2014, back to back with a national workshop which led to the establishment of the Steering Committee for NAP.
- 4) Workshop [Strengthening National Capacities for Sustainable Housing, Energy Efficiency and Urban Planning, 28-29 October 2014, Dushanbe](#)
- 5) Advisory mission to Belgrade, Serbia, on 11-17 November 2014, back to back with the national workshop
- 6) Workshop [Strengthening National Capacities for Sustainable Housing, 12-13 November 2014, Belgrade](#)
- 7) Advisory mission to Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, 10-12 December 2014 which led to the establishment of the Steering Committee for NAP.
- 8) Workshop [Strengthening National Capacities for Urban Planning, Housing, Energy Efficiency and Disaster Risk Reduction](#), 9 April 2015, Yerevan

- 9) Workshop [Strengthening National Capacities for Sustainable Housing, 8-9 September 2015, Chisinau](#)
- 10) Workshop [Strengthening National Capacities for Sustainable Housing, 9-10 November 2015, Belgrade](#)
- 11) Advisory mission to Chisinau, Moldova, 23–26 February 2016 with the tasks of promoting of the Project at the Regular Development Partners Coordination Meeting organized by the UNDP, securing the preparation of the national validation workshop, and further broaching the international and national partnerships network
- 12) Workshop [Strengthening National Capacities for Sustainable Housing, Energy Efficiency and Urban Development based on National Action Plan](#), 26 April 2016, Dushanbe
- 13) [Workshop “Strengthening national capacities for sustainable housing and urban development in countries with economies in transition”](#) 16 September 2016, Geneva
- 14) Advisory mission to Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 6 – 9 November 2016 with the tasks of reviewing the initial draft of the NAP against the “Guidelines on NAP preparation” with the national and international consultant, delineating the priority areas of the NAP, setting up the road map for next steps next steps and their time frame as well as planning of the next workshop.
- 15) Advisory mission to Chisinau, Moldova, 14–17 December 2016 with the tasks of arranging the coordination of preparing the country’s NAP between the newly appointed national consultant for the Project and the main stakeholders – Ministry of Regional Development and Construction and Agency for Land Relations – and to conform the structure and areas to be covered in the NAP with the “Guidelines on NAP preparation”.
- 16) Workshop [Strengthening National Capacities for Sustainable Housing, Urban Development and Land Management: development, implementation and monitoring of the National Action Plans, Belgrade, Serbia, 31 January - 2 February 2017](#)
- 17) Advisory mission to Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 27 February – 3 March 2017 with the tasks of reviewing and editing the first draft of the NAP and appraise its adoption process along with ironing out difficulties in the preparation of the final workshop.
- 18) Workshop [Strengthening National Capacities for Sustainable Housing, Urban Development and Land Management: Third Regional Meeting, 9 March 2017, Geneva, Switzerland](#)
- 19) Workshop [Strengthening national capacities in the area of housing, urban development and land management, 27-28 April 2017, Chisinau, Moldova](#)
- 20) Workshop [Towards strengthening capacities in national urban policy making in CIS region countries ,16 May 2017 Paris, France](#)

- 21) Workshop [Strengthening national capacities in the area of housing, urban development and land management: development, implementation and monitoring of national action plans](#) (24 May 2017, Dushanbe, Tajikistan)
- 22) [Regional meeting on strengthening national capacity for sustainable housing, urban development and land management: development, implementation and monitoring of national action plans](#) (5 October 2017, Chisinau, Moldova)
- 23) [Regional workshop for ECE Region "Building capacity in countries in transition economy in housing and urban development"](#) (10 November 2017, Geneva, Switzerland)
- 24) National Action Plan for Serbia was prepared and adopted in 2016 by the Government. Currently, it is a living document which is being amended and approved annually to reflect the changing context. The main result of the implementation of this action plan was the [Law on Housing and Maintenance of Buildings](#), adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia on 22 December 2016.
- 25) National Action Plan for Armenia was finalized and reviewed by the Government and is expected to be adopted by the State Committee on Urban Development during the first quarter of 2018.
- 26) National Action Plan for Moldova was prepared and scheduled to be adopted by the Government in October 2017 but in early October the Government reform ensued and the adoption was postponed until the date to be determined by the new Government.
- 27) National Action Plan for Tajikistan has been prepared, commented by international experts and is expected to be adopted as an Order by the State Committee on Construction during the first quarter of 2018.
- 28) The Project's overview policy paper comprising best practices, lessons learned and guidelines for the preparation and implementation of National Action Plans for Sustainable Housing is in final draft and is envisaged to be published in February 2018.

25. Thus, the Project delivered six more (or 30 per cent more) outputs than was initially planned and all of its outputs were delivered on schedule except for one which was due to the situation beyond the control of HLMU. Most importantly, the key deliverables of the Project – the NAPs – were delivered in full and on time, one of them (for Serbia) was adopted by the Government, two are scheduled for adoption (Armenia and Tajikistan) and one for Moldova is put on hold due to the large-scale overhaul of its Government which is obviously beyond the control of the HLMU. This attests to the Project's effectiveness in terms of its output delivery.

26. Regarding the effectiveness of attaining the Project accomplishments, in the online feedback from its beneficiaries 86 per cent of them believed that this Project's outputs and support services were delivered timely and reliably and the rest 14% were of the view that it was or almost so, and that these outputs provided all necessary and sufficient knowledge and information required by its beneficiaries and facilitated them retaining it (86% of respondents) while another 7% were of the view that they still required some time and effort on part of the beneficiaries to be absorbed fully

and owned. Further indication of the Project's effectiveness was that all of the respondents – 100% - reported that their participation in implementing the Project had marked and discernible positive impact on its beneficiaries. In particular, they underscored that they “obtained a wider view of existing problems and possible solutions”, “acquired new skills and knowledge as well as connections with international experts”, that this project gave us new ideas to pursue in near future”, “allowed to flesh out a specific component of the national housing policy”, “boosted my professional expertise”, “allowed to define the sequence of actions in resolving the pressing housing problems”, etc. Six of the interviewees echoed this assessment by stressing that the Project helped to formulate more comprehensively, more inclusively the tasks that sectoral ministries of the housing sphere face, to approach them from the new point of view. They were of the view that the methodological guidance and expert assistance received in the course of the Project regarding drafting the National Action Plans were indispensable.

