

# United Nations Development Account

## Terminal Evaluation of Project 2023AA

*"Building urban economic resilience during and after COVID-19"*

(2020-2022)

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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

DA-PMT	Development Account Programme Management Team
DPT	Diagnostic and Planning Tool
ECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EMC	Evaluation Management Committee
ERBP	Economic Resilience Building Plans
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
IE	Implementing Entity
ILO	International Labour Organization
MPTF	United Nations COVID-19 Response & Recovery Multi-Party Trust Fund
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SERP	Socio-Economic Response Plan
UN	United Nations
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDA	United Nations Development Account
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDRR	United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNPFA	United Nations Population Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlement Programme
VLR	Voluntary Local Review

## Executive summary

**Project overview.** The project “Building urban economic resilience during and after COVID-19” sought to strengthen the capacities of local governments in 16 cities globally to design, implement, and monitor sustainable, resilient, and inclusive COVID-19 economic and financial responses, as well as recovery and rebuilding plans. The intended impact of the project was for local governments to be better able to withstand shocks and crises with financial implications, such as COVID-19 and other stresses to urban systems that are likely to reoccur in a predominantly urban world. The project was organized into five workstreams: assessment and capacity building, stakeholder engagement, economic resilience planning, knowledge sharing, and process monitoring and evaluation. The project was implemented in 16 pilot cities between May 2020 and April 2022. The project was funded under the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) and had a budget of \$2,179,000 USD. The Implementing Entities (IEs) of the project were the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA). Two technical collaboration partners supported project implementation across all the regions: the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF).

**Evaluation purpose and scope.** This evaluation analyzed the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the project with the purpose of assessing the results achieved by the project and of identifying lessons learned and good practices to inform future projects and strengthen the knowledge base regarding what works to build urban economic resilience in different contexts. The evaluation was carried out between July 2022 and December 2022 following a structured process of data collection and analysis, which included key informant interviews, an online survey, five city deep dives and a review of project documents.

### Conclusions

#### *Relevance*

The project was designed to address expressions of interest from local authorities in developing country Member States and was thus relevant to their new needs and priorities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The main impacts of COVID-19 on urban economies were clearly identified in the Project Document. While the situation analysis did not identify the challenges faced by local governments to address these impacts (which included the lack of a planned response, lack of funding, and the lack of information on the economic impacts of COVID-19 in the city), this gap was addressed by the first workstream, which contemplated a diagnostic assessment at the city level. There were some missed opportunities in the alignment of the Economic Resilience Building Plans (ERBPs) developed in each city with the countries’ Socio-Economic Resilience Plans, particularly in relation with green recovery opportunities and the specific needs of persons in situations of vulnerability in relation with economic resilience building.

Project activities and modalities were relevant to the new environment created by the pandemic. Internet access and language barriers were a challenge in some cities but did not substantially affect project implementation. Remote work facilitated project coordination across a large number of cities and

strengthened collaboration among partners in different regions, while local consultants played a key role as the interface between IEs and local stakeholders.

The project was aligned with multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the design stage but some ERBPs did not explicitly reflect the comprehensive approach to development promoted by the SDGs, pointing to opportunities for a more integrated approach. While the approach outlined in the Diagnostic and Planning Tool (DPT) left ample room for adjusting the thematic focus depending on the priorities of each city, environmental sustainability was not included among the dimensions covered by the DPT, possibly leading to missed opportunities to identify options for green recovery, which were driven by local interests and the ongoing work of each IE. While contemplated to a certain extent in the DPT, social sustainability does not figure prominently in the city diagnostics and in the ERBPs, partly due to limited availability of disaggregated data at the city level and the predominantly economic focus of the DPT. Some of the actions proposed in the ERBPs, however, have the potential to produce social and environmental co-benefits.

The gender perspective was adequately considered in the project design and, to a certain extent, in stakeholder discussions and other project activities, but is not fully mainstreamed into the DPT, city diagnostics and ERBPs, mainly due to the lack of disaggregated data at the city level. The same can be said for the rights of the persons in situation of vulnerability and with disabilities. Project design and activities were aligned with a human rights perspective, especially by fostering inclusive processes, but the DPT provided limited guidance on how to integrate it in diagnostics and plans, where it remained implicit.

### *Coherence*

Opportunities for complementarity and coordination with other work undertaken by project partners were clearly identified at project design. In some cities, synergies were established with Voluntary Local Reviews, while in others, IEs integrated the project into ongoing collaboration to foster synergies and ensure continued support after project end. Project partners also harnessed synergies to integrate the data collected and the DPT into subsequent projects.

Despite the efforts made to engage United Nations (UN) Country Teams and other UN entities, coordination remained limited due to their multiple engagements and stretched capacities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the specific focus of the project on economic resilience at the city level, with implementation in cities that are not capitals, while UNCTs work mostly at the national level. Limited evidence was found of coordination with the UN COVID-19 Response & Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund, although potential synergies might have been explored in at least one case.

### *Effectiveness*

A clear methodology for urban economic resilience analysis and planning was developed and applied in all cities. With support from the IEs, economic resilience diagnostics, ERBPs, and information notes with sources of financial support were developed for the 16 pilot cities, in addition to several knowledge products and events, and additional project outputs to address emerging needs and opportunities. City diagnostics provided clear and comparable assessments of urban economic resilience. ERBPs provided a menu of options to address the gaps identified in the diagnostics but the proposed actions would have benefited from being prioritized and, in some cases, from being formulated in a more specific and measurable manner. Information briefs on sources of financial support came late in project

implementation and did not fully address local governments' need to increase their capacities to access funding opportunities.

Overall, the project achieved its planned outcomes, thus contributing to increased knowledge on urban economic resilience. However, it was not always successful in increasing cities' capacities to access finance, and its contribution to improving implementation and monitoring capacities was limited. In some cities, governments have already started using the capacities gained through the project for economic resilience planning. Promising actions have been taken by some local governments in the pilot cities as a result of project support, such as integrating ERBPs in their planning frameworks and establishing funding mechanisms to support their implementation, but economic, social, and environmental benefits have yet to materialize. The project also had the positive, unintended result of strengthening coordination among IEs and of positioning economic resilience in their agendas, which also paved the way for further collaboration with some pilot cities.

Overall, local stakeholders consider that the project was useful for city governments' response to the economic impacts of COVID-19, and positively value the quality and the timeliness of the support provided. This is partly due to the fact that, while following a unified implementation approach with clear deliverables and milestones, IEs adapted the nature and focus of project activities as relevant to address emerging local priorities.

The DPT is a key contribution and legacy of the project. This tool, developed by UNCDF specifically for this project, proved particularly effective in providing a snapshot of urban economic resilience and in highlighting key gaps, while allowing comparisons between different periods and across cities. While relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tool is easily applicable to other contexts, thus ensuring its continued relevance and replicability. The application of the DPT in the pilot cities provided valuable lessons that can be harnessed to strengthen the tool. These include considering limited data availability, providing training and advice throughout implementation given limited technical capacity at the local level, and strengthening the mainstreaming of environmental and social sustainability.

Effective project management and governance was the main enabling condition for project outputs and outcomes. Project implementation faced several barriers, including COVID-19 restrictions, government changes, limited data availability and access, and overlapping crises in Beirut and Kharkiv, which were managed adequately.

### *Efficiency*

Key project outputs were completed by project end in all cities despite some delays experienced during implementation, partly thanks to the fact that risks were correctly anticipated and managed. In some cases, however, delays and sequencing issues affected the timeliness and relevance of project outputs, particularly the information briefs.

Project partners were adequately selected, with the five UN Regional Commissions providing an adequate platform to support project implementation, as they brought to the project their networks and in-depth understanding of each region, as well as their internal expertise on the multiple themes linked with urban economic resilience. Overall, the clear division of labor among project partners, together with clearly established processes for decision-making, communication, information-sharing and knowledge management, ensured efficient implementation.

Weekly Steering Committee meetings were an effective mechanism to coordinate activities, monitor progress, discuss emerging challenges, and exchange experiences. Frequent communication at these meetings also helped create closer ties among project partners and identify additional opportunities for collaboration, thus strengthening interregional work. Coordination with other UNDA IEs in the framework of the response to COVID-19 was however limited.

### *Sustainability*

As the project provided short-term support to address emerging needs in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not equipped with a funded sustainability strategy. Nevertheless, several measures were implemented to foster ownership by local governments, including letters of endorsement, continued engagement through events, spin-off and follow-up projects, as well as communication and knowledge management. Despite these measures, some risks to the sustainability of project outcomes in the future still need to be monitored, especially in relation to funding and to government changes that could affect political ownership. To a lesser extent, limited technical capacities in local governments and institutional frameworks also pose some challenges.

### **Recommendations**

#### *Recommendations to ensure the sustainability of project results*

**1. ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA, with support from UN-Habitat and UNCDF as relevant, should continue efforts to engage pilot cities and help them further develop their capacities to access funding for their plans.** The evaluation identified some risks to the sustainability of project results, including limited access to funding, decreased political ownership following possible government changes in the future, low social ownership and, to a lesser extent, limited technical capacities within local governments and institutional arrangements that hinder the adoption of the Economic Resilience Building Plans (ERBPs). To address these risks, the following actions should be considered:

- **Continue engaging local governments from the pilot cities in ongoing or upcoming projects and activities** to provide them with continued support to access funding and to improve their technical capacities for the implementation and monitoring of the ERBPs. Cities would particularly benefit from continued and practical advice on how to tap on existing opportunities for increasing public revenue, and on how to access international and private-sector funding for the most cost-intensive actions included in the ERBPs (e.g., those related with basic infrastructure). Advice is particularly needed to develop a pipeline of projects and match them with adequate types of funding from different sources.
- **Continue providing spaces for experience exchange among pilot cities**, both at the regional and global level, including joint events in different fora and the integration of local governments into ongoing initiatives, such as the Making Cities Resilient 2030 network, the Asia – Pacific Mayors Academy (launched by ESCAP, UN-Habitat and other organizations), and the Malaga Global Coalition for Municipal Finance led by UNCDF. This would provide local governments with opportunities to access expert advice and capacity building to implement their ERBPs, while at the same time fostering long-term engagement in resilience building. Ideally, experience exchange should go beyond mayors to involve local focal points and other city officials.

**2. ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, UN-Habitat and UNCDF should consider mobilizing resources (UNDA or other) for a follow-up project to support the implementation and monitoring of ERBPs in the pilot cities.** A draft concept note for a DA 16<sup>th</sup> tranche project was developed to support urban economic resilience building for inclusive responses and recovery regarding natural, man-made disasters, internal and external shocks. If implemented in some of the pilot cities, this proposed project could help them update the city diagnostics, track progress in the ERBPs, and continue building their capacities in relation with resilience planning, monitoring (including data collection and management), and implementation in the context of the multiple economic crises that cities are facing in the current international juncture.

**3. ECA and ECE, with support from ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, UN-Habitat and UNCDF as relevant, should systematize the lessons learned from this project.** The project produced a large number of knowledge products and deliverables, most of which are available on the project website. It would be useful to distil this vast knowledge into policy guidelines for economic resilience building that would provide practical and concise guidance to national and subnational governments regarding how to strengthen urban economic resilience in the face of external shocks.

#### *Recommendations for future projects*

**4. UNCDF, with support from UN-Habitat, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA as relevant, should update the Diagnostic and Planning Tool (DPT) based on lessons learned and pilot its use in tandem with other diagnostic instruments.** The evaluation found that, while the DPT was a relevant and effective tool to assess urban economic resilience, there are opportunities to strengthen it based on the lessons learned from its application in the 16 pilot cities. It is therefore recommended that UNCDF updates the DPT drawing on these lessons, including those related with the mainstreaming of social and environmental sustainability into economic resilience. Among other aspects, practical guidance should be provided to a) assess and address the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on urban economic resilience; b) identify vulnerable groups and the specific impacts of external shocks on the economic resilience of those groups, including persons with disabilities; and c) mainstream gender and human rights perspectives in the application of the tool. Input could be provided by UN Regional Commissions based on their experience in this project. The application of the DPT in tandem with other diagnostic instruments, such as UN-Habitat's City Resilience Profiling Tool,<sup>1</sup> should also be piloted.

**5. ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, UN-Habitat and UNCDF should continue implementing joint, global projects** to fully harness potential synergies and multiply outcomes. Future joint projects should replicate the project's governance arrangements, including the appointment of a leading agency supported by a project manager, weekly Steering Committee meetings, knowledge management systems, and a unified implementation strategy with clear but adaptable deliverables and milestones.

