

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1617AN: Strengthening the national capacities of selected UNECE countries for evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies to achieve SDGs

I. Purpose

The primary purpose of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which the objectives of the UNDA 10th tranche project “Strengthening the national capacities of selected UNECE countries for evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies to achieve SDGs” were achieved. The evaluation will assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project in supporting member States to strengthen their capacities in the area of evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies, in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The evaluation will also look at the activities repurposed to address the impact of the Covid-19 crisis, and assess, to the extent possible, the ECE’s Covid-19 early response through this project.

The results of the evaluation will allow improving capacity building services provided to member States through regular technical cooperation as well as the development and implementation of similar future projects and activities by the Economic and Cooperation Trade Division (ECTD) of UNECE. It will finally help reinforce ECE’s response efforts to Covid-19 and its consequences.

II. Scope

The evaluation will include the full project implementation during the period of 1 January 2017- 31 December 2020 in three countries (Armenia, Georgia, and Serbia).

The universally recognized values and principles of human rights and gender equality need to be integrated at all stages of an evaluation, in compliance with the United Nations Evaluation Group’s revised gender-related norms and standards. Therefore, the evaluation will assess how gender considerations were included in the process and it will make recommendations on how gender can be included better in the process.

III. Background

The project supports the expected accomplishment (d) “Enhanced national capacity of member States for trade policy development and implementation” of the Trade subprogramme of UNECE, as reflected in the Programme plan for 2016-2017; 2018-2019¹ and 2020². This expected accomplishment derives from the core mandate of the subprogramme to “oversee and guide the development of international norms and standards, procedures and best practices that

¹ <https://undocs.org/a/71/6/Rev.1> Please refer to Programme 6.

² [https://undocs.org/a/74/6\(Sect.20\)](https://undocs.org/a/74/6(Sect.20))

reduce the costs associated with export and import processes and increase the efficiency, predictability and transparency of trade regulations and procedures and the movement of goods and services”³.

The Trade subprogramme reports to the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (SCTCS), which is responsible for promoting and maintaining norms, standards, recommendations and best practice guidelines in the areas of trade facilitation; regulatory cooperation and standardization policy; and, agricultural quality standards.⁴

The project builds on the UNECE studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade, which were launched in 2010 using the UNECE unique survey-based methodology.⁵ The methodology stands apart from existing methodologies in that it covers both behind and at the border regulatory and administrative procedures governing export and import activities. By 2017, it was implemented in seven countries (Albania, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan). The studies provided a systemic analysis of regulatory and procedural trade barriers stemming from: (i) trade facilitation measures; (ii) quality control systems embodied in standardization policies, technical regulations, quality assurance, accreditation and metrology (SQAM); and, (iii) trade-related infrastructure, including transport and logistical support.

The overall goal of the project is to strengthen the national capacities of selected countries (Armenia, Georgia and Serbia) in the UNECE region for evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies to support the achievement of 2030 Agenda, particularly SDGs 1, 9, 10 and 17. It was implemented in collaboration with UNCTAD, with UNECE assuming the role of the lead agency.

The project involved piloting an extended evaluation in the three selected countries. The extended methodology addresses, in addition to the above-mentioned areas, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) engaged in trade activities; exporters in partner countries; small farmers and female-owned enterprises who engage in trade activities.⁶ The project also involved training activities in collaboration with UNCTAD as well as follow up advisory services (also in collaboration with UNCTAD) to support the implementation of the recommendations emerging from the studies.

In addition, building on experience gained from the studies, the project involved developing a guideline document for translating into practice the 2030 Agenda concept of trade as a “means of implementation” as elaborated under SDG 17. The guideline contains a framework of indicators for measuring and monitoring the contribution of trade, particularly non-tariff measures (NTMs) to the 2030 SDGs. It was developed by the secretariat and shared with the relevant agencies from the countries where the studies were undertaken for comments.

In March 2020, the project was repurposed to involve additional assessments to ascertain the

³ ECE/EX/2015/L.6

⁴ ECE/EX/2015/L.6

⁵ The studies and evaluation methodology are available at: <http://www.unece.org/tradewelcome/studies-on-procedural-and-regulatory-barriers-to-trade.html>.

⁶ In total, the extended evaluation methodology includes 7 questionnaires, including the core methodology (SQAM, trade facilitation and the traders) and the additional questionnaires (SMEs, female traders, small farmers and market support institutions), which together make up the extended methodology.

impact of the COVID 19 induced economic crisis on the MSMEs development prospects. The impact assessments were launched in May 2020 in the three selected countries and in Belarus and the Republic of Moldova. Another set of COVID 19 assessments were launched to ascertain the impact of the economic crisis on female owned enterprises in Armenia and the Republic of Moldova with funds from a UNDA SME surge project.

The national stakeholders of the project are public and private sector institutions that are directly involved in supporting the implementation of trade reforms aimed at removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade. The project also targets traders and owners/managers of manufacturing industries, especially MSMEs to ensure responsiveness and support increased public-private sector consultations on policies and reform initiatives for removing regulatory and procedural barriers.

The main organizations involved in project implementation are UNECE (lead agency) and UNCTAD (an implementing partner).