27. It was noted that almost all of the respondents – 93% of them – reported that the participation in the Project brought about positive changes in the style and methods of work of their departments and/or ministries by stating that “the project reinforced the collaboration and built trust with other agencies as well as countries in the realm of housing policies”, “new strategy is being formulated and in the next year we expect advancement in our work based on the gained experience in this project”, “new cooperative style now prevails in joint efforts with the partner ministries”, “the international expertise in the subject of the sustainable housing became more accessible to our management and staff”. These sentiments were corroborated by three interviewees who believed that one of the stronger facets of the Project was that it also allowed the practitioners to step aside from their daily routine and get briefed on theoretical aspects of what they were doing, broaden their professional horizons and get exposed to the cutting-edge methods of solving the tasks that they face. Two interviewees stressed that the Project's effectiveness and outcomes were largely contingent on involving all the national stakeholders from the point zero, from the outset. In this connection, it they acknowledged that the UNECE imprimatur on the plan was an important catalyst for mobilizing the national stakeholders' attention to the NAP preparation.

28. All survey respondents and interviewees stated without exception that the cooperation of the national staff with the Project personnel was excellent. They pointed out that while working under the Project, the local staff learned the importance of measurement and defining the baselines.

29. One important aspect of the expected accomplishments was to promote interministerial cooperation in developing and implementing the housing policies. In this regard, 43% of those who responded to the survey and six interviewees believed that Project's impact on promoting the interministerial cooperation aimed at strengthening national capacities for sustainable housing and urban development in their countries and throughout the region was strong and conspicuous, another 43% considered it to be above average, and the rest 14% thought that it was average or negligible. The view was expressed twice that the Project served as a catalyst for the national reform process and a magnet for the donor support.

30. As evidence of the Project's effectiveness, forty percent of the respondents pointed out that the Project begot positive unforeseen outcomes such as gained skills in surveys of the national housing stock, amending legislative approach to revising the housing policies and expanding the

scope of the feasible options for action in the wider context of urban development and land administration, fostering collaboration with national and international NGOs, as well as triggering new technical cooperation projects with other UN organizations and programmes such as, for example UNHCHR – on drafting and implementation of the legal provision related to protection from eviction, UN-Habitat on the variety of subjects, UNDP on the related country programmes, with the offices of the United Nations Resident Coordinators in support of the process of preparing and drafting the new National Housing Strategies. They indicated that the implementation of the Project also either triggered or catalysed their cooperation in the area of the housing policies with diverse spectrum of the international actors giving examples of USAID, [Building and Social Housing Foundation \(BSHF\)](#), [EU/IPA](#), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, [Green Climate Fund](#) and others.

31. As was pointed out in two interviews, consequently to the implementation of the Project, the Committee on Construction and Architecture under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and World Bank have established recently a [“One Stop Shop” facility](#) to improve the business environment through the simplification of procedures of registration of properties. As the result of this reforms which were prompted, *inter alia*, by the Project outcome that made it easier and less costly to register property, Tajikistan has [improved](#) its position noticeably in the [World Bank Doing Business Ranking](#) by rising from the 143rd place to 128th place on “registration of property”. Similarly, the reforms engendered by the Project implementation in Serbia also improved their positions in the [World Bank Doing Business Ranking](#): from 2014 to 2018, Serbia’s ranking on “registration of property” raised from [93rd to 43rd place](#), 50 steps up in large part due to the improved reliability of its land administration system by implementing a geographic information system with information on land and property registration.

32. Concerning the particularly valuable topics covered at the Project’s workshops and seminars, the interlocutors pointed to such subjects as the mainstays of the integrated urban development, architectural and housing policy, ways to ensure resilience to the effects of natural disaster management, and energy efficiency strategy in construction, land administration and registration of real estate rights along with more efficient management and maintenance of residential buildings. Equally useful were presentations and discussions on ways and means of improving cooperation between various competent authorities and institutions operating in the residential area. They were of the view that the related presentations from different workshops and seminars should be grouped thematically and posted in the searchable subject clusters at the Project’s website.

33. Three interviewees were of the view that the relatively smooth and timely implementation of the Project was facilitated in some measure by the continuous oversight of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management as its Bureau regularly scheduled on its agenda the updates on the progress in delivering the Project’s outputs. It was also highlighted in the course of the interviews that the collaboration between UNECE and UN-Habitat was seamless and effective and that both partners exemplified the best commitment to teamwork and taking advantage of the synergies between them.

34. One important dimension of ensuring the Project’s effectiveness in the course of its delivery is the contemporaneous performance monitoring and reporting on the progress in the Project

delivery to allow learning lessons as the Project is implemented. One significant aspect of it is that the Project staff should consistently use the feedback from on-the-spot surveys of the participants at each workshop and seminar to obtain both quantitative ratings of the substance of issues discussed there and of the quality of such discussions and of the organization of workshops as well as qualitative comments and suggestions regarding future issues of interest. Currently, there are plenty of simple online tools for this purpose, the most user-friendly of them being [Google Forms](#) and [Survey Monkey](#) that allow promptly and reliably obtain the beneficiaries feedback regarding the delivery of each output, easily compile and analyse the returns, and archive both individual returns and analytics of each survey in the Internet cloud literally indefinitely.

35. However, it was found that this tool was not fully utilized by the Project as only scarce, paper-based returns from some of the workshops were made available to the evaluator. It could be recommended that the project management team use systematically online performance monitoring tools, for instance, conduct online survey of participants at the end of workshops.

36. The Project would have undoubtedly benefited if the good practice of obtaining on-the-spot online feedback of beneficiaries in the same standard format was followed at each and every capacity-building activity and the respondents were encouraged to provide detailed qualitative comments and proposals. Once such returns are accumulated in sufficient quantity, they could serve as critical mass of knowledge for drawing lessons towards improvements of the substantive content and methodology of capacity building.