**6. UNDA projects should support capacity building throughout implementation.** While supporting diagnostic and planning processes is key to advance urban economic resilience, and more broadly the 2030 Agenda, so is developing implementation capacities, especially at the local level. As already mentioned above, efforts should focus, in particular, on helping local governments strengthen their capacities to increase public revenues and develop a pipeline of projects matched with adequate types of funding from different sources. The proposed DA 16<sup>th</sup> tranche project mentioned above is a promising step in this direction.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://unhabitat.org/guide-to-the-city-resilience-profiling-tool>

## 1. Introduction

The project “Building urban economic resilience during and after COVID-19” sought to strengthen the capacities of local governments in 16 cities globally to design, implement, and monitor sustainable, resilient, and inclusive COVID-19 economic and financial responses, as well as recovery and rebuilding plans. The intended impact of the project was for local governments to be better able to withstand shocks and crises with financial implications, such as COVID-19 and other stresses to urban systems that are likely to reoccur in a predominantly urban world. The project was organized into five workstreams: assessment and capacity building, stakeholder engagement, economic resilience planning, knowledge sharing, and process monitoring and evaluation. The project was implemented in 16 pilot cities between May 2020 and April 2022. The project was funded under the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) and had a budget of \$2,179,000 USD. The Implementing Entities (IEs) of the project were the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA). Two technical collaboration partners supported project implementation across all the regions: the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF).

This evaluation analyzed the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the project with the purpose of assessing the results achieved by the project and of identifying lessons learned and good practices to inform future projects and strengthen the knowledge base regarding what works to build urban economic resilience in different contexts. The evaluation was carried out between July 2022 and December 2022 following a structured process of data collection and analysis, which included key informant interviews, an online survey, five city deep dives and a review of project documents.

The primary audiences of the evaluation are the IEs (ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, and ESCWA) and the technical collaboration partners (UN-Habitat and UNCDF). The findings of the evaluation also feed into the program-level evaluation of the UNDA’s response to COVID-19, scheduled to be initiated in 2023, whose primary audiences will include the UNDA Steering Committee and Program Management Team, as well as the management of the UNDA IEs. The results of the program-level evaluation will also be presented to the General Assembly of the UN as part of the biennial progress report on the implementation of the UNDA.

## 2. Description of the Project

### 2.1 Background

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By 2020, urban residents accounted for 56.2% of the global population (i.e., 4.4 billion people) and are expected to grow to 62.5% (5.5 billion) by 2035.<sup>2</sup> The growing concentration of population in urban areas makes them especially vulnerable to communicable disease outbreaks, transmission, and impacts. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, cities have been the main hotspots for the

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<sup>2</sup> ONU Habitat, 2022. World City Report 2022 (Statistical Annex, Table A.1).

transmission of the virus. This has caused extensive impacts on urban economies, including reduced employment (especially for women), economic losses for businesses (leading to bankruptcy in some cases), and disruptions in urban-rural supply chains. The COVID-19 pandemic has thus exacerbated urban poverty and inequality, especially in cities with large informal sectors and limited access to basic services. Local governments have been at the frontline of COVID-19 economic response and recovery despite reduced public revenues and limited capacities.

## 2.2 Project objectives and expected accomplishments/results

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The project “Building urban economic resilience during and after COVID-19” sought to strengthen the capacities of local governments in 16 cities globally to design, implement, and monitor sustainable, resilient, and inclusive COVID-19 economic and financial responses, as well as recovery and rebuilding plans. The intended impact of the project was for local governments to be better able to withstand shocks and crises with financial implications, such as COVID-19 and other stresses to urban systems that are likely to reoccur in a predominantly urban world.

## 2.3 Project strategies and key activities

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The project was organized into **five workstreams**, which were implemented in synergy:

1. **Assessment and capacity building:** Through pre-planning, capacity building, and assessment activities, this workstream focused on laying the groundwork for local governments to successfully participate in the project and achieve its outcomes.
2. **Stakeholder engagement:** This workstream was geared towards engaging local stakeholders to develop a shared vision and objectives for local economic recovery and resilience plans.
3. **Economic resilience planning:** Under this workstream, the project supported local governments in drafting city-specific economic recovery and resilience plans.
4. **Knowledge sharing:** The focus of this workstream was on documenting and disseminating lessons learned to support mutual learning across the pilot cities, to foster scaling up and replication in other cities, and to enhance the technical capabilities of the United Nations (UN).
5. **Process monitoring and evaluation:** This workstream supported both internal project monitoring based on output and outcome indicators, as well as the integration of monitoring and evaluation into city plans.

Through the five workstreams, the project supported the development of three key deliverables in the pilot cities: an economic resilience diagnostic, an Economic Resilience Building Plan (ERBP), and an information note on sources of financial support. Workshops and meetings with local stakeholders<sup>3</sup> were carried out in each city to provide input for these deliverables, validate them, and build local capacities. Regional and global knowledge products were also developed to support the cities and to ensure experience exchange and dissemination. The project’s Theory of Change (ToC) included in Annex I

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<sup>3</sup> Local stakeholders that participated in project activities included local government officials, as well as representatives from academia, businesses, civil society organizations, the national government, and UN agencies, among others.

specifies the key outputs developed under each workstream and their expected contribution to project outcomes and objective.

## 2.4 Beneficiaries and target countries

The project was implemented in 16 pilot cities that were selected by the UN Regional Commissions based on expressions of interest (see Table 1).

*Table 1: Pilot cities by Implementing Entity*

Implementing Entity	Pilot cities
ECA	Accra (Ghana), Harare (Zimbabwe), Yaoundé (Cameroon)
ECE	Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Kharkiv (Ukraine), Tirana (Albania)
ECLAC	Guayaquil (Ecuador), Lima (Peru), Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic)
ESCAP	Hoi An (Viet Nam), Pune (India), Subang Jaya (Malaysia), Suva (Fiji)
ESCWA	Alexandria (Egypt), Beirut (Lebanon), Kuwait (Kuwait)

## 2.5 Key partners and other key stakeholders

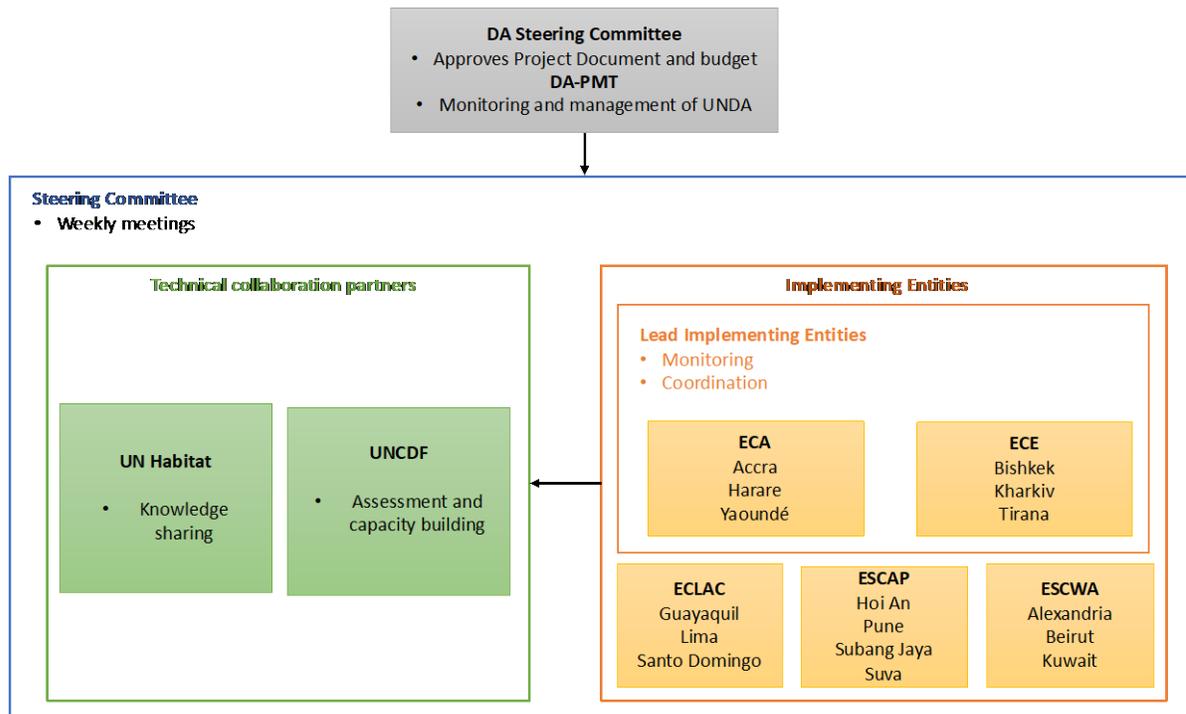
As showed in Figure 1, the IEs of the project were ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, and ESCWA. Each Regional Commission was responsible for project implementation in their respective region (Table 1); as the lead IEs, ECA and ECE were also responsible for project coordination and monitoring, with the support of a Project Management Consultant based at ECE. Two technical collaboration partners supported project implementation across all the regions: UN-Habitat, with a focus on the knowledge sharing workstream, and UNCDF, with a focus on the assessment and capacity-building workstream. The project's Steering Committee, which held weekly meetings from June 2020 to March 2022, was composed of the focal points of the IEs and of the technical collaboration partners.

To coordinate activities in each city, a focal point was appointed in each local government<sup>4</sup> and a local consultant was hired to provide support. Seven international consultants (one or two in each region) were also hired to support implementation. UN regional commissions held weekly meetings with the local consultants and periodic meetings with focal points for monitoring purposes.

The Development Account Programme Management Team (DA-PMT), located within the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), provided guidance and support in the planning and implementation of the project, and had a significant involvement in project monitoring. The Project Document and budget for each phase of the project were approved by the UNDA Steering Committee.

<sup>4</sup> The local government officers appointed as focal points were either city councilors, senior officers at the Mayor Office, or heads of municipal departments or agencies (such as finance, planning, international cooperation, knowledge, monitoring and evaluation).

Figure 1: Governance arrangements



## 2.6 Resources

Project implementation started in May 2020 and finalized in April 2022.<sup>5</sup> The project was funded under the United Nations Development Account (UNDA), which is a mechanism to fund capacity development projects of the 10 economic and social entities of the UN Secretariat. The project budget was \$2,179,000 USD, distributed as follows: i) Phase I (May-June 2020): \$200,000 USD; ii) Phase II (July 2020-February 2021): \$650,000 USD; and Phase III (March 2021-April 2022): \$1.329.000 USD. Phase I consisted in the establishment of the consortium and detailed planning, while project implementation was carried out in Phases II and III.

## 2.7 Link to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

According to the Project Document, the project was expected to directly contribute to the achievement of the SDGs 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 11, and 17 (see Section 5.1 for a detailed analysis).

## 2.8 Innovative elements

A Diagnostic and Planning Tool (DPT)<sup>6</sup> for urban economic recovery and resilience was developed by UNCDF as part of the project. The DPT conceptualizes urban economic resilience as *“the capacity and related capabilities of cities or urban areas to plan for and anticipate negative shocks, including long-term*

<sup>5</sup> The original end date as per the Project Document was December 2021 but this was extended to April 2022.

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://urbaneconomicresilience.org/deliverables-resources/urban-economic-recovery-and-resilience-diagnostics-and-planning-tool-dpt/>

*stresses, to their economies, allocate, reallocate and mobilize resources to withstand those shocks, recover from the shocks, and rebuild better, while placing their economies on the path to sustainable economic growth and simultaneously strengthening their capacity to deal with any future shocks”.*

This definition is operationalized into five areas: labor market, business environment, financial environment, economic governance, and basic infrastructure and connectivity. For each area, the DPT identifies performance indicators (17) and their relevant dimensions (63), providing a scoring system to assess performance indicators, and then to calculate the score for each urban resilience area. The DPT suggests methods to carry out the scoring (e.g., expert panels) and contemplates the possibility of doing so qualitatively when data are not available. The tool also sets out guidelines for resilience planning. These span planning principles (some of which are specific to COVID-19 response and recovery), time horizons, alignment with existing plans, key planning steps, and the contents of the plan (including templates for performance targets, action plans, and risk analyses).

### 3. Evaluation objectives, scope and questions

#### 3.1 Purpose and objectives

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Based on the Terms of Reference (ToR, see Annex II) and consultations with the project’s Steering Committee during the inception phase, this evaluation serves the double **purpose** of providing an assessment of the results achieved by the project (accountability) and of identifying lessons learned and good practices to inform future projects and to strengthen the knowledge base regarding what works to build urban economic resilience in different contexts (learning).

As per the ToR, the **specific objectives** of the evaluation are the following:

- Determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the project results in light of its goals and objectives.
- Document the results and achievements in each of the workstreams of the project, as well as at the project level (including synergies built across workstreams).<sup>7</sup>
- Assess the contribution of the project to COVID-19 response delivery and external coordination, including appropriate gender and human rights dimensions.<sup>8</sup>
- Identify good practices and lessons learned from the project and formulate action-oriented, forward-looking recommendations addressed to the IEs for improving future interventions.

#### 3.2 Evaluation scope, criteria and questions

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The evaluation assesses project design and implementation based on five evaluation criteria: **relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability**.<sup>9</sup> In line with the UNDA Project Evaluation

<sup>7</sup> This evaluation objective was adjusted to clarify scope.

<sup>8</sup> This evaluation objective was adjusted to clarify scope.

