

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1819BA: Sustainable transport connectivity and implementation of transport related SDGs in selected landlocked and transit/bridging countries

I. Purpose

The primary purpose of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which the objectives of the UNDA 11th tranche project on “*Sustainable transport connectivity and implementation of transport related SDGs in selected landlocked and transit/bridging countries*” were achieved. The evaluation will assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the project in supporting member States to strengthen their capacities to assess the performance of their inland transport systems and their degree of interoperability with transport systems in their respective sub-regions, in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The evaluation will also assess progresses on human rights, gender equality results, disability inclusion, climate change and disaster risk reduction in the context of this engagement. The evaluation will finally 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 Sustainable Transport Division of ECE.

II. Scope

The evaluation will include the full project implementation during the period of 1 January 2018- 31 December 2021 in 5 countries (Georgia, Kazakhstan, Serbia, Paraguay, Jordan).

III. Background

The project supported the following expected accomplishments of the transport sub-programme as defined in the UN Biennial Programme Plan and Priorities for the period 2018-2019 (A/71/6/Rev.1):

“(b) Greater geographical coverage and more effective monitoring of implementation of United Nations legal instruments and recommendations on transport administered by ECE”; and

“(c) Enhanced capacity in ECE member States, particularly in landlocked developing countries for the development of the Pan-European and transcontinental transport infrastructure and transport facilitation measures.”

The project also supported Result 2 of the transport sub-programme as defined in the United Nations Programme budget for 2021 (A/75/6/Add.1): “Enhanced regulatory framework for sustainable inland transport systems that are safer, cleaner and more efficient”.

Transport and the 2030 Agenda

Sustainable transport is essential to achieving most of the SDGs. It is mainstreamed across several SDGs and targets, especially those related to food security, health, energy, infrastructure and cities and human settlements. The implementation of the project has required the harmonization and collection of data, which includes – among others – already identified SDG indicators. This is expected to have had a positive impact on national capacities to monitor and report on progress towards the SDGs, at all levels. The project contributed the following SDGs: SDG 3 (Target 3.6 and 3.9); SDG 7 (Target 7.3); SDG 8 (Target 8.1, 8.2 and 8.4); SDG 9 (Targets 9.1, 9.a and 9.4); SDG 11 (Targets 11.2,11.a); SDG 12 (Target 12.4); SDG 13 (Target 13.2); and SDG 17 (Target 17.14).

Synergies

The project built on ECE’s extensive expertise in the field of sustainable transport, and collaboration with other Regional Commissions on transport related issues. The ECE Sustainable Transport Division administers 59 United Nations legal instruments and serves as the secretariat to twelve treaty bodies which shape the international legal framework for inland transport. This includes road, rail, inland waterways, and intermodal transport, as well as dangerous goods transport and vehicle construction.

Objective and scope of the project

The project objective aimed at enhancing the national capacities of selected developing and middle-income countries to design and implement an evidence-based transport policy framework, that fosters sustainable transport connectivity and the implementation of transport-related SDGs. In the framework of the project a set of 215 Sustainable Inland Transport Connectivity Indicators was developed offering an instrument (a measurable set of criteria) for Governments enabling them to evaluate/ assess: i) the extent to which they implement the relevant UN legal instruments, agreements and conventions effectively; and ii) the degree to which their inland transport systems are inter-operable with the systems within their respective (sub-)regions. Use of the indicators enables policymakers to assess their country’s degree of external economic connectivity in terms of efficiency of inland transport, logistics, trade, customs, and border crossing facilitation processes.

Target group

The target group of the project were public sector officials from a range of line ministries and agencies including Ministries in charge of transport, the economy, infrastructure development, customs committees/ border management agencies as well as road and rail infrastructure managers and operators, including also representatives of private sector, chambers of commerce and other related agencies. The five pilot countries were selected as they are all Landlocked (or transit) Developing Countries and thus face specific transit and transport challenges.

COVID impact

In March 2020, the project was modified to help assess and mitigate the impact of the pandemic on inland transport systems.

A cluster of additional indicators was created enabling countries to assess their transport system preparedness for and resilience to pandemics and other cross-border emergencies. Due to COVID-19 induced travel restrictions a significant part of the budget was reallocated from travel of participants and staff to: i) additional (virtual) capacity building events; ii) the development of an online SITCIN data collection platform enabling countries to use the indicators in a fully automated manner and iii) the development of an online, multilingual e-learning course for countries on how to use the indicators.

Modalities and budget

The budget of the project was \$550,200 funded from the 11th tranche of the Development Account. The project was implemented in cooperation with ESCWA and ECLAC. The project was managed by the Economic Affairs Officer from the Transport Facilitation and Economics 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 efficient and inter-connected transport systems, in the context of the 2030 Agenda, and the Vienna Programme of Action (resolution 69/137)?
2. To what extent were the activities consistent with global and regional priorities? How relevant were the activities vis-à-vis the programme of work of the UNECE? What value has UNECE's efforts added in this area?
3. How relevant was the project to the target groups' needs and priorities? Was there a focus on the most vulnerable ones?
4. Did the project apply gender, rights-based and disability inclusion approaches in the design, implementation, and results of the activities?
5. How relevant was the project with regards to climate change and disaster risk reduction?