37. Overall, the management of the Project treated its performance monitoring and reporting duties with due diligence: three Annual Progress Reports were submitted for 2014, 2015 and 2016 and all outputs were delivered on time. However, the same cannot be said about the presentation of these monitoring efforts: it was noted at the beginning of this evaluation that the [web page of the Project Monitoring Tool for the Project](#)¹⁷ was maintained somewhat unevenly, for example, as of November 2017, the master table for implementation was not updated since 2015. These weaknesses were brought to the attention of the Project management at the exit conference and the evaluator is pleased to note that they were addressed by January 2017.

38. As for the room for improvement regarding the Project's effectiveness, one respondent (7% of the total) pointed out that the Project should have taken better account of the disparities in the level of preparedness of different countries to take ownership of the advanced policies and techniques and that less advanced countries should be allowed more time and attention in addressing the tasks of the Project more successfully. Eight interviewees and six online respondents suggested that the Project's workshops could gain from making them more interactive and increasing the cross-country comparative analysis. Five survey respondents and eight interviewees also underscored the desirability of having a dedicated, renewable and thematically structured online space (either within UNECE website or elsewhere) where all the best practices in sustainable housing and land management are accumulated. Such online Library of the selected best practices – an online toolkit of the best practices – could be maintained jointly by UNECE and UN-Habitat, it was suggested.

¹⁷ <https://www.unece.org/info/open-unece/pmt/regular-budget/1415ac-strengthening-national-capacities-for-sustainable-housing-in-selected-countries-with-economies-in-transition.html>

39. To wrap up, the expected accomplishments were fully achieved and buttressed by the delivery of 30% more outputs than planned. The main obstacle to the Project outcome was the political will and organizational cohesiveness and preparedness of the beneficiary Governments to adopt timely National Action Plans and consistently implement them. The main challenge to the Project's effectiveness, in this evaluator's judgement is fully harnessing the potential of the Internet resources for enhancing the Project's impact.

(c) Efficiency

40. In assessing the efficiency of the Project implementation, the evaluation sought to answer two questions posed in its TOR:

- Were the available resources appropriate to the scale of the project and the needs identified by the beneficiary countries?
- Were the human and financial resources allocated to the project used efficiently and commensurate with the project results?

41. Before answering these two questions, it should be noted from the outset that in trying to assess how efficiently the resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) of the Project were converted into its outputs, the obvious challenge is that it is not possible to measure both inputs and outputs in the same or comparable metrics (which is usually money). In the absence of such direct measure of efficiency, the evaluation approach was to employ all possible indirect, corollary assessments of how efficient was the delivery of the Project's outputs, assessing to what extent has its budget been spent in line with the plan, whether the project schedule has been met and completed within reasonable time parameters, to what extent and in what ways did the joint nature of the project increase or reduce efficiency in delivering outputs and attaining outcomes, and to what extent have the activities used the most efficient means in delivering the Project.

42. As mentioned earlier, the Project had the budget of US\$533,000 spread over four years and was about 15% smaller than the average project of the UNDA 9th tranche. The budget of the Project was allotted for delivering 22 outputs. However, in reality, the Project delivered 28 outputs of the same calibre and substance (workshops, advisory missions) as initially envisaged, that is 30 per cent more than planned. This is the first and most important direct evidence that the Project was delivered efficiently.

43. Secondly, all four main outputs of the Project – National Action Plans - were delivered in full and on deadlines and in the case of Serbia followed by the adoption of the Law which is a corollary evidence of the efficiency of the resource utilization.

44. Another indication of efficiency in the Project delivery was that the HLMU was proactive in seeking contribution in kind and complementary financing from committed stakeholders to buttress the Project's own financing that covered the main costs of the workshops. Thus, in addition to the UNDA Project funds, significant additional resources that were leveraged included, for example:

- in-kind support by the host governments in providing conference premises and assistance in logistics, in publicizing the workshops to national and local stakeholders and supporting outreach through the national media;
- additional international experts provided through funding of UN-Habitat or national government of other countries (such as the two UK experts that participated in the national workshop in Tajikistan);
- in-kind expert support to the organization of national workshops by the UNDP country offices; and
- taking advantage of the substantive synergies by conducting some regional workshops in conjunction with other larger relevant meetings and events.

45. The efficiency was also enhanced through the durable contacts established by the Project with the international organizations in the pilot countries: UNECE and UN/Habitat representatives organized as a matter of course the bilateral meetings during the advisory missions and they also invited international partners to attend the national workshops. The NAPs were also developed in dialogue with international organizations on ground, in the pilot countries, such as UNDP, the World Bank, OSCE and others. Due to this regular communication and collaboration, the UNDP and the UN-Habitat committed to support partially the NAPs implementation in Armenia, Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan. In fact, the resources invested in this Project in cases of these countries played the role of “seed money” as they triggered and catalysed further cooperation of the beneficiary countries on sustainable housing with UNDP, UN-Habitat, the World Bank, OSCE and other international entities

46. The above notwithstanding, further efficiency gains could be realized by taking advantage of online training opportunities that allow for teaching many beneficiaries fast, wherever they are located and with zero travel costs. It allows the outreach not only to the current workshops’ participants but also to those that succeed them in the future so that they can, proverbially, hit the ground running. It allows reaching easily, on a flexible schedule, more geographically-dispersed learners with the same event and same instructional design that can be easily updated. It allows interaction with instructor and/or subject-matter expert not necessarily at the same time and location. Its materials and recorded sessions can be later reused numerous times. These opportunities will be discussed below.

(d) **Sustainability**

47. On this issue, the evaluation’s TOR require to establish what specific laws, regulations, policies or projects have been developed to date based on the National Action Plans.