<sup>9</sup> For the definitions of these evaluation criteria, see the UNDA Project Evaluation Guidelines (2019, p. 9) and the OECD-DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance:

<https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

Guidelines, the evaluation also looks at the contribution of the project to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the partnerships that were put in place by IEs for joint project implementation; the mainstreaming of gender, human rights, and the rights of persons with disabilities; and the innovation spurred by the project.<sup>10</sup> As further explained in Section 4, an evaluation matrix (Annex III), which identifies the questions to be addressed under each evaluation criterion, was developed as a guiding tool for this evaluation.

The evaluation covers the entire duration of the project **from May 2020 to April 2022**. The **primary audiences** of the evaluation are the IEs (ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, and ESCWA) and the technical collaboration partners (UN-Habitat and UNCDF). The findings of the evaluation also feed into the program-level evaluation of the UNDA's response to COVID-19, scheduled to be initiated in 2023, whose primary audiences will include the UNDA Steering Committee and Program Management Team, as well as the management of the UNDA IEs. The results of the program-level evaluation will also be presented to the General Assembly of the UN as part of the biennial progress report on the implementation of the UNDA.

## 4. Methodology

This evaluation was carried out following a structured process of data collection and analysis to assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the project. Throughout evaluation design, data collection, analysis, and reporting, the evaluator took into consideration the requirements established in the *UNDA Project Evaluation Guidelines* (October 2019) and in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) *Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation* (2020), together with the *COVID-19 Response Evaluation Protocol* developed by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) in October 2020. To account for regional and local diversity in project implementation contexts, the evaluation methodology included consultations with a variety of stakeholders. During data collection and analysis, the evaluator was alert to the different characteristics (such as gender, ethnicity, age, and disabilities) that intersect in project stakeholders, shaping their social relationships, capacities, needs and vulnerabilities in relation with urban economic resilience.

The evaluation was led by the ECA and ECE Evaluation Units as the Secretariat of the Evaluation Management Committee (EMC), which served a quality assurance function and comprised representatives of the Evaluation Units of ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, UNCDF, and UN Habitat. An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG), which comprised the project focal points of each IE and technical collaboration partner, provided substantive feedback to evaluation deliverables.

### 4.1 Inception phase

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Two virtual inception meetings were held in July 2022, the first with the lead IEs and the second with the project's Steering Committee, to establish communication arrangements, agree on an updated timeline, share expectations, and exchange on practical aspects of the evaluation process, such as key project

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<sup>10</sup> These additional dimensions are addressed in a cross-cutting manner under the main evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability). See Annex 5.1 for more detail.

documents to be reviewed and the support needed from the IEs to set up consultations with city-level stakeholders.

To prepare the inception report, a rapid desk review was also conducted to identify the types and contents of available project documents as well as any information gaps. The Project Document, the draft Final Project Report, and the Stakeholder Engagement Template were reviewed in detail by the evaluator to become familiar with the project and to identify key considerations for evaluation design.

An evaluation matrix was then developed (Annex III), which includes the evaluation questions to be considered under each evaluation criterion, key qualitative and quantitative indicators to operationalize the evaluation questions, as well as the sources of information and data collection methods to answer each question. The project's ToC (Annex I) was also reconstructed based on project documents. The evaluation matrix and the ToC were used as a guiding framework for data collection and analysis.

The draft inception report was submitted to ECA and ECE Evaluation Units on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The evaluator addressed the comments provided by the EMC and submitted the final inception report on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

## 4.2 Data gathering phase

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The data gathering phase was carried out remotely between August 22<sup>nd</sup> and October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022. At the project level, this phase comprised a document review and remote key informant interviews, while, at the city level, it included a survey to project stakeholders across the 16 pilot cities, complemented by deep dives in five cities.

### *Data gathering at project level*

**Document review:** The evaluator conducted an in-depth review of key project documentation, including the planning and monitoring documents, project-level deliverables, and relevant UN frameworks (see Annex IV for a detailed list).

**Key informant interviews:** Between late August and early September 2022, eight individual or group interviews were conducted remotely via Teams, one with the DA-PMT and seven with the focal points of each IE and technical collaboration partner; when so suggested by focal points, international or regional consultants also participated in the interviews. The interviews were semi-structured, i.e., the evaluator followed a questionnaire to facilitate data triangulation but was free to explore any other relevant topics that arose during the interview or that were specific to a given interviewee. A total of 11 people participated in these interviews, including four women and seven men. The full list of interviewees is included in Annex V and the interview questionnaires are included in Annex VI.

### *Data gathering at city level*

**Survey:** An online survey was administered to 67 city-level project stakeholders across the 16 pilot cities, including the focal point in the local government, the local consultant, and any other stakeholders that have actively participated in project activities in their respective cities and could thus provide an informed opinion about the project. To ensure inclusive consultations, the survey was available in English, French,

Spanish, Arabic, and Russian;<sup>11</sup> it was accessible on different devices (including phones) and by using third-party screen readers. Twenty-three full responses were submitted between October 19<sup>th</sup> and November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022. The respondents included local consultants (12), local focal points (7), participants in project activities (3) and other project stakeholders (1) across 14 of the 16 pilot cities.<sup>12</sup> The survey questionnaire is included in Annex VI.

**City deep dives** were also carried out in a purposive sample of five cities: Harare, Zimbabwe; Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan; Guayaquil, Ecuador; Hoi An, Viet Nam; and Beirut, Lebanon. Data gathering, which took place in September and October 2022, included the following:

- **Desk review** of city-level deliverables, including urban economic recovery and resilience diagnostics, Economic Resilience Building Plans, and information packages on sources for financial support to cities (see Annex IV for a detailed list).
- **Key informant interviews:** 10 remote interviews were conducted with the local focal points (4) and the local consultants (6) in each city. A total of 19 people participated in these interviews, including 12 women and seven men (see Annex V).<sup>13</sup>

The five cities were selected based on purposive sampling criteria, which sought to reflect the diversity of the pilot cities and their learning potential across key analytical dimensions: region; level of COVID-19 impact on urban economies; urban economic resilience capacity (based on city diagnostics); key economic sectors; city status (capital / non capital); f) public and private sector engagement in pandemic management; population; and feasibility to reach key informants (Table 2).

*Table 2: Purposive sample for city deep dives*

IE	City	COVID-19 economic impact	Resilience capacity	Key economic sectors	Capital	Key stakeholders in pandemic management	Population	Feasibility
ECA	Harare (Zimbabwe)	High	Medium	Services, industry	Yes	Central government, private sector	Over one million	Feasible
ECE	Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan)	High	Medium	Commerce, construction, industry	Yes	Central & local government Private sector	Over one million	Feasible with interpretation to be provided
ECLAC	Guayaquil (Ecuador)	High	High	Commerce (port)	No	Local government Private sector	Over one million	Feasible
ESCAP	Hoi An (Viet Nam)	High	Medium	Tourism	No	Local government, Private sector	Under one million	Feasible
ESCWA	Beirut (Lebanon)	High	Low	Tourism, finance	Yes	Central government	Over one million	Feasible

<sup>11</sup> While it was initially planned to offer the survey in Albanese and Vietnamese as well, Steering Committee members later suggested that this was not necessary as project stakeholders in Tirana and Hoi An were fluent in English.

<sup>12</sup> No responses were received from stakeholders in Pune, India, and Subang Jaya, Malaysia.

<sup>13</sup> Despite repeated attempts, it was not possible to conduct an interview with the local focal points in Harare, Zimbabwe. However, they submitted their response to the survey.

### 4.3 Analysis and reporting phase

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The data collected were systematized and matched with the evaluation questions. For each question, data from different sources was triangulated to ensure that evaluation findings are grounded in evidence and reflect the perspectives of different stakeholders. Project results were then assessed against the project's results framework and ToC (Annex I). Relevant UN frameworks (see Annex IV) were also considered as a reference in the analysis to assess the mainstreaming of gender, human rights, and the rights of persons with disabilities or in situations of vulnerability. Based on the findings thus obtained, the evaluator identified conclusions, lessons learned / good practices, and developed recommendations.

This **draft evaluation report** was submitted on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022, for review by the EMC. A remote **presentation of the preliminary findings** was held on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022, to address any questions and discuss implications for future work with the EMC and the ERG. The EMC shared with the evaluator the consolidated feedback of the EMC and the ERG to the draft evaluation report on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The feedback received was considered and integrated into this **final evaluation report**, which was submitted to the EMC on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

### 4.4 Limitations

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**Large number of pilot cities:** While it was not possible to conduct in-depth consultations in all pilot cities due to time and budget constraints, the survey provided the aggregated perspectives of local stakeholders from the diversity of contexts in which the project was implemented, while the deep dives provided more granular, qualitative data on the project's contribution, lessons learned and good practices.

#### **Challenges to contact local project stakeholders:**

- To ensure a higher response rate, the survey was distributed by ECE, and reminders were sent by ECE and by IEs to stakeholders in their respective regions. Survey responses were submitted for 14 of the 16 pilot cities, with a rather low response rate from local focal points and especially participants. This is likely due to the busy schedules of city officials and to the fact that project activities ended months ago in some of the cities. While this response rate limited the possibility of a rigorous cross-city analysis, individual responses provided valuable qualitative insights into the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of the project in different contexts.
- It was not possible to interview Harare focal points despite repeated attempts, as they experienced internet connection issues and had very busy schedules. Harare focal points answered the online survey, however.

**Time constraints:** It took a longer time than planned to collect the contact data of local project stakeholders for survey distribution and to have the survey translated to Russian and Arabic, mainly due to the high workloads of the IEs that supported these tasks. The data collection period was extended to make up for this delay and ensure that the survey would be available for three weeks.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Relevance

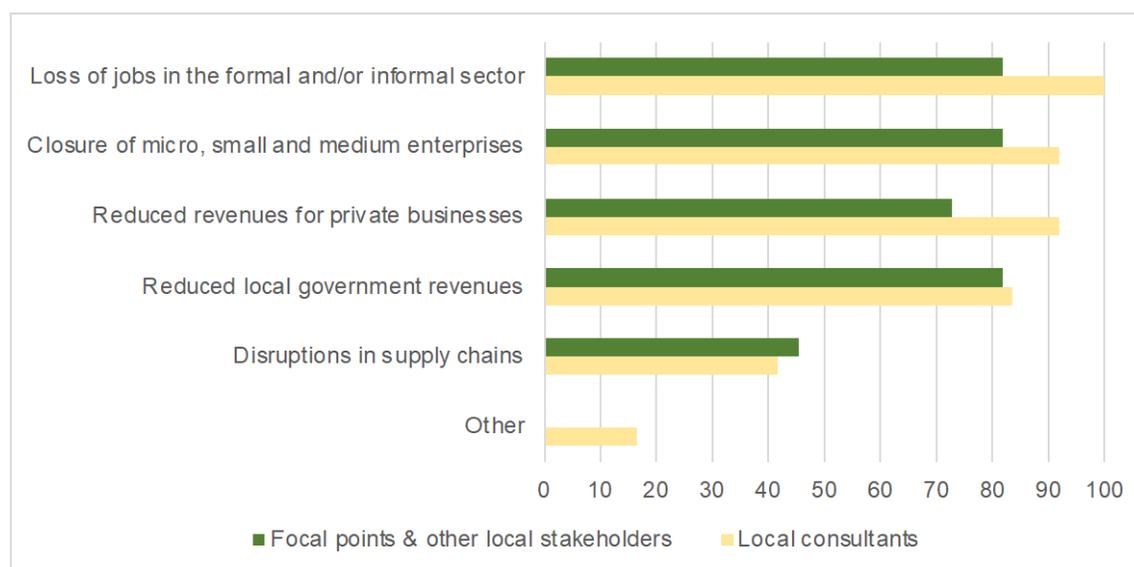
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To what extent was the project designed to target the new needs and priorities of developing country Member States' local authorities as a result of COVID-19, including those enunciated in the country's COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP)?

**The project was designed to address expressions of interest from local authorities of developing country Member States in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.** The project design team was composed of staff and consultants from the two lead IEs (ECE and ECA), who developed technical inputs for discussion, approval, and joint decision-making by project partners. Interviews with IEs show that, while pilot cities were selected by IEs based on expressions of interest, additional criteria were applied to make the final selection among interested cities, such as geographical representation across regions and the balance between capital and non-capital cities. Other criteria used at the regional level were previous engagement (ECLAC and ESCAP), the impact of the COVID-19 (used by ECLAC in the case of Guayaquil), the localization of the cities in different sub-regions (ESCAP) and diversity in government structure, size, and development status (ESCWA); technical collaboration partners were also consulted in some cases. Selecting pilot cities based on expressions of interest helped ensure that the project was relevant to city governments and that they had a strong interest in participating.