Coherence:

6. How coherent was the collaboration with other entities in the UN system and other international organizations?
7. How coherent was the project design? Were the activities implemented in the required sequence needed to ensure the greatest impact of the project? To what extent are the outputs consistent with and relevant to the overall objective and expected accomplishments?
8. What adjustments, if any, were made to the project as a direct consequence of the COVID-19 situation, and to what extent did the adjustments allow the project to effectively respond to the new priorities of Member States that emerged in relation to COVID-19?

9. How did the adjustments, if any, affect the achievement of the project's expected results as stated in its original results framework?

Effectiveness:

10. Did the project achieve the results expected during the project design in terms of the planned activities, outcome, and impact?
11. What were the challenges/ obstacles to achieving the activities, objective and expected accomplishments?

Efficiency:

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

Sustainability:

15. How is the stakeholders' engagement likely to continue, be scaled up, replicated or institutionalized? To what extent do the partners and beneficiaries 'own' the outcomes of the work?
16. 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?
17. What are the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 related activities? Could they be replicated?
18. What are the laws, regulations, policies, or projects that have been developed so far as a result of the project, based on the pilot countries enhanced capacity for evaluating the efficiency of their inland transport systems and for the development of new, sustainable evidence-based transport policies?

V. Methodology

a) The evaluation will be conducted based on the following mixed methods to triangulate information:

- A desk review of all relevant documents, as the primary source of information. The desk review will include *inter alia*: the project document and information on project activities (monitoring data); studies and reports (Project progress reports, the national connectivity and sustainability plans developed for each of the five pilot countries in the framework of the project and available financial information). The consultant will also research projects in the same area conducted by other UN agencies.
- Interviews (in person and/or by telephone/video) to be conducted with (i) the national Government focal points for the project in each of the five pilot countries as well the national consultants 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) implementing partners ESCWA and ECLAC closely involved in the implementation of the project. As deemed necessary, focus group discussions via online platforms can also be organized.

- Online survey of the key stakeholders and beneficiaries. The survey will be developed by the consultant on his preferred platform.
- Remote observation of virtual workshops and meetings

b) Norms and standards

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the [ECE Evaluation Policy](#) and the Administrative instruction guiding Evaluation in the UN Secretariat ([ST/AI/2021/3](#)).

Gender equality and human rights considerations are integrated at all stages of the evaluation: (i) in the evaluation scope of analysis, evaluation criteria and questions design; (ii) in the methods, tools, and data analysis techniques; (iii) in the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the final report.

c) Outline of the final report

The evaluation report will strive not to exceed 30 pages and follow the mandatory outline for UNDA report to be shared by the Programme Management Unit. 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 January 2021;
- B. Data collection: by 15 February 2022;
- C. Data analysis: by 15 March 2021;
- D. Draft report: 1 April 2022;
- E. Final draft report: 15 April 2022;
- F. Final report: 31 April 2022

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

VII. Resources and Management of the evaluation

An independent consultant will be engaged for a period of 40 days to conduct the evaluation, within a budget of \$22,000 inclusive of all costs.

To enhance the relevance, quality and credibility of the evaluation process, an Evaluation Committee will support the evaluation process. The Committee will be comprised of three members:

- Project Manager, Mr. Roel Janssens, Transport Facilitation and Economics Section, Sustainable Transport Division
- Programme Officer in charge of evaluations, Programme Management Unit (PMU)
- Ms. Ketevan Salukvadze, Head of Transport and Logistics Development Policy

Department, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia
The Evaluation Committee will be involved in the following steps:

- Review of the Terms of Reference
- Review of the proposed evaluator profiles
- Reception and review of the draft evaluation report

The Project Manager, Mr. Roel Janssens in consultation with Mr. Konstantinos Alexopoulos, Chief of Section will be involved in the following steps:

- Provide all documentation needed for desk review, contact details, support and guidance to the evaluation consultant as needed throughout the timeline of the evaluation.
- Advise the evaluator on the recipients for the questionnaire and for follow-up interviews.
- Process and manage the consultancy contract of the evaluator, along the key milestones agreed with PMU.

The Programme Management Unit will be involved in the following steps:

- Selection of the evaluator
- Development and clearance of the Terms of Reference
- Provide guidance to the Project Manager and evaluator as needed on the evaluation design and methodology
- Clearance of the final report after 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 project for Governments interested in starting to use the indicators for evaluation of their national transport system efficiency
- induce new project ideas, improving the planning and design of future capacity-building activities and projects on regional and inter-regional transport connectivity in the UNECE and other regions

The results of the evaluation will be reported to the Inland Transport Committee.

Following the issuance 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, advanced statistical research and analysis.
- Demonstrated relevant professional experience in design, management and conduct of evaluation processes with the UN Secretariat, 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.

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