48. It should be noted from the outset that this requirement is not entirely realistic as the legislative process of adopting a National Action Plan can be protracted and complicated as most legislative process are and since the drafts of NAPs emerge closer to the end of the Project, it is reasonable to expect that their adoption would occur beyond the lifespan of the Project as was the case for Armenia, Tajikistan and Moldova. The Project staff regularly communicated with the respective governments on possible adoption of the NAPs however the adoption depends on specific political contexts in each country. In turn, translating the NAP into the follow-up legal acts is also an exercise pregnant with all sorts of political and bureaucratic complexities with not very predictable

gestation period that can be disrupted at any time. This for example, was the case in Moldova where the NAP was ready for adoption when the new government brought in by the recent election launched a major overhaul of the whole governmental bureaucracy of the country and the adoption of the NAP remains in limbo at the time of this writing.

49. Nevertheless, the circumstances in Serbia, which was the most advanced of the four beneficiary countries in regard to developing the sustainable housing policy platform, were right for curtailing the length of such process. Serbia adopted its NAP at the beginning of 2016 and on 22 December 2016, consequent to NAP, the [Law on Housing and Maintenance of Buildings](#), was adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.

50. Apart from the major laws, the beneficiaries (as conveyed by four interviewees) stressed that an important factor in buttressing the sustainability of the Project's outcomes was that the [International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning](#) were integrated into the sustainability component of the national housing policies by being presented and discussed at the national workshops and the relevant experts included into the advisory missions to provide advice to the national as well as the municipal authorities in the pilot countries. This aspect of the sustainability issue is buttressed by the evolving HLMU strategy to work together with the UN-Habitat to establish [Geneva UN Charter Centres](#) in all the pilot countries and to provide regular trainings and advice on approaches to the Guidelines implementation. It was noted in this connection that in the follow-up to the Project, a delegation of the Armenian national and local authorities and experts [was taken at the end of 2017](#) by the Estonian Geneva Charter Centre on a study tour funded by the UNDP/Armenia to Estonia to glean the best practices in the management of multi-apartment buildings.

51. It is also reasonable to expect that the sustainability of the Project's outcomes should be fostered by the successor UNDA Project. In this regard, it should be recalled that the idea of National Action Plans on Housing, Urban Development and Land Management (NAPs) was an innovation in itself. No other national review in relevant subject areas in the UNECE has developed such an instrument as national action plans to follow up on the recommendations of national reviews. Thus this UNDA 9th tranche project was aimed at breaking the ground in developing the NAPs and test it as an instrument undergirding the policy implementation whereas the monitoring of the implementation is a subject of the next, UNDA 10th tranche, project. This linkage, in this evaluator's view reasonably safeguards the continuity and sustainability of the Project's outcomes while the main challenge of instituting an indicator-based monitoring of the NAPs implementation remains. Making the Project's outcomes and impact sustainable in the longer term will depend in large measure on the effectiveness of joint efforts of the HLMU, UN-Habitat and the Geneva UN Charter Centres in establishing the indicator-based monitoring of the implementation of the National Action Plans.

52. It would be useful to address by the future National Actions Plans is to develop a viable roadmap for their implementation with clear assignment of timelines and responsibilities along with the cogent mechanism of monitoring the implementation of the NAP. This being said, it should be also acknowledged that accepting such roadmap and monitoring arrangements is contingent on the political will and organizational prowess of the beneficiary Governments.

53. The components of the sustainability safety net mentioned above can also benefit from a more robust approach of the HLMU to employing online resources for safeguarding the knowledge, skills and experience gained in the course of implementing this Project by posting online thematically structured lessons learned in the course of its implementation and supplementing them by the online library of relevant best practices along with engendering and nurturing to maturity the online network of experts and practitioners on sustainable housing in the pilot countries. Ensuring the longer-term sustainability will require a dedicated effort in establishing viable virtual networking and online knowledge sharing, including searchable databases of outcomes and best practices easily accessible either for an interested UN staff member, an outside expert or another potential beneficiary.

(e) Internet as the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability enhancement

54. The shape and form of the Project's capacity development activities was the same as in the majority of UNDA projects: oral presentations by experts in a classic academic-type conference set-up of reports and brief discussion of them or in a face-to-face training in a location to which trainees had to travel. However, nowadays the capacity development is not just on-site, instructor-led classroom face-to-face training, but a broader creation, building and subsequent management and retention of abilities, relationships and values that will enable organizations, groups and individuals to improve their performance and achieve their objectives in tackling the sustainable housing policies. The Internet offers superior opportunities for this as it allows preparing conjunctly for a training event, provide training interactively, follow-up promptly with instructors on questions and difficulties and to discuss and consult with colleagues on further developments regarding their real life experiences in the their relevant areas of interest within the overall milieu of the sustainable housing policies, and foster the interactive networking between stakeholders and beneficiaries.

55. The most significant efficiency advantage of online training is that it's best for teaching many beneficiaries fast, wherever they are located and with zero travel costs. It allows the outreach not only to the current workshops' participants but also to those that succeed them in the future so that they can, proverbially, hit the ground running. It allows reaching easily, on a flexible schedule more geographically-dispersed learners with the same event and same instructional design that can be easily updated. It allows interaction with instructor and/or subject-matter expert not necessarily at the same time and location. Its materials and recorded sessions can be later reused numerous times.

56. The best practices in modern capacity building indicate that its efficiencies gain from being supplemented by advance and/or follow-up self-paced training, which may be delivered by downloadable self-study workbooks or web-based tutorials (referred to usually as [asynchronous e-learning](#)). Online learning is also perfectly suited for preserving the knowledge gained in previous workshops and cascading knowledge and skills efficiently to subsequent learners. Online training also allows expanding its syllabus by including the manageable number of case studies, specimens of successful sustainable housing policies and projects, compendiums of real sustainable housing lessons learned and any other materials buttressing the capacity building outcomes. The retention of knowledge obtained in the course of such training could be enhanced by virtual follow up networks.

57. There are numerous well-honed software tools available for e-training¹⁸ through the ICT Divisions/Sections/Units at the UN Secretariat, including such platforms as [WebEx](#) and [Citrix](#) that can provide complex training effectively and efficiently. Learning practitioners have worked with these tools long enough to offer a variety of techniques for using them well.