**The project design was relevant to the new needs and priorities of the local authorities in developing country Member States.** The situation analysis included in the Project Document identified the key economic and financial impacts arising from COVID-19 in urban areas; these are aligned with those that were most frequently mentioned in the local stakeholder survey, namely job loss, closure of SMEs, reduced revenues for private businesses, and reduced local government revenues (Figure 2). While the situation analysis did not identify the challenges faced by local governments to address these negative impacts, this gap was addressed by the first workstream, which contemplated a diagnostic assessment at the city level. The local stakeholder survey reveals that the main challenges faced are the lack of a planned response, lack of funding, and the lack of information on the economic impacts of COVID-19 in the city. The objective of the project, its expected outcomes, and the five workstreams adequately addressed these challenges by strengthening the capacity of local governments in the 16 cities to design, implement and monitor resilience-building and ERBPs. Furthermore, the project was flexibly designed to adapt to the specific needs and priorities of each of the pilot cities, which are very diverse in terms of their population size, economies, and governance. Indeed, the Project Document specified that *“project activities and outputs should remain flexible enough to respond to the results of stakeholder engagement throughout the project and incorporate feedback”* and that *“current developments in some of the piloted cities [...] indicate that stakeholder engagement will have to be adjusted to the specific situations”*.

Figure 2: Main economic impacts of COVID-19 in pilot cities (% of responses)<sup>14</sup>



Source: Local stakeholder survey, October 2022.

**There were some missed opportunities in the alignment with the countries’ Socio-Economic Resilience Plans (SERPs).** Deep dives revealed that, while there is a strong alignment between the SERPs for Vietnam and Zimbabwe and the ERBPs of Hoi An and Harare, respectively, the ERBPs developed for other cities have a more limited alignment with the SERPs or this alignment remains implicit. This is partly explained by the different scale and purpose of the ERBPs, which focus on economic resilience building at the city level, and by the limited interaction with some UN Country Teams (UNCTs) given their busy schedules (see Section 5.2). In some cases, however, ERBPs would have benefited from being more informed by the SERPs, especially in relation with opportunities of green recovery and the mainstreaming of gender and the rights of persons in situations of vulnerability.

The EERP of Hoi An is aligned with two pillars of SERP for Vietnam (social cohesion and community resilience, and economic response and recovery) and with its cross-cutting focus on environmental sustainability for building back better. However, the ERBP, unlike the SERP, did not focus on addressing gender-specific needs or those of vulnerable groups. The ERBP of Harare, which included several proposed actions to support enterprises, the formalization of the informal economy and improved social protection, is in line with the focus of Zimbabwe’s SERP on economic response and recovery but addressed gender inequalities and green recovery opportunities to a limited extent.

A lower alignment was found between the SERP for Ecuador, which identifies the protection of employment, of small and medium enterprises, and of informal workers as key areas of UN support in the context of economic recovery, and the ERBP for Guayaquil, which did not address these aspects directly as it focused specifically on improving the sustainability of housing projects in the city. In Lebanon, the SERP focuses on humanitarian response in seven sectors (education, food, health, nutrition, WASH, child protection and gender-based violence, and migrants) with a strong focus on supporting vulnerable

<sup>14</sup> Other includes increased rates of violence against women, increased unequal access to education given the existing digital gap, and the reliance on online education.

populations, which is not fully reflected in the ERBP for Beirut, which is more focused on key enabling conditions for long-term economic resilience building. As for Bishkek, some aspects highlighted in the SERP from Kyrgyzstan were not explicitly addressed in the ERBP, namely the particular attention required by urban informal workers and their household members (including internal migrants in Bishkek) and women, who are typically more economically vulnerable than men due to the large gender gaps in employment, wages, and income. However, these aspects are addressed by other ECE projects in Bishkek that were implemented in synergy with this project.

**To what extent was the project, including its activities and modality, relevant to the new environment created by the pandemic?<sup>15</sup>**

**Overall, project activities and modalities were relevant to the new environment created by the pandemic. Internet access and language barriers were a challenge in some cities but did not substantially affect project implementation.** Most activities were implemented remotely and were adapted according to individual city needs and situations. WhatsApp, phone calls and emails were used for day-to-day communications, and in-person meetings were organized when possible given local COVID-19 restrictions, especially by local consultants to conduct focus groups or one-to-one interviews. Remote work was at times challenging for some local stakeholders in locations with limited internet access. For instance, the City of Beirut experienced some communication challenges because of disruptions in electricity supply and internet connection; likewise local stakeholder participation in remote events and interviews was challenging for some participants in Harare and Hoi An due to unstable internet connection. When setting up remote project activities, project management was alert to time zones, and simultaneous translation was provided; training materials were also translated into multiple languages. However, time zone differences and language barriers still posed challenges in some cities, for instance in Hoi An, where issues with the quality of materials were experienced and required additional backstopping from ESCAP. According to the final project report, closer interaction between the IEs and the beneficiaries would have likely created even greater commitment towards the implementation of some project activities.

**Remote work enabled the simultaneous implementation of the project in a large number of cities and strengthened collaboration among partners in different regions.** Weekly Steering Committee meetings and remote events strengthened collaboration ties among partners in different regions and enabled some experience exchange between city officials located in different regions. For example, UN-Habitat organized a global policy dialogue during Phase II of the project with representatives from pilot cities and project partners, where cities could listen at what other cities were doing and how they were confronting the different challenges posed by the pandemic. An additional co-benefit was that IEs, especially ECE in its project management role, strengthened their capacities in using a variety of online tools to facilitate remote interaction and to store project information. According to the final project report, in some cases, the use of online tools facilitated innovative and creative ways for participants to interact with each other during project meetings and improve efficiency in implementation.

**Local consultants played a key role as the interface between IEs and local stakeholders.** The recruitment of experienced local consultants with wide local networks of contacts in each city facilitated data

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<sup>15</sup> As explained in Annex 8.1 Evaluation Matrix, this question analyzed the extent to which planned project activities and their modes of implementation addressed the new conditions created by the pandemic (e.g., risks and restrictions to in-person work).

collection in the context of COVID-19 related restrictions and allowed some in person interaction with city officials. This was especially important as IEs and international consultants were working remotely, while local consultants were able to visit government agencies and to have individual meetings with city officials to collect data as feasible given local COVID-19 regulations.

### To what extent was the project aligned with the SDGs?

**Project design was aligned with multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).** According to the Project Document, the project was expected to directly contribute to the achievement of the seven SDGs presented in Table 3.

*Table 3: SDGs to which the project was aligned at the design stage*

<b>SDG 1</b>	End poverty in all its forms everywhere
<b>SDG 3</b>	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
<b>SDG 5</b>	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
<b>SDG 8</b>	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
<b>SDG 10</b>	Reduce inequality within and among countries
<b>SDG 11</b>	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
<b>SDG 17</b>	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Source: Project Document.

Considering the project objective of building urban economic resilience, the project design was directly aligned with SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, as it supported local policies for improving health, affordable housing, basic services, sustainable mobility, and connectivity. It was also strongly aligned with SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth as it promoted sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work, and with SDG 17, given its focus on capacity building to increase data availability and on improving access to finance for local governments. Through its five workstreams, the project strategy was also indirectly aligned with the other SDGs mentioned in the Project Document.

**Some ERBPs are explicitly aligned to the comprehensive approach to development promoted by the SDGs, while others less so, pointing to opportunities for a more integrated approach.** Environmental sustainability was not included among the dimensions covered by DPT, possibly leading to missed opportunities to identify options for green recovery, as intended in the Project Document and in line with SDG 11. The approach outlined in the DPT, however, left ample room for adjusting the thematic focus depending on the priorities of each city. In fact, deep dives and project-level interviews suggest that the inclusion of actions related to environmental sustainability in the ERBPs was driven by local interests and needs as they emerged in stakeholder discussions, and by the ongoing work of each IE. For example, in the ESCAP region, each city considered the four development pillars from the *Future of Asian and Pacific Cities: Transformative pathways towards sustainable development in the post COVID-19 era report (environment, infrastructure, economy and people)* and linked their ERBPs to the achievement of the SDGs

to ensure a holistic focus. This is illustrated by the ERBP for Hoi An, which sets out four focus areas (people, business, government and urban), which are explicitly aligned with the SDGs, and include proposed actions related with resilience to disasters and climate change, renewable energy, energy efficiency, and ecologically oriented urban development. In the ECLAC region, the project focused on sustainable housing in Lima and Guayaquil and supported the development of the Resilience Plan for Santo Domingo given the interest of the local government in strengthening emergency response building on the existing plans that focus on climate change and disasters.

The ERBPs for cities in the ESCWA, ECA, and ECE regions mainstreamed environmental sustainability to a limited extent as they focused on pressing issues such as informality, housing, and economic diversification, which are linked to SDGs 8 and 11. Some of the actions included in the ERBPs in these regions, however, have environmental co-benefits. For instance, one of the proposed actions for Beirut was to foster distributed renewable energy systems (solar, wind) to improve energy supply in the city.

As discussed more in detail in the next subsection, social sustainability, which is linked to SDGs 1 on ending poverty, SDG 5 on achieving gender equality, and SDG 10 on reducing inequality, was partially covered by the DPT under the areas “Resilience of local labor markets” (especially under the indicator on social protection of labor) and “Resilience of basic infrastructure and connectivity”, but these areas do not contemplate specific dimensions to assess economic resilience by gender and for vulnerable populations. Because of this and of the limited disaggregated data available at the city level, social sustainability figures less prominently in the diagnostics and, as a consequence, in the ERBPs, some of which include a small number of actions explicitly targeted to population groups that have been more strongly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the actions included in the ERBPs, however, have the potential to contribute to the reduction of poverty and inequality by creating jobs and improving urban infrastructure. For example, the ERBP for Harare includes several proposed actions to support the formalization of the informal economy and improved social protection, while the EERP of Beirut proposes the establishment of a new municipal division for social support as well as the development of vocational training programs to boost employment. Interviews indicate that these aspects were also addressed in stakeholder workshops.

[To what extent were gender and human rights perspectives integrated into the design and implementation of the project? What results can be identified from these actions? How can gender and human rights perspectives be better included in future projects design and implementation?](#)

### *Gender mainstreaming*

**The gender perspective was adequately considered in project design but is not fully mainstreamed in the DPT.** In addition to the alignment to SDG 5 on gender equality, the Project Document indicates that gender equality and women’s empowerment would be at the heart of the project, driving the active and meaningful participation of both women and men, and consistently empowering women and girls. Two actions were contemplated in the Project Document on this regard: a) collecting disaggregated data on gender for the diagnostics and b) ensuring gender balance in project workshops. The DPT also emphasizes that an effort should be made to collect and analyze disaggregated data, particularly for the population groups that may be particularly vulnerable to economic shocks induced by future events similar to COVID-19, especially women who have been disproportionately affected by the crisis, so that more targeted

measures can be designed. The absence of specific gender dimensions in the tool, however, might have affected the full mainstreaming of this perspective into diagnostics.

**The integration of the gender perspective into project activities differed between cities but was overall present in stakeholder discussions.** Project-level interviews and deep dives indicate that IEs and consultants paid special attention to the equitable participation of women during workshops and events, both as attendants and speakers. The differential economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women were reported as one of the key aspects discussed in stakeholder workshops in some cities, but less so in others. These differences seem to respond to the gender awareness of local governments, stakeholders, and consultants, which varies across countries, and to the more proactive role played by some IEs in fostering these discussions. This is reflected in survey results, with 48% of the survey respondents considering that project activities addressed gender-differentiated needs and capabilities to respond to COVID-19 to a moderate extent and 9% to a low extent, while only 35% considered that they were addressed to a high extent. It should be noted, however, that 45% of focal points and other local stakeholders considered that gender was integrated to a high extent, compared to 25% of local consultants (see Figure 3).

*Figure 3: Extent to which project activities addressed gender-differentiated needs and capabilities to respond to COVID-19 (%)*



Source: Local stakeholder survey, October 2022.

**Gender mainstreaming into the diagnostics and plans developed for each city was found to be limited, mainly due to a lack of disaggregated data.** Deep dives and project-level interviews revealed that limited or no availability of data disaggregated by gender at the city level was a common challenge across cities. In some cities, however, efforts were made to collect qualitative information and expert assessments, resulting in the inclusion of some gender-related measures into the plans. For example, in Beirut, a short analysis of women participation in the workforce based on national data was included in the diagnostic, leading to two proposed measures in the ERBP to enhance youth and women’s participation in the workforce and reduce the female unemployment rate by providing vocational training. A similar measure was proposed in the ERBP for Bishkek. Two gender-related measures were also included in Harare’s ERBP, namely establishing a Civil Society Forum to ensure the involvement of civil society in the planning of

investment projects on social, environmental and gender issues, and providing training to young women on sexual reproductive health and rights. Such measures, however, do not comprehensively address the linkages between gender inequalities and economic resilience in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the increased care responsibilities taken on by women or the impact of the pandemic in economic sectors with a large female workforce. The ERBPs for Hoi An and Guayaquil do not contain any gender-related measures.<sup>16</sup>

### *Integration of the human rights perspective*

**The human rights perspective was adequately considered in project design, but the DPT provided limited guidance on how to integrate it in diagnostics and plans.** The Project Document refers to “the Human Rights-Based Approach to Development” (HRBA)<sup>17</sup> and the commitment to “Leave no one behind” in the context of the 2030 Agenda as guiding frameworks for project design and implementation. The Project Document acknowledges that the HRBA requires human rights principles (equality and non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, and accountability) to guide UN development cooperation, and sets out specific steps to operationalize the commitment to “Leave no one behind”, such as collecting disaggregated data and carrying out qualitative analyses to identify who is being excluded or discriminated against, how and why, as well as supporting legal, policy, institutional and other measures to address structural constraints and inequality. The DPT acknowledges that income and non-income inequalities have implications for economic resilience and that addressing these inequalities should be a focus of any economic resilience strategy. It also includes “participation in planning and governance” as one of the guiding principles for resilience planning, which entails promoting inclusiveness and fostering comprehensive and meaningful participation of all, particularly those in vulnerable situations, in planning and governance processes. Furthermore, it refers to the “Leave no one behind” principle in the context of the UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19, suggesting that the application of this principle to recovery planning entailed a) an analysis of the human rights and gender impacts of the pandemic to inform the design of policies that address these risks, and b) paying particular attention to industries most likely to provide employment for vulnerable groups and to those most likely to pay taxes and sustain the overall local economy. The tool, however, did not provide practical guidance on how to integrate these aspects in diagnostics and plans, beyond the suggestion to include disaggregated data as available.

