

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Evaluation Title:	Independent Review of the UNECE Project: 1617AN Strengthening the National Capacities of Selected UNECE Countries for Evidence-Based Regulatory and Procedural Trade Policies to Achieve SDGs		
Period of Review:	1 January 2017- 31 December 2020		
Date of Evaluation Report:	07/04/2021		
Approved by	Mr. Nicolas Dath-Baron Officer-in-Charge, Programme Management Unit	Date	Signature
		16/06/2021	
Cleared by:	Director of Division Ms. Elisabeth Tuerk	16/06/2021	
Prepared by:	Manager of the evaluation Ms. Hana Daoudi	16/05/2021	

Key findings and conclusions of the evaluation:

The evaluation's key conclusions confirmed the project's *relevance* (very relevant, feeding into global, regional and national strategies of the three beneficiary countries for removing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade); *UNECE's value-added* in terms of its COVID response (providing member States with a trusted, objective overview of multi-agency and cross-departmental issues); the project's *coherence* (very coherent, complementing the achievement of the SDGs, the work of the United Nations system, the direct beneficiaries and the business community); its *effectiveness* (achieving most of what it set out to accomplish in terms of activities, outcome and impact); its *effectiveness* (very effective in introducing gender analysis to UNECE's work, by offering separate assessments on female entrepreneurs to member States as part of the studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade); its *efficiency* (achieving its objectives, but a year later than planned, due to external forces) and *sustainability* (very sustainable because it was specifically designed to develop sustainable tools that would be used in the beneficiary countries after its completion).

Key findings further noted that the human and financial resources have been used *efficiently* and are commensurate to results; that member States participating in the project have a *good level of ownership* in the outcomes of the work and the project activities have *responded well to the COVID-19* pandemic, and noted the interest of some stakeholders to have *the key findings and recommendations translated* into national languages and all the United Nations official languages to ensure broader dissemination.

Recommendation 1:

The project will remain relevant as the three beneficiary countries continue their process of regulatory harmonization and expanding their network of global trade partners. UNECE could consider this model to be a pilot project that could be rolled out to other countries in future.

Management Response:

UNECE accepts the recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

- The UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division has recently launched a similar project in Uzbekistan within the context of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) Project, “Transport and Trade Connectivity in the Age of Pandemics” (2020-2021). The project involves undertaking a study of regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the country using UNECE survey-based evaluation methodology, which targets all supply chain actors (enterprises, freight forwarders and State agencies involved in supporting trade in goods). The results will be published in a comprehensive study that features detailed recommendations in the form of a time-bound action plan, which maps recommendation against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for guiding implementation facilitating monitoring and evaluation.
- The secretariat stands ready to carry out similar studies in response to beneficiary countries’ demand and availability of XB resources.

Timeline: June 2022

Responsible: Project Manager implementing the respective segment of the UNDA Project “Transport and Trade Connectivity in the Age of Pandemics”

Recommendation 2:

The gender-based work can be replicated in the UNECE region and in other regions. The national assessment surveys, female traders’ questionnaires and COVID reports have a relevance which is universal.

Management Response:

UNECE accepts the recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

- The study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Uzbekistan will feature a special focus on female-owned enterprises operating in strategic sectors identified in consultation with the Government. These enterprises will be approached through phone interviews and the results of the interviews will be integrated in the study under a separate chapter.
- Within the context of UNDA “Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 resurgence of the MSME sector” Project (2020-2021), the UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division is carrying out two survey-based impact assessments (Republic of Armenia and Republic of Moldova) to trace the impact of COVID-19 on the end-to-end supply chains of female owned micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- The secretariat stands ready to replicate the gender-based work in additional countries in the UNECE region in response to beneficiary countries’ demand and availability of XB resources. The secretariat stands ready to share the methodology for the gender-based work for entities ready to roll out similar work in other, non-UNECE regions.

Timeline: June 2022

Management Response, Evaluation, PMU, UNECE

Responsible: Project Manager implementing the respective segment of the UNDA Project “Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 resurgence of the MSME sector”

Recommendation 3:

Further disseminate the results of assessments by translating the recommendations into national languages of the beneficiary countries.

Management Response:

UNECE partially accepts this recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

- As this project has been completed, it would be difficult to translate the recommendations emerging from the assessments into the national languages of the beneficiary countries, owing to the lack of funds. This recommendation will be implemented in the future. The UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division will strive to secure enough resources for translating the recommendations from similar assessments during the fund-raising phase.
- A report summarizing the main findings emerging from the COVID-19 impact assessments carried out under this project (Republic of Armenia, Republic of Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Serbia) was prepared (in English and Russian) and will be presented to UNECE member States during the upcoming annual session of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (21-22 June 2021, Geneva and online).
- The study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Uzbekistan will be published in English and Russian.

Timeline: June 2022

Responsible: Manager of this evaluation

Recommendation 4:

Continue to provide high-level analysis of national responses to the COVID pandemic.

Management Response:

UNECE accepts this recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

- The study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Uzbekistan will capture the impact of the pandemic on end-to-end supply chains. In so doing it will provide the beneficiary country a trusted, objective overview of multi-agency and cross-departmental issues, assisting individual ministries understand the factors impacting other government departments and help them understand how they can provide more consistent support to the trade sector.

Timeline: June 2022

Responsible: Project Manager implementing the respective segment of the UNDA Project “Transport and Trade Connectivity in the Age of Pandemics.”

Recommendation 5:

UNECE has a role to play in providing Governments with the voice the most vulnerable into the design of future projects.

Management Response:

UNECE accepts this recommendation.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

- The study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Uzbekistan will feature a special focus on MSMEs.
- In line with its mandate, beneficiary countries' demand and available XB resources, the secretariat will factor in the special needs of the most vulnerable (e.g. MSMEs, female-owned enterprises etc.) into the design of future projects.

Timeline: June 2022

Responsible: Project Manager implementing the respective segment of the UNDA Project “Transport and Trade Connectivity in the Age of Pandemics” and Project Managers of respective follow-up studies.