58. The evaluator also noted that the recommendation 7 of the "[Evaluation of the role of the UNECE Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management](#)"¹⁹ of June 2016 suggested that a web-tool should be created for the exchange and sharing of information and best practice examples of legislation, policies, plans and strategies that were developed based on CP²⁰ recommendations. It was also noted that the [Management Response](#)²¹ to the above recommendation was that “the online web portal protected by a password already exists. It is maintained by the Housing and Land Management Unit and is used by experts involved in the production of Country Profiles for sharing background information and draft chapters of the publication.” Management also envisaged that the Housing and Land Management Unit will establish by October 2017 a webpage open to public at the HLM website with online information on best practice examples of legislation, policies, plans and strategies that were developed based on CP recommendations and the status of the implementation of Country Profiles’ recommendations. However, so far the existing [webpage](#)²² referred to above has no dedicated area for the best practices in sustainable housing.

59. Nevertheless, in its current shape and form, the Project webpage is already a useful tool as evidenced by 86% of the respondents who characterized [the Project’s page](#) on the UNECE website as a useful reference resource which most of them access frequently. They also informed that some of the materials posted there were duplicated at some of their countries’ governmental portals (Armenia, Moldova, Serbia) in national languages. In general, they were of the view that online resources such as virtual consultations and meetings, interactive online training and social networking should be more actively engaged and that the HLMU may wish to take lead in facilitating this change. In this connection, four interviewees emphasized that the Project generated by means of its regional workshops an informal network of the national experts and fostered direct cooperation between them. These national champions who emerged out of the Project currently are coming up with new ideas for the future cooperation. The particulars of the identified national experts are currently recorded in the UNECE database; they will be called upon to partake as trainers in its future regional and subregional workshops. While this is undoubtedly a very helpful arrangement, it could certainly gain from posting such network online and making it interactive. As one of the examples to emulate, they pointed out to the [Community-driven development community of practitioners](#) managed by the World Bank.

¹⁸ Which can be found, for example [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) or [here](#)

¹⁹ http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/OPEN_UNECE/EVALUATION/Evaluation_Reports-with_SPs/08-HLMP/08a-HLM-Report_EvalCountryProfilesHLM_28_July_2016.pdf

²⁰ Country Profiles

²¹

https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/prgm/cph/Evaluation/2016_Management_Response_CP_Evaluation.pdf

^f

²² <http://www.unece.org/housing-and-land-management/quick-links/log-in/housing-experts.html>

60. Eight interviewees were of the view that the Project's webpage could benefit from being augmented by links to the online knowledge resources in Russian that could be supplementary and corollary to the capacity building thrust of the Project such as [creating a comfortable urban environment](#), the website of the [Estonian Cooperative Association of Housing](#) (which has [training materials available in Russian](#) that would be certainly useful to practitioners in the CIS most of whom are Russian-speaking) the World Bank's [Project on Reforming Russia's Housing and Communal Services Sector](#) as some of the best practices identified there could be employed in the Project's beneficiary countries, the proceedings of the conference on the [new development agenda of the Russian Cities](#) that has a number of very useful and pragmatic reports that might be useful for the target audience of the Project. It is also worthwhile to post the link for [Housing Europe](#) on the HLMU or the Project webpage. It was also suggested that a good instrument to build into the Project is the [City Prosperity Index](#) initiative. It was stressed in the course of the interviews that the online resources are extremely useful, especially in view of the administrative reshuffling and turnovers in national administrations as they secure the institutional memory regarding objectives, indicators, etc. The UNECE website would be useful as the central repository because, for example, after the administrative reshuffling in Moldova many ministerial websites simply disappeared.

61. Six interviewees and the survey respondents suggested that creating a learning space on the Project webpage (or separately from it) would be certainly useful and that providing the link to the [UN-Habitat Urban Lectures](#) could help users to expand their horizons. Given that, reportedly, UNCHS will start producing these Urban Lectures in Russian too, that would allow to reach out to more Russian-speaking audience of the Project but meanwhile the existing lectures in English can be equipped with the Russian Subtitles. In this regard, this evaluator noted with satisfaction that the Best Practices Unit of the Research and Capacity Development Branch, of UN-Habitat was willing to make a selection of the online learning courses that may be posted on the Project's and/or the HLMU webpage as a learning tool. The same Unit also indicated its readiness to assist HLMU in developing more engaged modalities of conducting interactive workshops and meeting the challenge of making the best practices visible and accessible along with transitioning them into the Standard Operating Procedures.

Six interviewees also were of the view that having a regional network/forum online is a good idea, while also acknowledging the challenge of making it sufficiently attractive to users and moderating it so that it doesn't become chaotic or idle. This evaluator noted that the HLMU positively reacted to those ideas however it is understandable that implementation of these additional tasks is subject of availability of resources.

62. This evaluator is of the view that the impact of the Project's capacity building endeavors could be tangibly enhanced by offering supplementary online learning resources for [asynchronous learning](#) to build up the beneficiaries ability, expertise and intellectual prowess in internalizing the challenges of attaining the sustainable housing objectives and broaden their intellectual horizons. Obviously, those materials would not be mandatory but rather complementary and complimentary.

62. Currently, there is literally a limitless cornucopia of online training materials that would allow broaden the beneficiaries horizons and comprehension of sustainable housing problematics such as, for example, [Planning for Sustainable Development](#) , [Sustainable Urban Development](#) and

others , including [Smart Cities](#) on the excellent free resource www.eDX.org or [Principles Of Sustainable Design](#) and [Practices For Sustainable Architecture](#) on <https://buildacademy.com/> For those of the Project’s beneficiaries whose preferred language is Russian, there is also a wide choice of free learning materials in Russian, too, for example on highly useful website www.postnauka.ru (“[Urban Sociology](#)”, “[From elevator to skyscraper](#)”, “[Microurbanism](#)”, etc.) and elsewhere (for example [Что делает города креативными?](#)).