**IEs fostered inclusive diagnostic and planning processes, but the human rights approach remains implicit in city diagnostics and plans.** Project-level interviews and deep dives indicate that IEs paid attention to the application of human rights principles in project activities, particularly by seeking the participation of civil society organizations in local workshops to the extent possible in order to foster cross-sectoral dialogue and the inclusion of different perspectives. The Stakeholder Engagement Template shows that, for example, in Pune the local stakeholders consulted included representatives from the association Action for the Rights of the Child, the domestic workers union, the street vendor union, and the Rikshaw Panchayat Union, among others. Likewise, in Accra, participants in the ERBP validation

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<sup>16</sup> The objective of the ERBP for Guayaquil refers to increasing the city's economic resilience and access to home ownership under equal and equitable conditions, especially for young people, women, and ethnic minorities. The specific actions do not include any reference to gender, however, as they focus on the institutional strengthening of the Municipal Housing Company. The diagnostic for Guayaquil recommends integrating gender into urban resilience assessments and offering loans to women-led businesses.

<sup>17</sup> See: <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/human-rights-based-approach>

workshop included, *inter alia*, representatives from the Association of Persons with Disability, the Strategic Youth Network, unions, and microfinance institutions. In other cities, however, participation was limited to government officials, mainly due to local government's resistance to engage organizations from other sectors. However, as further explained in the following subsection, the diverse needs and capabilities of the population were not fully addressed in the diagnostics and plans prepared in each city.

### To what extent have the activities of the project taken into account the rights of persons with disabilities and the perspective of vulnerable groups?

**The project design mainstreams the perspective of vulnerable groups,<sup>18</sup> and to a lesser extent the rights of persons with disabilities.** The Project Document refers to social cohesion and community resilience, one of the five pillars of the UN approach to building back better, which involves supporting measures that benefit vulnerable groups of the population, including the elderly, women, children, and persons with disabilities, among others. Vulnerable groups are also mentioned in reference to SDG 1, which targets resilience building for the poor and those in vulnerable situations, while the rights of persons with disabilities are mentioned in relation with relevant targets for SDG 8, 10, and 17. In the project strategy, the need to ensure the representation of vulnerable populations is stressed for the assessment and capacity building workstream.

**The diverse needs and capabilities of persons in situation of vulnerability and with disabilities were considered to some extent in project activities.** Project-level interviews and project documents suggest that IEs made efforts to ensure that the diverse needs and capabilities of persons in situation of vulnerability and with disabilities were discussed at workshops and events. For instance, the global dialogue hosted by UN-Habitat included discussions about the identification of persons in situation of vulnerability and on how they were differently impacted by the pandemic. An example at the city level is that immigrant workers were a point of attention in Kuwait City as they lack basic rights, however this focus was not reflected in the diagnostic and plan. In line with these findings, 42% of survey respondents expressed that project activities addressed the diverse needs and capabilities of persons in situation of vulnerability to a high extent, 42% to a moderate extent, and 8% to a low extent; in addition, 23% of respondents expressed that project activities addressed the needs of persons with disabilities to a high extent, 42% to moderate extent, and 27% to a low extent, with slight differences in perception between local focal points and other local stakeholders, on one hand, and local consultants on the other hand (see Figure 4).

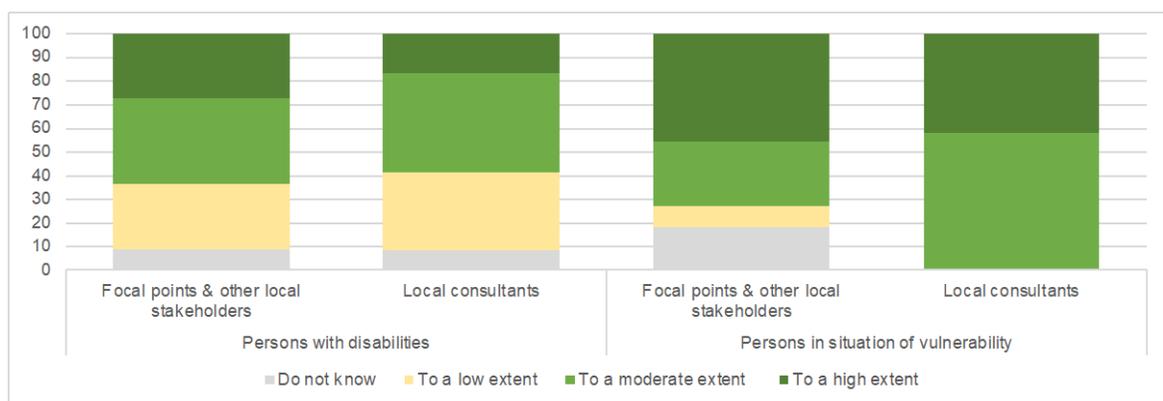
**City diagnostics and plans address to some extent the specific needs of persons in situation of vulnerability and with disabilities.** City deep dives suggest that diagnostics do not clearly and systematically identify the vulnerable groups in each city, nor the specific challenges of these groups and of persons with disabilities in relation with economic resilience. While some of the diagnostics reviewed present sparse data on vulnerable groups such as women, children, youth, people in poverty, and informal workers (e.g., Beirut and Harare), others only include general references to vulnerable groups (e.g., Bishkek, Guayaquil, Hoi An). While this is related to gaps in disaggregated data, it seems likely that some qualitative findings could have been included in the diagnostics. For example, the SERPs for Kyrgyzstan

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<sup>18</sup> For the purposes of this report, vulnerability is understood as the inability or limited ability to cope with and recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19. Persons in situations of vulnerability might include persons living in poverty, persons with chronic health conditions, migrants, persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities, or LGBT+ persons, among others.

and Vietnam clearly identify vulnerable groups highly impacted by the pandemic, but this information is not reflected in the diagnostics. As a consequence, measures that specifically and explicitly address the needs of these population groups are scarce in the ERBPs, and mostly refer to women and youth as already discussed above. Despite these limitations, it should be noted that some of the actions proposed in the ERBPs could positively benefit vulnerable groups. For example, sustainable housing projects in Guayaquil will partly benefit households in poverty, while the improvement of water and sanitation infrastructure in informal settlements in Bishkek will improve the living conditions of vulnerable groups (such as migrants) that reside in these settlements. Likewise, proposed measures to support the tourism sector in Hoi An and to diversify the local economy are expected to benefit workers that lost their jobs during the pandemic. No specific references to persons with disabilities were identified in the diagnostics and ERBPs for the five deep-dive cities; a rapid review of all ERBPs shows that four out of 16 include actions that are explicitly targeted to persons with disabilities.<sup>19</sup>

Figure 4: Extent to which project activities addressed the diverse needs and capabilities of persons with disabilities and in situation of vulnerability (%)



Source: Local stakeholder survey, October 2022.

## 5.2 Coherence

To what extent was the project complementary to, and coordinated with other work undertaken by the IEs and the technical collaboration partners?

**Opportunities for complementarity and coordination with other work undertaken by project partners were clearly identified at project design.** The Project Document acknowledged the mandate of the IEs to facilitate and coordinate linkages in UN work at the global, regional, national, and local level, including towards the implementation of SDGs, and emphasized that the project would be implemented in a manner that is consistent with and complementary to the specific COVID-19 initiatives of the IEs, as well as other programmatic resources, capacities, and opportunities available within them. It then presented a detailed account of how the project was expected to draw upon and contribute to ongoing work by each partner. Interviews also indicate that the project was not conceived as a stand-alone intervention but rather as a complement to ongoing work of the IEs, which thus sought to harness interlinkages with other projects within their mandates.

<sup>19</sup> These are the ERBPs for Accra, Kharkiv, Pune, and Tirana.

**Synergies were established with Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR) in some pilot cities.** Project-level interviews and deep dives indicate that one major point of collaboration was with VLR processes, which consist in regular and inclusive reviews of progress on SDG implementation at the sub-national level. VLRS, which also involve data collection, were conducted in some of the cities that participated in the project (Accra, Yaoundé, Harare, Subang Jaya, and Lima). For instance, in Harare, the project was built on the VLR and, in Subang Jaya, the ERBP was integral to the implementation of the VLR. In Bishkek, the VLR, which is currently ongoing with support from a UNDA project,<sup>20</sup> builds on data collected during the project, while the City of Alexandria has expressed interest in doing so in the future.

**In some of the pilot cities, IEs integrated the project into ongoing collaboration,** which has continued after project end and has built on project results. In Bishkek, for instance, the project worked in unison with two other ECE projects, one to upgrade informal settlements (2020), and another to develop a sustainable smart city profile (2020-2023);<sup>21</sup> the project on informal settlements was also implemented in Tirana.<sup>22</sup> It should be noted, however, that in cities without previous work by the IEs, such as Guayaquil and Hoi An (which are both secondary cities), synergies did not take place or were more limited.

**Project partners harnessed synergies to integrate the data collected and the DPT into other projects.** For instance, spin-off projects were developed by ECA, such as one that supports the measurement of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in African cities (including Accra, Harare, and Yaoundé),<sup>23</sup> and the UNDA project “Expanded and resilient urban fiscal space for an inclusive and resilient COVID-19 recovery in Africa” with UN-Habitat and UNCDF, which will help local and national governments assess and expand their fiscal space. The latter is expected to start in 2023 with the participation of Harare and Yaoundé, where it will provide additional support on finance for economic recovery.<sup>24</sup> A spin-off project is also under implementation in Kharkiv to support reconstruction, drawing on data and recommendations on urban economic resilience (see Section 5.3). As for the DPT, this tool was applied by UNCDF in additional cities in Africa and it was included by ESCAP in the curriculum of the last Asia-Pacific Mayors Academy,<sup>25</sup> as well as by ECLAC into its ongoing work on climate resilience with the United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction Program (UNDRR). Some IEs have also advocated for replication in additional cities, leading to expressions of interest from the governments of Egypt and Zimbabwe. The project also served as a catalyst to develop the urban portfolio at ESCWA, building on previous work by UN-Habitat in the region. For example, the diagnostic data gathered in Beirut were used by ESCWA and UN-Habitat to prepare the State of Lebanese Cities Report, and the DPT was used as a reference for the project “Inter-Regional Cooperation on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda” (2021-2023), implemented in Amman (Jordan) and Agadir (Morocco).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Voluntary Local Reviews: Evidence for Greener, Resilient, and Sustainable Urban Recovery in Eastern European and Central Asian Countries in Transition: <https://unece.org/housing/VLRs>

<sup>21</sup> See: <https://unece.org/covid-19/press/unece-supports-transition-bishkek-smart-sustainable-and-resilient-city>

<sup>22</sup> See: <https://uri.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Assessment-Report-Tirana-UNECE.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> See: <https://uneca.org/stories/new-eca-initiative-supports-city-gdp-measurement-in-africa>

<sup>24</sup> See: [https://www.un.org/development/desa/da/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/da-project-management-documents/2372\\_1654009043\\_DA%20Fascicle%20-%20proposed%20programme%20budget%20for%202023.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/da/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/da-project-management-documents/2372_1654009043_DA%20Fascicle%20-%20proposed%20programme%20budget%20for%202023.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> See: <https://www.asiapacificmayorsacademy.org/>

<sup>26</sup> See: <https://www.unescwa.org/events/inter-regional-cooperation-implementation-new-urban-agenda>

To what extent was the project coordinated with, and complementary to, the response to COVID-19 of other UN entities (Secretariat and non-Secretariat) in delivering socio-economic support to Member States, including the work financed by the UN COVID-19 Response & Recovery Multi-Party Trust Fund and the UN Country Teams?

**Despite the efforts made by IEs to engage UNCTs and other UN entities, coordination remained limited.**

The Project Document stated that UN Regional Commissions would organize regular updates on the project activities at UNCT meetings in the countries where the project was to be implemented, so as to establish cooperation with resident UN agencies and synergies when possible. In practice, while IEs held meetings with UNCTs and the latter participated in local workshops in some cities, their involvement in the project was overall limited due to their multiple engagements and stretched capacities in the context of the response to COVID-19.