The budget of the project is total US\$ 620'000 (including the additional funds of the amount of US\$ 120'000 added in 2019). The project was managed by the Economic Affairs Officer from the Market Access Section, funded from the UN regular budget (Sect.20) resources.

IV. Issues

The evaluation will answer the following issues: Relevance; Coherence; Effectiveness; Efficiency and Sustainability.

Relevance:

1. To what extent did the Project respond to the priorities and needs of the beneficiary countries to develop evidence-based policies? Was the project design appropriate?
2. To what extent were the activities consistent with global and regional priorities and the programme of work of the UNECE? What value has UNECE's efforts added in this area? How relevant were the project activities in the way of achieving the SDGs?
3. How relevant were the activities added in response to the Covid-19 pandemic?
4. How relevant was the project to the target groups' needs and priorities? Was there a focus on the most vulnerable?
5. Did the project apply gender, rights-based and disability inclusion approaches in the design, implementation and results of the activities?

Coherence:

6. How coherent was the collaboration with other entities in the UN system and other international organizations?
7. Were the activities implemented according to the planned timeframe? How coherent with the initial project design are the Covid-19 related activities, added in April 2020?
8. Were the activities implemented in the required sequence needed to ensure the greatest impact of the project?
9. To what extent are the outputs consistent with and relevant to the overall objective and expected accomplishments?

Effectiveness:

10. Did the project achieve the results expected during the project design in terms of the planned activities, outcome, and impact?

11. To what extent were the expected accomplishments of the project achieved?
12. What were the challenges/ obstacles to achieving the activities, objective and expected accomplishments?
13. What were the specific challenges to Covid-19 expected accomplishment and activities?

Efficiency:

14. Did the project achieve its objectives within the anticipated budget and allocation of resources?
15. How could the use of resources be improved? Would you propose any alternatives to achieve the same results? If yes, which ones?
16. Were the human and financial resources allocated to the project used efficiently and commensurate the project results?

Sustainability:

17. How is the stakeholders' engagement likely to continue, be scaled up, replicated or institutionalized?
18. To what extent do the partners and beneficiaries 'own' the outcomes of the work?
19. To what extent are the objectives of the activity still valid? How can the activity be replicated in the UNECE region or in other regions?
20. What are the lessons learnt from the Covid-19 related activities? Could they be replicated?
21. What are the laws, regulations, policies or projects that have been developed so far based on the strengthening national capacities for the development of the evidence-based policies for sustainable housing and urban development?
22. Has the project helped to strengthen the application of gender mainstreaming principles and contribute to substantial and meaningful changes in the situation of the most vulnerable groups?

V. Methodology

The evaluation will be conducted based on:

- A desk review of all relevant documents will be conducted in the first instance. The desk review will include: the project document and information on project activities; studies and reports (published studies, the Guideline on gearing trade to serve as a means of implementation and advisory reports); and, the decisions from the SCTCS annual sessions. These documents will be provided by the Market Access Section.
- In-depth in person and skype interviews will be conducted with (i) national coordinators who acted as UNECE counterparts throughout the national assessments and follow up activities; (ii) representatives of government agencies responsible for the areas addressed in the studies; (iii) representatives of enterprise support institutions ; and, (iv) with partners involved in the project, UNECE responsible staff from the Market Access Section and UNCTAD. (list of contacts and details to be provided by the project manager).

UNECE will provide all documentation, support and guidance to the evaluation consultant as needed throughout the timeline of the evaluation.

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the ECE Evaluation Policy. A gender-responsive methodology, methods and tools, and data techniques are selected. The evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations reflect a gender analysis.

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

VI. Evaluation schedule

A. Preliminary research: by 1 October 2020;

B. Data collection: by 15 November 2020;

C. Data analysis: by 15 December 2020;

D. Draft report: 20 January 2021;

E. Final report: 1 February 2021

Final timetable to be agreed following engagement of the evaluator. The timing above is indicative.

VII. Resources

An independent consultant will be engaged for a period of 40 days to conduct the evaluation, within a budget of US\$ \$10'000 (inclusive of all costs).

Ms. Hana Daoudi, the Project Manager, will manage the evaluation in consultation with the Division Director Ms. Elizabeth Tuerk. The Project Manager will provide support by ensuring the provision of all necessary documentation needed for the desk review, guiding the evaluator on the recipients for the questionnaire and for follow-up interviews, as well as by ensuring communication with the evaluator during the evaluation period.

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

VIII. Intended Use/Next Steps

Findings of this evaluation will be used when possible to:

- improve direct project's follow up actions, implementation of products by project beneficiaries and dissemination of the knowledge created through the project;
- learn lessons from early response to the impact of Covid-19, to develop further related projects
- assess the gaps and further needs of countries in the area of this project;
- formulate a tailored capacity building projects for the development of evidence-based policies for sustainable housing and urban;
- induce new project ideas, improving the planning and design of future capacity building activities and projects on evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies in the UNECE region;

The results of the evaluation will be reported to the SCTCS.

Following the receipt of the final report, the project manager will develop a management response and action plan for addressing the recommendations made by the evaluator. The final evaluation report, the management response and the progress on implementation of recommendations will be available on the UNECE website.

IX. Criteria for evaluators

Evaluators should have:

- An advanced university degree or equivalent background in 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, gender analysis and human rights due diligence
- 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.