63. One should also point out that by creating such lasting online presence in the thematic area of sustainable housing, the HLMU would ensure that the new workshop participants would be able to attain a required expertise and acuity along with a common conceptual ground and outlook on the issues to be tackled in the workshops delivered by the HLMU’s projects.

64. Regarding fostering the exchange of best practices and lessons learned through the Project, the review of the Project’s pages on the UNECE website indicates that so far there is still considerable unrealized potential there. If an interested layman (like this evaluator) would try to locate a nexus for the best practices in sustainable housing on the UNECE website, s/he will certainly fail (like this evaluator) as the search field in the upper left corner yields long list of reports with varying degree of relevance to the best practices but leaves one wondering how many other meta-papers on best practices are hidden in other nooks and crannies of the UNECE website. Only someone in the know of where to look can find the desired analytical papers, and such outcome is certainly not the best practice in disseminating the best practices.

65. In this connection, it was noted that in the UN-Habitat’s portion of the Programme Performance Report²³, it was reported that the [Global Urban Lecture Series](#) has become the agency’s most successful and far reaching capacity-building initiative to date, and that it was elected as the world’s second best massive open online courses on cities. The perusal of both the [Global Urban Lecture](#) portion of the Habitat website and of its [channel on YouTube](#) revealed a number of lectures closely related to best practices in sustainable housing. However, there was no mention of these series on the UNECE website and no link to them.

V. Conclusions

66. The Project delivered 30 per cent more outputs than initially envisaged by its Logical Framework and the Result-based Work Plan²⁴ in full and on schedule. Its four principal outputs – the National Action Plans for Serbia, Armenia, Tajikistan and Moldova - were drafted and finalized within the lifespan of the Project. One of them was enacted by the Government, two others are in the pipeline for adoption in the near future and one remains on hold due to circumstances beyond the Project staff’s control. The satisfactory effectiveness and efficiency of the Project’s implementation was bolstered by its synergetic partnerships with UN-Habitat, UNDP and other international, regional and national developmental organizations and agencies in delivering workshops, expert group meetings and its other outputs.

²³ [A/71/75](#) of 22 March 2016, page 145, para.371

²⁴ See [PROJECT DOCUMENT](#), pp. 10-12

67. The Project also brought about some positive outcomes, including: national laws prompted by the development of the National Action Plans were enacted in two beneficiary countries, exchanges and durable cooperation between some of the beneficiaries and stakeholders emerged, some of the best practices started to gain ground in the beneficiary countries even before the NAPs were developed. Thus, the Project's impact has already started to materialize and mature within its lifespan. These developments attest to the Project's relevance and sustainability.

68. While the longer-term impact of the Project is difficult to assess exactly at this junction, the available evidence points to it being an important step forward in fostering the capacity development of beneficiaries in sustainable housing policymaking especially taking into account that its impact is cumulative with the impacts of the predecessor HLMU exercise in developing Country Profiles and the successor UNDA 10th tranche project on the evidence-based policies for sustainable housing and urban development.

69. The modalities of the Project' delivery followed the conventional, customary routine as it has formed in the two decades of the Development Account's existence: providing training in a physical, classroom-like, face-to-face format of workshops, fostering personal contacts of participants in the venues of expert group meetings and conferences and relying on person-to-person transfer of knowledge and skills. To achieve further gains in effectiveness and efficiency, it is necessary in future to shift the centre of gravity in the UNDA capacity-building activities towards the modern methods of interactive online training, online provision of training tools, reference materials and best practices databases as well as fostering virtual interaction of beneficiaries and trainers in online forums and communities of practice.

70. Three areas for improvement were identified by this evaluation: need to strengthen the arrangements to safeguard and promote the institutional memory and knowledge gained in the course of the Project though the Internet, insufficient utilization of the modern online training tools for its capacity-building activities and in obtaining feedback of the workshops' participants and in the ongoing project monitoring and reporting through the [Project Monitoring Tool \(PMT\)](#).

71. The HLMU was forthcoming and cooperative in the course of this evaluation. It was fully receptive to the preliminary evaluative findings along with the suggestions on rectifying the observed weaknesses and took immediate corrective action even while the draft of this report was still in progress.

VI. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: HLMU should follow the best practice of administering to the beneficiaries on-the spot online (or paper-based where unavoidable) surveys as the standard operational procedure for all its workshops and seminars. Such surveys should always include requests for qualitative comments and proposals by participants. The summaries of returns and their analytics should be stored online and become part of the records of the project implementation to be used for lessons learning purpose. The staff of HLMU should be trained in using [Google Forms](#) and [Survey Monkey for this purpose](#).

Recommendation 2: The project performance monitoring reporting through the Project Monitoring Tool should be made more comprehensive and contemporaneous to its implementation.

Recommendation 3: The HLMU should when resources are available strategize shifting the emphasis in its capacity-development activities towards e-learning and taking advantage of best practices in online training.

Recommendation 4: The HLMU webpage with online information on best practices should be created and desirably complemented with an online forum facility for experts. This is subject to availability of resources. It should be linked to the UN-Habitat [Best Practices Database](#) , [Best Practices Unit](#) and [Global Urban Lectures](#) webpages.

List of acronyms

CHLM - Committee on Housing and Land Management

CP - Country Profile

DESA - United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

ECE - Economic Commission for Europe

EU - European Union

HLMU - Housing and Land Management Unit of UNECE

MS - Member State

NAP – National Action Plan

SDG - Sustainable Development Goal

SEE - South-Eastern Europe

TOR - Terms of reference

UNDA – United Nations Development Account

UNECE - United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

UN-Habitat - United Nations Human Settlements Programme

UN - United Nations

Terms of Reference

Evaluation of the UNDA 9th tranche project “Strengthening national capacities for sustainable housing in selected countries with economies in transition”

I. Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the UNDA 9 Tranche project “Strengthening national capacities for sustainable housing in selected countries with economies in transition”. The results of the evaluation will support improvement of the future technical cooperation provided under the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management (CHLM) to lower and upper middle-income countries in the preparation and implementation of National Action Plans on Housing and Urban Development. The results of evaluation will support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda and specifically SDGs 9, 11, 12 and 13.