Project-level interviews indicate that the project was presented at regular meetings of Making Cities Resilient 2030, a network of 14 UN agencies and cities coordinated by the UNDRR, and the invitation was made to support with funding the recommendations resulting from this project. There is also evidence that representatives from several UN agencies participated in local workshops in different cities. Overall, however, coordination was limited due to a) already high workloads and stretched resources in non-partner UN agencies, and b) the unprecedented focus of the project on urban economic resilience with implementation in several cities that are not national capitals. This possibly led to some missed opportunities. For example, deep dives suggest that in Harare, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had concomitant projects on water, sanitation, and hygiene, while the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) assisted the city in developing innovation hubs, youth centers, and clinics.

**Limited evidence was found of coordination with the UN COVID-19 Response & Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF).** The MPTF is financing projects at the national or subnational level in some of the countries where the present project was implemented, namely Vietnam, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, India, Fiji, Peru, and Kyrgyzstan, with a focus on mitigating social impact of COVID-19 and supporting economic recovery.<sup>27</sup> On invitation of the UN Resident Coordinator office, ECE took part in online meetings for Kyrgyzstan and provided input. Other potential synergies might have been explored, however. In Cameroon, for instance, a MPTF project was implemented, with the participation of UN-Habitat, with the aim of reducing the vulnerability of women and young people by supporting the creation and protection of jobs, small businesses, and cooperatives for a better recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, which is in line with the focus on the present project.

## 5.3 Effectiveness

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What were the significant results and achievements of the project?

*Achievement of project outputs*

**A clear methodology for urban economic resilience analysis and planning was developed and applied in all cities.** The DPT was developed by UNCDF to provide detailed guidance for project implementation at the city level. An online training was then developed by UN-Habitat to familiarize project participants with

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<sup>27</sup> See: <https://mptf.undp.org/fund/cov00>

the DPT; this training was completed by 73 persons in December 2020, including local consultants, local focal points, and other local government officers. With support from the IEs, economic resilience diagnostics, ERBPs, and information notes with sources of financial support were developed for the 16 pilot cities. Key process milestones -including diagnostic validation workshops, local stakeholder visioning and scenario planning workshops, technical capacity building workshops, and validation workshops- were also completed in each city with the relevant adaptations.<sup>28</sup> To support knowledge exchange and dissemination, UN-Habitat led the development of a Global Compendium of Practices on Local Economic and Financial Recovery (published in March 2021) and hosted a Global Policy Dialogue in October 2021; five policy briefs were also developed by IEs with a regional focus. Most of these materials are available on the project website<sup>29</sup> and were disseminated through communication campaigns.

**Diagnostics provide clear and comparable assessments of urban economic resilience.** All the diagnostics follow the methodology outlined in the DPT, with the relevant adaptations based on data availability; with the exception of Lima, all diagnostics include quantitative assessments of economic resilience performance that are comparable across pilot cities. Deep dives indicate that the diagnostics were found useful by local governments as they provided a snapshot of the situation of their city and clearly highlighted existing strengths and weaknesses.

**ERBPs provide a menu of options to address the gaps identified in the diagnostics, but oftentimes they lack specificity and prioritization.** City deep dives show that the proposed actions included in the ERBPs are relevant to address the gaps identified in the diagnostics, as they look beyond COVID-19 response to the building blocks of urban economic recovery and resilience. However, a common shortcoming is that some of these actions are not specific (i.e., not formulated in concrete terms) and, as a consequence, not measurable. Timeframes for their implementation are specified in most ERBPs, but oftentimes it is not clear what conditions need to be in place for each action to be achievable (e.g., access to funding, approval from regional or national authorities). Therefore, proposed actions are not SMART<sup>30</sup> as suggested in the DPT. There are some emerging good practices, however: for instance, many of the proposed actions included in the ERBP for Beirut do not require spending and instead focus on modifications in laws and bylaws to enable Public Private Partnerships, as relying on public budget is not realistic given the overlapping crises that the city is experiencing.

In addition, ERBPs include a large number of actions, ranging from 25 (Guayaquil) to 95 (Hoi An) without any prioritization; in some cases, they are not clearly framed within government competences and planning frameworks. Overall, this suggests that ERBP processes served as spaces for dialogue among stakeholders from different sectors, which produced a menu of options from which city governments can select specific actions to be integrated into their policies and plans. While this constitutes a valuable input, it reduces the likelihood of implementation as additional steps are required for local governments to translate general ideas into specific actions and link them with available funding, in contexts of competing priorities and limited resources. This has implications for the sustainability of project results (See Section 5.5).

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<sup>28</sup> Frequent adaptations were to carry out regional workshops instead of separate city-level workshops, and to address different topics in the same workshop for greater efficiency.

<sup>29</sup> <https://urbaneconomicresilience.org/>

<sup>30</sup> Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timebound.

Four out of the five ERBPs reviewed included a section on implementation and monitoring arrangements. These are rather general as the intention was for ERBPs to be integrated into local governments' plans and policies and thus become subjected to their regular monitoring processes.

**Information briefs on sources of financial support came late in project implementation and did not fully address the gaps in local governments' capacities to access funding.** These briefs were expected to support city governments in identifying funding options for the ERBPs but, due to administrative delays (see Section 5.4), they were delivered months after diagnostic and planning processes were finalized.<sup>31</sup> The briefs reviewed for city deep dives provide an analysis of city's revenue and expenditure and make recommendations on funding sources or mechanisms for the ERBPs (e.g., Beirut, Harare) or to address the financial gaps identified in the diagnostics (e.g., Bishkek, Guayaquil, Hoi An). In Bishkek, the brief concluded that the inadequate coverage and functionality of basic public services, a key challenge to urban resilience according to the diagnostic, was the result of the insufficient investment readiness of the city. To improve readiness, the brief recommended the creation of a dedicated agency with the role of developing project pipelines and attracting external funding, a recommendation that was adopted by the city government (see Section 5.3). Despite some success stories, deep dives and survey responses indicate that lack of funding is a persisting challenge in the pilot cities, more so with the reduction in government revenues during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that local governments would have appreciated additional support to strengthen their capacities to identify and access specific funding opportunities in the UN system and beyond.

It should be noted that the Project Document contemplated two key deliverables to strengthen the capacities of cities to access financing for the ERBPs: the development of information packages on sources of financial support (OP3.1) and of city financing strategies (OP3.3). In the end, information briefs were delivered to each city instead of packages, and financing strategies were not developed. This suggests that, while the need to increase cities' capacities to access funding for the ERBPs was addressed at project design, the development of four sequenced deliverables in each city -a diagnostic, an ERBP, an information package, and a financing strategy- in the less than two years (July 2020 to April 2022) was overambitious.

**Additional project outputs were developed to address emerging needs and opportunities.** For instance, at the regional level, ESCWA developed national policy briefs in addition to the regional brief, translated the DPT to Arabic, and carried out an additional study on smart digital solutions for urban resilience. At the city level, the diagnostic and planning process in Guayaquil showed the interest of the local government in anchoring economic recovery in the construction sector, so the project provided technical assistance to the recently created Municipal Housing Company to improve the social and environmental sustainability of their housing projects.

### *Achievement of project outcomes and objective*

**The project contributed to increased knowledge on urban economic resilience but was not always successful in increasing cities' capacities to access finance.** The final project report provides limited information on outcomes (i.e., the changes in project participants that are influenced by project outputs), since several of the indicators used to assess progress towards outcomes actually measure outputs (i.e., the products, capital goods and services delivered by the project). The triangulation of the final project

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<sup>31</sup> Most diagnostic and planning processes finalized in the fourth quarter of 2021, while information briefs on sources of financial support were delivered in April 2022.

report with qualitative evidence from the deep dives shows that, overall, the project achieved its planned outcomes, with mixed progress in increasing capacity on potential sources of finance. The progress achieved towards each outcome is summarized in Table 4.

*Table 4: Outcome achievement*

Expected Outcome	Progress achieved
<p><b>Outcome 1:</b> Increased understanding of local governments, national governments, private sector, academia, and civil society on COVID-19 impacts, strategies of urban economic recovery and resilience, and opportunities for building economic resilience by project partners and local governments.</p>	<p><b>Achieved</b></p> <p>According to the final project report, all diagnostics were validated by policy makers in the respective cities. Likewise, ERBPs were validated and officially endorsed by city authorities.</p> <p>Survey responses and interviews indicate that the project: a) improved local stakeholders’ understanding of COVID-19 impacts on city economies and, more broadly, of their economic resilience; and b) helped them identify the actions needed to address existing gaps in economic resilience. In some cities, it was the first time that data on urban economies were aggregated from multiple sources and analyzed in a structured manner, thus providing novel evidence for decision-making.</p> <p>For instance, in Hoi An, a key takeaway for local government officials was that the city’s overreliance on heritage tourism reduced its economic resilience; economic diversification, with the development of other sectors such as agriculture (linked to rural tourism), is now considered a priority for the city.</p>
<p><b>Outcome 2:</b> Expanded participation in the economic resilience building process by relevant local and national stakeholders in partner cities and countries and strengthened technical capacity of local governments, national governments, private sector, academia, and civil society to participate in urban economic recovery and resilience planning.</p>	<p><b>Achieved</b></p> <p>Increased dialogue within local governments and with other sectors is seen by local stakeholders as a key outcome of the project, according to survey responses and interviews. Despite the limitations to interaction posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project was able to engage local stakeholders beyond focal points, including officers from other local and national government agencies, civil society organizations, academia, and private businesses. Based on the project’s Stakeholder Engagement Template, 378 persons participated in at least one project activity across the 16 cities (averaging 23 per city).</p> <p>Most stakeholders, however, only took part in one or two project activities, so it is likely that those who benefited from increased capacities are a subset of highly engaged individuals, mainly local focal points and local consultants. An effective strategy implemented by IEs to enhance local government participation was to link different projects, either in sequence or in parallel (see Section 5.2).</p>
<p><b>Outcome 3:</b> Increased capacity on potential sources of finance to implement economic recovery and resilience building strategies by partner cities.</p>	<p><b>Partially achieved</b></p> <p>With the exception of a few cities that are in the process to set up municipal agencies to attract funds as a result of the project (e.g., Bishkek, Kharkiv), the capacities developed by partner cities on potential sources of finance is overall low.</p> <p>Most local governments rely primarily on public budgets and have limited or no experience with other types of finance, such as public-private partnerships and</p>

Expected Outcome	Progress achieved
	private finance. In this context, the guidance provided by the project, which came late in the process and was rather general, did not substantially increase the capacities of most local governments to access additional sources of finance.
<p><b>Outcome 4:</b> Increased knowledge of local governments on successful local economic recovery and resilience building.</p>	<p><b>Achieved</b></p> <p>According to the final project report and project materials, local government officials from several pilot cities had the opportunity to participate in experience-exchange events, such as the Global Virtual Workshop (2020), the Global Policy Dialogue (2021), the UNECE Forum of Mayors 2022, the Global South-South Expo 2022, and the World Urban Forum, among others. The 2020 training also provided opportunities for increased knowledge. Some local governments, however, expressed their interest in further opportunities for experience exchange with their peers.</p>

**The project contributed to increasing the capacities of local governments to design ERBPs, while its contribution to improving implementation and monitoring capacities was limited.** As highlighted in the project’s ToC developed for this evaluation (Annex I), the objective of the project was to strengthen the capacities of local governments to design, implement, and monitor sustainable, resilient, and inclusive COVID-19 economic and financial responses, as well as ERBPs. Through the outputs and outcomes discussed above, the project contributed to increasing the capacities of local governments to design ERBPs that foster increased economic resilience in face of COVID-19 and other crises. It should be noted, however, that while some local government officers were exposed to training and involved in the validation of diagnostics and ERBPs, these were developed by local consultants, which might have limited the capacities actually built within local governments. Implementation and monitoring capacities were not substantially increased given the predominant focus of the project on diagnostic and planning, and the mixed results in increasing local governments’ capacities to access finance.

**In some pilot cities, governments have already started using the capacities gained through the project for economic recovery planning.** The first assumption of the project’s ToC was that, for the outputs to influence the outcomes, city stakeholders needed to participate in project activities actively and continuously. As explained above, the project achieved adequate stakeholder engagement given the restrictions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but only a few stakeholders in each city, usually local focal points and local consultants, had an active and continuous participation. The permanence of focal points and their leverage on decision-making thus influenced the realization of the second assumption, i.e., that, for the outcomes to contribute to the building of urban economic resilience as implied in the project objective, city stakeholders need to use strengthened capacities to respond to the key economic and financial challenges arising from COVID-19. As explained in more detail below, deep dives show that this is already happening in some cities (e.g., Harare, Bishkek, and Guayaquil). In other cities, such as Beirut and Hoi An, lengthy validation processes by different authorities and lack of funding have so far limited the application of the capacities built with the project for economic recovery.

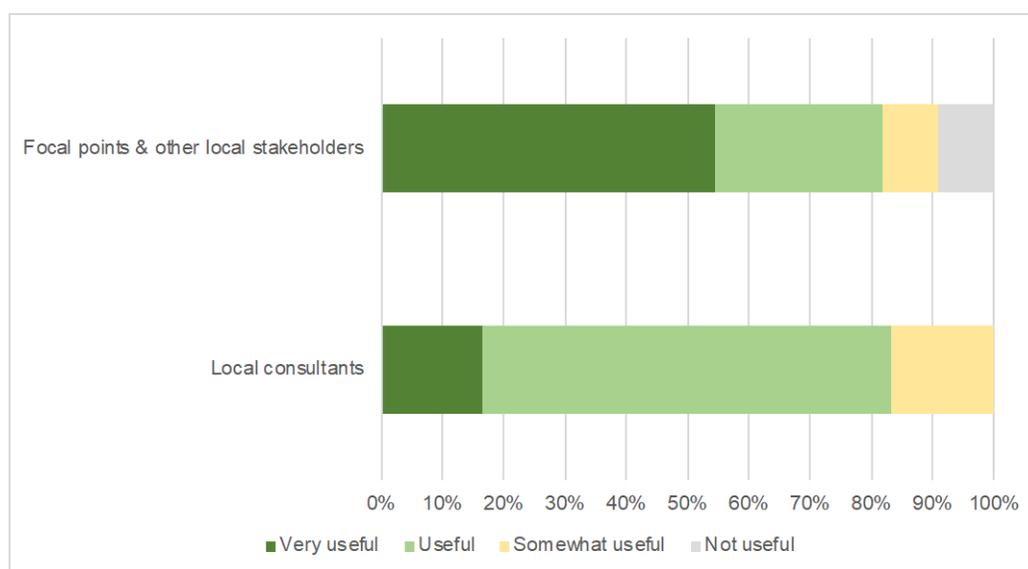
## Unintended results<sup>32</sup>

**The project strengthened collaboration among IEs and with the pilot cities, further positioning urban economic resilience in their agendas.** After co-implementing the project, IEs report increased communication and collaboration on different topics. As further explained in Section 5.4, weekly Steering Committee meetings were highly appreciated as an opportunity to build closer relationships, exchange experiences, and identify opportunities of collaboration. Two IEs also mentioned that, thanks to the project, they better integrated urban economic resilience into their work: the project was instrumental for ESCWA to establish an urban development portfolio, while ECLAC is integrating the DPT into other ongoing work on climate change. As already mentioned in Section 5.2, the project also paved the way for further collaboration with pilot cities through spin-off projects.<sup>33</sup>

## To what extent has the project effectively addressed the new priorities of Member States' local authorities that emerged as a result of COVID-19?

**Overall, the project is perceived as useful for city governments' response to the economic impacts of COVID-19.** 82.6% of survey respondents consider that the project was useful or very useful to guide city governments' responses to the economic impacts of COVID-19, with over half of focal points and other local stakeholders considering that it was very useful (see Figure 5). In particular, the project was considered useful to identify key gaps in cities' economic resilience, support better recovery planning, and strengthen local institutions.

Figure 5: Usefulness of project support to respond to COVID-19 (%)



Source: Local stakeholder survey, October 2022.

<sup>32</sup> Unintended results are understood as those not explicitly included in the project's results framework.

<sup>33</sup> See: [https://www.un.org/development/desa/da/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/da-project-management-documents/2372\\_1654009043\\_DA%20Fascicle%20-%20proposed%20programme%20budget%20for%202023.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/da/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/da-project-management-documents/2372_1654009043_DA%20Fascicle%20-%20proposed%20programme%20budget%20for%202023.pdf)

While the project’s focus on long-term economic recovery was not considered as useful to guide the immediate response to COVID-19, interviews suggest that this forward-looking approach provided an entry point to discuss challenges that were exacerbated by COVID-19. For example, in Beirut, the project provided a space to discuss the deterioration of the economy and livelihoods caused by Lebanon’s fiscal and monetary crisis since 2019, the effects of the Beirut port explosion in August 2020, as well as challenges related with energy supply and migration from neighboring countries.

**Local stakeholders positively value the quality and the timeliness of the support provided by the project.**

As shown in Figure 6, the quality of project support was positively assessed by virtually all survey respondents, while 78% rated its timeliness as good or excellent, with a higher perception of timeliness among focal points and other local stakeholders. The lower rating for timeliness might be explained by the lengthy revision processes that project outputs underwent in some cases, which undermined the relevance of final outputs in the fast-changing environment produced by the pandemic.

*Figure 6: Quality and timeliness of project support (%)*



Source: Local stakeholder survey, October 2022.

**Project implementation was adapted to address emerging local priorities.** While the same methodology was followed and key milestones were achieved in all cities, IEs flexibly adapted project activities to address emerging priorities. Different strategies were followed to ensure continued relevance:

- **Tailored ERBPs:** The ERBPs reflect the priorities identified in the diagnostics and in stakeholder discussions.
- **Zoom-in on a priority sector:** For instance, in Guayaquil, technical assistance on sustainable housing was provided to the Municipal Housing Company after the diagnostic and planning process highlighted this newly created agency as a key stakeholder for local economic recovery; a similar approach was followed in Lima.
- **Synergies with other projects:** As described in Section 5.2, synergies with other parallel or consecutive projects have helped IEs delve deeper into aspects of interest for some cities.

## What difference did the project make to the local governments' responses to COVID-19?

**Economic, social, and environmental benefits have yet to materialize, but promising actions have been taken by some local governments as a result of project support.** As mentioned above, the final project report and deep dives show that the cities of Accra, Harare, Yaoundé, and Bishkek have integrated, or are in the process of integrating, the ERBPs into local planning. The City Council of Bishkek has also followed up on the recommendations included in the brief on financing sources by creating a new agency that is supporting the Mayor's Office in developing a pipeline of projects in the context of the city's mid-term strategy. Similarly, the city of Kharkiv is in the process of establishing a reconstruction and development agency with ECE support to increase the capacity of the local government to attract and manage reconstruction funds, in line with a recommendation included in the brief on financing sources. In Guayaquil, the Municipal Housing Company reported having applied many of the project recommendations to improve the sustainability of its housing developments, such as increased accessibility of public transportation and recreational facilities, continuous bicycle lanes equipped with parking, and solar public lighting; an agreement was also signed with a local university to conduct consultations with future residents on their housing preferences. While these actions have the potential to generate economic, social, and environmental benefits, other cities have yet to take concrete steps to implement their ERBPs.

## What innovative approach or tool, if any, did the project use, and what were the outcomes and lessons learned from its application?

**The DPT is a key contribution and legacy of the project.** The DPT was developed by UNCDF with a two-fold objective: (1) to help cities understand the strengths and weaknesses of their economies and institutional arrangements to respond to external shocks; and (2) to guide the design and implementation of plans or strategies to address the identified gaps, accelerate better recovery, and improve longer-term resilience (see Box 1). The methodology set out in the DPT was closely followed by 15 of the pilot cities to carry out the diagnostics,<sup>34</sup> while it was more loosely implemented to develop the ERBPs, with the results discussed above. The tool proved particularly effective in providing a snapshot of urban economic resilience and in highlighting key gaps, while allowing comparisons between different periods and across cities. While relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tool is easily applicable to other contexts, thus ensuring its continued relevance and replicability (see Section 5.2).

**The implementation of the DPT provided lessons in relation with data availability, technical capacity to implement the tool, as well as mainstreaming of environmental and social sustainability.** Interviews suggest the following key lessons from the application of the DPT:

1. Consider data availability: A common challenge across cities was the lack of data at the city level to measure DPT indicators. Where data were scarcer, IEs and local consultants resorted to different strategies to complete the diagnostic, such as using national-level data, collecting data from multiple stakeholders, and complementing quantitative data with qualitative assessments. In addition, specific dimensions of the DPT were not relevant to some cities given their economies.
2. Provide training and advice throughout implementation: Local governments lacked the technical expertise to apply the DPT, especially in financial aspects. While they were supported by local

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<sup>34</sup> The diagnostic for Lima focused on the five resilience areas outlined in the DPT but does not include scores.

consultants, these found the DPT Excel tool not user-friendly and time-intensive to complete, and suggested that further training should be provided, including on how to adapt the tool in case of information gaps, and that a web-based information system could be developed to enter the data and make comparisons across cities more easily. Given the shortcomings found in some ERBPs, advice is also needed to ensure that the DPT planning guidelines are adequately implemented, especially regarding the formulation of SMART actions in the context of existing policy frameworks.

3. **Mainstream social and environmental sustainability:** As already discussed in Section 5.1, while the DPT provided a comprehensive framework to assess urban economic resilience, there exist opportunities to strengthen the integration of environmental and social considerations to ensure that these are mainstreamed in resilience planning.

### What factors and actors have enabled or hindered the achievement of project outputs and outcomes?

**Effective project management and governance was the main enabling condition for project outputs and outcomes.** Project-level interviews and deep dives indicate that clear governance arrangements, the expertise of project partners, and the role played by the IEs and their international consultants in guiding implementation and facilitating interaction among local stakeholders were key to the achievement of project outputs and outcomes (see Section 5.4). At the city level, the two key factors that enabled performance were the strength of consultants' local networks and the level of engagement of Focal Points, which facilitated data collection and sometimes acted as project champions; these, however, varied across the pilot cities, demanding more backstopping from IEs in some cases. In ECLAC, close communication and exchange among local consultants in the region was also considered an enabling factor.

**Project implementation faced several barriers, which were managed adequately.** According to the final project report and interviews, the external factors that have hindered the achievement of project outputs and outcomes were the following:

- **COVID-19 restrictions:** As explained in Section 5.1, following COVID-19 policies that restricted travel and in-person interaction, most of project activities were carried out remotely. IEs experienced a learning curve in using virtual tools and local stakeholders occasionally faced challenges in joining and actively participating in remote meetings due to internet connection issues. In addition, local authorities were focused on emergency response and thus were slow at responding to project requests or rotated the staff that took part in project workshops. In Kharkiv, the Mayor died from COVID-19 complications, leading to changes within the city government. In this context, IEs had to undertake additional efforts to ensure ownership and continued commitment. A further challenge was that, in Beirut and Alexandria, the local consultants underwent extensive health care and hospitalization following COVID-19 infection, which caused some implementation delays.
- **Overlapping crises:** In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, Beirut experienced the effects of a protracted economic crisis in the country and of the port explosion in August 2020, which shifted the focus of authorities to addressing these emergencies, in turn causing delays in project implementation. In Kharkiv, project implementation was affected by the military actions that began in the country in early 2022, which impacted the city directly. In response to this situation,

ECE initiated the follow-up project “UN4Kharkiv: Plan for the Integrated Rehabilitation of Settlements (Territories) in Ukraine with a pilot project in the City of Kharkiv”,<sup>35</sup> which builds on urban economic resilience data and recommendations to inform the financial aspects of Kharkiv’s recovery and reconstruction strategy.

- Government changes at the national and local level affected project implementation in all regions and required additional efforts from IEs to re-engage government stakeholders. For example, in Kuwait, two early cabinet changes in 2021 caused delays in the appointment of focal points, while in Santo Domingo and Bishkek, changes in national and local government authorities led to resistance from newly appointed government officials to re-validate the work done by their predecessors. In Tirana and Lima, changes in local focal points at advanced stages of project implementation posed challenges to continued communication with the local government and, in Lima, to ownership of project outputs. In the latter city, the local consultant also had to be changed as he was appointed Vice Minister of Housing. IEs applied different strategies to navigate these changes, such as convening expert group meetings to validate the diagnostics and engaging a broader spectrum of stakeholders, such as civil society and non-governmental organizations with a continued local presence.
- Limited data availability and access:<sup>36</sup> While data availability for the diagnostic varied significantly across pilot cities, information gaps were encountered in all cities; a common challenge was the lack of disaggregated data at the city level and by relevant analytical dimensions, such as gender, age, and vulnerable population groups. Even when data existed, government agencies were reluctant to share them in some cases. In this context, some local consultants faced challenges in selecting proxy indicators to substitute for those listed in the DPT. In ECA and ESCWA cities, where quantitative data were scarcer, qualitative data were gathered and triangulated through group discussions and interviews with local stakeholders from different sectors, including government, academia, the private sector, and civil society.

Other challenges that required additional backstopping from IEs in some cities were: i) the resistance of local stakeholders from different sectors to sit at the same table (reported in two regions); ii) the lack of regional and national expertise on urban economic resilience (reported in one region); and iii) language barriers (reported in two regions).

## 5.4 Efficiency

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Was the project implemented according to plan? If not, was timely corrective action taken where necessary? Was additional support identified or provided to overcome implementation challenges?

**Key project outputs were completed by project end in all cities despite the delays experienced during implementation.** The planned duration of the project was 20 months (May 2020 – December 2021) but the end date was extended to April 2022 as ERBP processes took longer than expected and UNCDF experienced administrative delays to hire the consultants that would develop the information briefs on

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<sup>35</sup> See: <https://unece.org/housing/un4kharkiv-rehabilitation>

<sup>36</sup> It should be noted this challenge is not unique to this project.

sources of financial support.<sup>37</sup> Even with this extension, the timeframe to deliver planned outputs was limited considering the multiple external factors that delayed implementation (see Section 5.3) and was shorter than the usual four years allocated to UNDA projects, due to the fact that the project was conceived in the context of the UN response to COVID-19 to address the emerging needs of Member States. Despite time restrictions, key project deliverables were completed in all cities by April 2022, while workshops for the validation of information briefs extended until September 2022. Dissemination activities also continued after project end as they were integrated in other ongoing work by the IEs.