II. Scope

The evaluation will include the full project implementation in 2014-2017 in all four pilot countries (Armenia, Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Tajikistan). The evaluation will review the development of four national action plans and their implementation in the beneficiary countries as the key deliverable of the project. The evaluation will assess to what extent the objective, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievements established in the logical framework were achieved.

III. Background

Countries in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region, especially those with economies in transition, are faced with several challenges in developing sustainable housing. These challenges were identified through the survey in housing and land management conducted by UNECE. Countries with economies in transition have seen a growing degradation and deterioration of their housing stock. Due to a lack of effective management and investments in maintenance and repairs, a large share of the region’s residential housing stock has deteriorated, causing energy losses and affecting the quality of life of the residents. According to the results of the above-mentioned survey, the inefficient use of energy is the main challenge in the housing sector. Other challenges include lack of affordable housing for low-income households; general decreased housing affordability because of the economic crisis and unemployment; limited access to affordable housing of adequate quality in the market; and reduced access to credit for households because of the financial crisis. This difficult situation in the housing sector in the countries with transition economies is not improving because of the lack of expertise of the governments in strategic planning of housing and urban development; and weak policy coordination between stakeholders at national and subnational levels. The market alone cannot address these challenges if government policies developed through a dialogue and in partnership with all key stakeholders does not support it.

This project was developed to address the above-mentioned challenges by assisting national governments in selected countries to develop and partially implement National Action Plans for Sustainable Housing; and to build capacity on sustainable housing through the provision of advisory services and the organization of workshops.

The objective of the UNDA 9th tranche project “Strengthening national capacities for sustainable housing in selected countries with economies in transition” is to strengthen national capacities for sustainable housing in selected countries with economies in transition to support the realization of Rio+20 commitments and the achievement of MDG 7. The project promotes sustainable housing in four selected countries with economies in transition (Armenia, Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Tajikistan) by assisting

their national governments in the development and partial implementation of National Action Plans for Sustainable Housing; and capacities building activities.²⁵

IV. Issues

The evaluation will answer the following questions:

Relevance

1. How relevant was the project to the needs and priorities of the beneficiary countries?
2. Have the beneficiary Governments refer to the National Action Plans in improving their legislation, institutional framework, policies and projects on housing and urban development?
3. Do Governments rate the developed National Action Plans as useful in promoting inter-ministerial cooperation?
4. Are there any issues or topics that are not currently being addressed by the National Action Plans/but it would be useful to address?

Effectiveness

5. To what extent were the expected accomplishments of the project achieved?
6. What were the challenges/ obstacles to achieving the project objective and expected accomplishments?

Efficiency

7. Were the available resources appropriate to the scale of the project and the needs identified by the beneficiary countries?
8. Were the human and financial resources allocated to the project used efficiently and commensurate the project results?

Sustainability

9. What are the laws, regulations, policies or projects that have been developed so far based on the National Action Plans (effectiveness, relevance and sustainability)?

V. Methodology

The evaluator will develop the methodology, which will include a variety of data sources:

- A desk review of all relevant documents will be conducted in the first instance. The desk review will include: Project document and information on [project activities](#), National Action Plans developed for the four pilot countries (will be provided by the Housing and Land Management Unit), Policy with best practices of preparation of National Action Plans, Guidelines for the preparation of National Action Plans on Housing and Land Management developed within the project (will be provided by the Housing and Land Management Unit).
- In-depth telephone and in person interviews will be conducted with (1) national coordinators of the project, representatives of national governments and relevant stakeholders in Armenia, Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Tajikistan; (2) representatives of national government authorities in member States and stakeholders to be identified by UNECE; and (3) with partners involved in the project, UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit and UN-Habitat.
- Survey of project participants and other key stakeholders.

²⁵ Please see information on the project at <http://www.unece.org/housing/unda.html>

The consultant will attend the final project meeting in Geneva on 8 and 10 November 2017 at margins of which would also hold some of the interviews with project participants and representatives of governments.

VI. Evaluation Schedule

1. Desk review of all documents provided by UNECE to the evaluator (30 October 2017) ,
2. Delivery of inception report including design of survey(15 November 2017)
3. Feedback on inception report by the project manager (20 November 2017)
4. Launching the survey (20 November 2017)
5. Conducting in-person and telephone interviews (20 November – 10 December 2017)
6. Analysis of collected information (10 -31 December 2017)
7. Draft report (10 January 2018)
8. Comments back to the evaluator after review by the project manager and the PMU (12 January 2018)
9. Final report (31 January 2018).

VII. Resources

An independent consultant will be engaged for a period of 40 days to conduct the evaluation, within a budget of USD\$10,000. Ms. Gulnara Roll, the project manager, will manage the evaluation in consultation with the Division Director Ms. Ivonne Higuero. Housing and Land Management Unit team members and UN-Habitat experts, who were involved in the project, will be asked for inputs. The Programme Management Unit (PMU) will provide guidance to the Project Manager and evaluator as needed on the evaluation design, methodology and quality assurance.

VIII. Intended Use/Next Steps

The Unit will review the results of the evaluation and report the results to the CHLM. The results will be used in improving a methodology to the development of National Action Plans. The evaluation will be consistent with the UNECE Evaluation Policy. Following the receipt of the final report, the project manager will develop a management response and action plan for addressing the recommendation made by the evaluator. The final evaluation report and the management response will be made publicly available on the UNECE website.

IX. Criteria for Evaluators

Evaluators should have:

- An advanced university degree in economics or relevant disciplines
- 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.

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

LIST OF REVIEWED DOCUMENTS

Project documents

The draft Project document (hard copy)

The webpage of the Project [Strengthening national capacities for sustainable housing and urban development in countries with economies in transition](#)

The [Project page](#) at the UNECE Project Management Tool

The [Project's page](#) on the UN Development Account website

Proceedings of the Projects workshops

National Action Plans for Armenia, Moldova, Serbia and Tajikistan (hard copy and online)

HLMU Advisory Mission reports on Chisinau and Dushanbe

Comments by experts on the draft NAPs for Armenia, Moldova, Serbia and Tajikistan (hard copy)

Guidelines for drafting the National Action Plan for the implementation of recommendations of UNECE country profiles on housing and land management in transition economies on the basis of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing (hard copy)

Руководящие принципы по разработке Национального плана мероприятий по реализации рекомендаций национального обзора жилищного хозяйства и землепользования в странах с переходной экономикой на основе Женевской хартии ООН об устойчивом жилищном хозяйстве (hard copy)

Two responses (from Moldova and Serbia) to the “Questionnaire on the UNECE 9th tranche on Strengthening national capacities for sustainable housing and urban development in countries with economies in transition” regarding the workshops attended.

UN programme planning and budgetary documents

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015, Section 35, Development Account", Annex AC. "Strengthening national capacities for sustainable housing in selected countries with economies in transition", [A/68/6 \(Sect. 35\)](#) of 30 April 2013, page 78-80;

"Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015, Section 20, Economic development in Europe", Subprogramme 8. Housing, land management and population ", [A/68/6 \(Sect. 20\)](#) of 12 April 2013, page 54-56;

"Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, Section 20, Economic development in Europe", Subprogramme 8. Housing, land management and population ", [A/70/6 \(Sect. 20\)](#) of 6 April 2015, page 43-45;

"Programme performance report of the United Nations for the biennium 2014-2015" [A/71/75](#) of 22 March 2016, pp 189-199.

Internet resources

[International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning](#)

[Geneva UN Charter Centres](#)

[Evaluation of the role of the UNECE Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management and Management Response to it](#)

[Global Urban Lecture Series](#)

[UN-Habitat Best Practices Database](#)

[Community-driven development community of practitioners](#)

Annex 4**List of sixteen stakeholders interviewed in person**

Ms. Tatiana KHABAROVA; Director, UN-Habitat Liaison Office in Moscow

Mr. Arsen KARAPETYAN, Executive Officer, Development Solutions Institute Foundation

Ms. Daniela GRABMÜLLEROVA, Vice-Chair of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management, Director of the European Affairs Department, Ministry of Regional Development, Czech Republic

Mr. Remy SIETCHIPING, Chief of the Regional and Metropolitan Planning Unit, UNCHS

Anonymous

Ms. Doris ANDONI, independent consultant on housing policies, lecturer at POLIC University, Tirana, Albania

Ms. Irina GENTZLER, international expert, Deputy Director, Institute for Urban Economics, Russian Federation

Ms. Evgenia ZHELEZOVA, international expert on housing finance, Analyst, Agency for Housing and Mortgage Lending, Russian Federation

Ms. Irina N. ILYINA, international expert, Head of Institute for Regional Studies and Urban Planning, Russia

Ms. Elena SZOLGAYOVA, Chair of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management, Director General, DG Housing Policy and Urban Development, Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of Slovakia

Ms. Jovanka ATANACKOVIC, Assistant Minister for housing and architectural policies, public utilities and energy efficiency

Ms. Vilma VAICIUNIENE, Member of the Bureau of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management; Chief of the Housing Division, Ministry of Environment, Lithuania

Mr. Jamshed AHMADZODA, Chairman, Committee for Architecture and Construction under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan

Mr. Serghei MUNTEANU, Ministry of Economy, Moldova

Ms. Domenica CARRIERO, Associate Economic Affairs Officer, Housing and Land Management Unit

Åsa JONSSON, Chief, Best Practices Unit, Russia and CIS Coordinator, Research and Capacity Development Branch, UN-HABITAT

Annex 5**Online questionnaire, English version****Evaluation of the UNECE Project "Strengthening national capacities for sustainable housing and urban development in countries with economies in transition"**

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the Project in order to assess its accomplishments

1. Please describe in what capacity you were involved with this Project.

2. How did your participation in the Project help your Organization?

3. To what extent the needs of your department were taken into account in formulating and implementing the Project?

Mark only one oval.

- Completely
- To a large degree
- To some degree
- Not taken into account

4. Did you and /or do you currently you seek assistance from other international organizations in support to your efforts on sustainable housing? If yes, please describe which and in what.

5. Have you/your department changed the way you work because of your participation in the project? If so, how?

6. Do you consider that services and support provided by this UNECE Project were delivered timely and reliably?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 To a degree
 No!

7. Do you or any of your colleagues make use of the Project webpage (<http://www.unece.org/housing/unda.html>) in your work? If the answer is yes, please describe how often and for what purpose.

8. From your participation in the Project's activities, were there outcomes you had not anticipated? Were there unexpected/unforeseen positive or negative consequences? If yes, please describe in detail.

9. How would you rate the Project in promoting inter-ministerial cooperation in your country and throughout the region?

Mark only one oval.

- Excellent
 Above average
 Below average
 Poor

10. Were any of the presentations, guidelines and documents obtained in the course the Project's workshops, advisory missions and other activities posted on the national governmental and/or non-governmental websites in your country or otherwise officially distributed? If the answer is yes, please provide hyperlinks and/or examples.

11. Do you (or your department) participate in any virtual support networks, communities of practitioners or online forums dealing with the problems of strengthening national capacities for sustainable housing and urban development? In your view, should UNECE participate in them too and, if yes, in what capacity? If not, please explain why not.

12. What other online facilities, including links to other websites and /or forums or communities of practitioners that are of interest to you would you like to be included on the relevant UNECE or HLMU website?

13. In your view, did the Project provide necessary and sufficient knowledge and information required by its beneficiaries and facilitated them retaining it? For each of the following five statements related to, please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the statements in the table.

Mark only one oval per row.

Sufficient guidance and methodological materials were provided widely both in hard and soft copies and widely used by practitioners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Useful materials were provided but they were not publicized widely among practitioners in my country and not translated into the national language.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Project outputs are interesting but they still require more time to be absorbed by practitioners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Project materials and guidelines were interesting from the academic standpoint but not from the practical one.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Project proceedings were of no practical use.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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