**In some cases, delays and sequencing issues affected the timeliness and relevance of project outputs.**

As already mentioned in Section 5.3, the delays in the development of the information briefs affected their timeliness and their depth.<sup>38</sup> Deep dives also show issues with the sequencing of outputs in Hoi An, where the ERBP was developed between July and December 2020 with a strategic focus on short-term recovery, while the diagnostic was developed in 2021, leading to two distinct sets of proposed actions.<sup>39</sup> The information brief considers the recommendations stemming from diagnostic, but not the actions proposed in the ERBP.

**Risks were correctly managed and anticipated.** The Project Document identifies five risks at the project level and five at the city level, which are largely coincident with the factors that hindered project implementation, except for unforeseeable events such as the Beirut blast and the military operations in Kharkiv. The mitigation actions contemplated in the Project Document are adequate to mitigate the risks and were implemented as described in Section 5.3.

**To what extent did the program and project governance, management structures and processes enable, or hinder, the efficient implementation of the project?**

**Project partners were adequately selected.** Project-level interviews indicate that the five UN Regional Commissions were an adequate platform to support project implementation, as they brought to the project their networks and in-depth understanding of each region, as well as their internal expertise on the multiple themes linked with urban economic resilience. As highlighted in Section 5.2, Regional Commissions were also best positioned to create synergies with other ongoing work to achieve and sustain results. Their participation as IEs in this project also had the added benefit of strengthening their work on urban issues, which IEs had integrated to their agenda to different degrees and with different emphases. UN-Habitat and UNCDF, as the technical collaboration partners, effectively complemented the IEs by providing specific expertise in urban resilience and local finance.

**Roles and responsibilities were clear, thus assuring efficient implementation.** IEs followed a unified approach, which facilitated implementation and monitoring. Based on the DPT, all the cities in the five regions followed the same implementation strategy, which provided clarity regarding expected results and facilitated monitoring, while ensuring certain flexibility to adapt the process to the specificities of each region and city. In this way, it was ensured that all cities in the five regions completed key deliverables and achieved key milestones with the relevant adaptations (see Section 5.3). According to

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<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that these delays were caused by UNCDF's internal procedures and are not specific to this project.

<sup>38</sup> In addition, there were issues with the quality of the briefs delivered by the consultant for ECA cities.

<sup>39</sup> Interviews suggest that this sequencing issue was related with a change in project management and approach at ESCAP.

areas of specialization, a clear division of labor was also established for UN-Habitat, which focused on a pre-defined set of knowledge activities, and UNCDF, which was responsible for the development of the DPT and for the information briefs on financing sources.

**Processes for decision-making, communication, and information-sharing were overall clear, with some communication challenges reported in one city.** Project-level interviews indicate that the role played by ECE and ECA as co-leads, with a full-time project manager at ECE, was instrumental to efficient project implementation. The co-leads, with the support of the project manager, convened Steering Committee meetings, monitored progress, and supported information-sharing and knowledge management. An online repository was created on SharePoint to store project documents and meeting recordings. In addition, relevant project documents and information were made available to project stakeholders and the public on the project website. Project partners felt adequately consulted and involved in decision-making throughout the project.

At the regional level, each IEs oversaw project implementation in the pilot cities with the support of international consultants, holding periodic follow-up meetings with local consultants and local focal points. Deep dives suggest that, overall, local consultants and local focal points felt adequately supported by the IEs, with the exception of Hoi An, where some communication challenges were reported; these seem to be explained by language barriers and by a change in regional project management halfway into implementation.

[How well coordinated were IEs and technical collaboration partners at the project level, and with other UNDA IEs at the program level \(i.e., in the framework of UNDA response to COVID-19\)?](#)

**Weekly Steering Committee meetings were an effective coordination mechanism.** As explained in Section 2, the project's Steering Committee, composed by the focal points of the IEs and of the technical collaboration partners, held weekly meetings from June 2020 to March 2022, i.e., throughout Phases 2 and 3 of the project. Recordings and minutes were made available after each meeting. Interviews indicate that these meetings were highly appreciated by project partners as an effective mechanism to coordinate activities, monitor progress, discuss emerging challenges, and exchange experiences. Frequent communication at these meetings also helped create closer ties among project partners and identify additional opportunities for collaboration, thus strengthening interregional work. For instance, in 2022 project partners have jointly hosted events to share lessons from the project at the High-Level Meeting on the Implementation of the Urban Agenda, the Global South-South Development Expo, and the UN climate change conference.

**Coordination with other UNDA IEs in the framework of the response to COVID-19 was limited.** Project partners comprised six of the 10 UNDA IEs, with the DA-PMT in an oversight role. While this fostered coordinated efforts among these entities for the response to COVID-19, no evidence was found of substantial coordination with the remaining UNDA IEs, i.e., the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). While the project was beyond the scope of work of UNODC, the lack of participation from UNCTAD and UNEP was probably due to already tight schedules and stretched resources as explained in Section 5.2. It should be noted, however, that partnerships were established

with these entities in the context of the other four projects funded through UNDA in response to COVID-19.<sup>40</sup>

## 5.5 Sustainability

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What measures were adopted to ensure that project outcomes would continue after the project ended?

**While the project did not have a sustainability strategy, several measures were implemented to foster ownership by local governments.** As the project provided short-term support to address emerging needs in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not equipped with a funded sustainability strategy. Nevertheless, the final project report and interviews reveal that several measures have been taken to ensure sustained outcomes after project end:

- **Letters of endorsement:** After the validation of the ERBPs, letters of endorsement were requested to local governments to foster high-level political commitment to implement the plans. According to the final project report, the local governments of the 16 pilot cities submitted these letters.<sup>41</sup> In the Asia-Pacific region, cities were encouraged to appoint a ERBP focal point in charge of reporting implementation progress to the Mayor / Chief Executive and to representatives of municipal councils / assemblies.
- **Continued engagement through events:** Another strategy to foster continued commitment has been to host international and regional events where high-level city officials can showcase their work with the project and beyond. While the main purpose of these events is knowledge dissemination, they are also expected to motivate city governments as they provide visibility and experience exchange opportunities. For example, the mayors of four pilot cities took part in the ECE Forum of Mayors 2022.<sup>42</sup> Joint events were also organized by the IEs throughout 2022, as detailed in Section 5.4.
- **Spin-off and follow-up projects:** In some of the pilot cities, IEs are developing VLRs and new projects that build on the data or on the recommendations produced by this project (see Sections 5.2 and 5.3), and thus maintain regular communication with city governments. This is ensuring the integration of project outputs into a continuous process of capacity building, in addition to providing opportunities for IEs to follow up on the implementation of the ERBPs, either by promoting their integration into government plans, or by facilitating access to funding. Furthermore, a draft concept note has been developed for the DA 16<sup>th</sup> tranche project “Supporting member states in urban economic resilience building for inclusive responses and

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<sup>40</sup> ESCAP, ECLAC, ECE, ECA and UN-Habitat, together with UNEP, were the IEs for the project “Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 Resurgence of the MSME sector”. In addition, the projects “Transport and Trade Connectivity in the Age of Pandemics” and “Strengthening Social Protection for Pandemic Response” brought together UNCTAD with the five UN Regional Commissions. Finally, the project “Response and Recovery: Mobilising Financial Resources for Development in the Time of Covid-19” was led by UNCTAD with the cooperation of ECLAC, ESCAP, and other Regional Commissions as needed. See: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/da/da-response-to-covid-19/>

<sup>41</sup> However, it should be noted that the evaluator had only access to nine endorsement letters.

<sup>42</sup> See: <https://forumofmayors.unece.org/>

recovery regarding natural, man-made disasters, internal and external shocks”, to be implemented in cities of 10 countries already covered by the 2023AA project, with the objective of strengthening the capacities of local governments in designing, implementing, and monitoring sustainable, resilient, and inclusive economic and financial responses to internal and external shocks to achieve the SDGs. The five UN Regional Commissions would be the IEs, in collaboration with UN-Habitat, UNCDF, and UN Resident Coordinators’ offices. Expected outcomes of this project include enhanced capacity of local governments to design and implement urban resilience projects and to identify sources of financing.

- Communication and knowledge management activities were implemented to disseminate the DPT and the experiences of pilot cities, including social media campaigns and the project website, which acts as a public repository of project deliverables, videos, and resources, and will be maintained at least until the end of 2023. In addition, a self-paced e-learning course on urban resilience was launched by UN-Habitat in 2022 based on the knowledge generated by the project.<sup>43</sup> The course, which is hosted on the Urban Resilience Hub website, had over 150 people registered by December 2022. This course, together with project deliverables and information, are also disseminated through the Urban and Cities Platform of Latin America and the Caribbean developed by ECLAC and UN-Habitat.<sup>44</sup> Finally, it should be noted that UNCDF submitted a paper to the winter 2021 issue of the Journal of Applied Business and Economics on the concept of urban economic resilience developed for the project.

### To what extent have these measures addressed the existing risks for sustainability?

**Despite sustainability measures, some risks to the sustainability of project outcomes need to be monitored in the future, especially in relation to ownership and funding.**

Funding: High risk. The local stakeholder survey and deep dives reveal that lack of funding is the main risk to the sustainability of project outcomes. Many local governments in the pilot cities are highly dependent on stretched public budgets, which have been strained even further by reductions in public revenues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As already discussed in Section 5.3, while the project has resulted in promising initiatives in some cities (e.g., Bishkek, Kharkiv), information briefs on sources of financing fell short of helping local governments develop capacities to access additional sources of funding or revenue to implement the most cost-intensive measures in the ERBPs. Among the deep-dive cities, Beirut and Hoi An are facing the greatest funding challenges. As a consequence of the devaluation of the Lebanese pound, the City of Beirut is facing rising costs and limited cash availability.<sup>45</sup> In turn, the City of Hoi An is still experiencing the effects of the fall in public revenues from tourism during the pandemic.

Political and social ownership: High risk. While IEs have made efforts to secure political ownership of the ERBPs and their integration into government planning frameworks during project implementation,

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<sup>43</sup> See: <https://www.cityresiliencetraining.com/course/login/index.php> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gfilh-OEli8>

<sup>44</sup> See: <https://plataformaurbana.cepal.org/en>

<sup>45</sup> However, it is expected that some actions from the ERBP will be implemented in the context of the Lebanon Reform and Recovery Reconstruction Framework, with the participation of UN-Habitat. See: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/publication/lebanon-reform-recovery-reconstruction-framework-3rf>

government changes after the end of the project are mentioned as a key risk in interviews and, to a lesser extent, in the local stakeholder survey. Short electoral cycles and political changes are likely to affect buy-in from local authorities in the short to medium term, at least in some cities. Other factors that might affect political ownership include a) limited knowledge on the ERBPs within local governments beyond focal points;<sup>46</sup> b) limited engagement of national governments, which are a key source of support for cities, in project implementation; and c) limited accountability in a context of low social ownership. While representatives from academia, business, and civil society organizations participated in specific project activities (especially validation workshops), it is unclear if these were sufficient to generate continued engagement in supporting the implementation of the ERBPs and in holding local governments accountable.

Technical capacities: Moderate risk. Limited technical capacities were the second most frequently mentioned sustainability risk in the local stakeholder survey. Interviews indicate that this is linked to staff shortages and turnover, unmet needs of training in public management, and limited use of information technology.

Legal, institutional and policy frameworks: Low risk. Deep dives show that, in some cities, institutional arrangements can pose challenges to the adoption of ERBPs. For instance, in Hoi An, the ERBP has to undergo the approval of the provincial government, which also retains some fiscal authority on the city, thus limiting the possibility of flexibly redirecting local resources. In Beirut, possible tensions between the City Council (elected) and the City Governor (appointed by the Minister of Interior), who are currently from different political parties, might also affect the adoption of the ERBP.

## 6. Conclusions

### *Relevance*

The project was designed to address expressions of interest from local authorities in developing country Member States and was thus relevant to their new needs and priorities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The main impacts of COVID-19 on urban economies were clearly identified in the Project Document. While the situation analysis did not identify the challenges faced by local governments to address these impacts (which included the lack of a planned response, lack of funding, and the lack of information on the economic impacts of COVID-19 in the city), this gap was addressed by the first workstream, which contemplated a diagnostic assessment at the city level. There were some missed opportunities in the alignment of the ERBPs developed in each city with the countries' SERPs, particularly in relation with green recovery opportunities and the specific needs of persons in situations of vulnerability in relation with economic resilience building.

Project activities and modalities were relevant to the new environment created by the pandemic. Internet access and language barriers were a challenge in some cities but did not substantially affect project implementation. Remote work facilitated project coordination across a large number of cities and

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<sup>46</sup> For instance, in one of the deep-dive cities, the local government officials who attended the interview were not familiar with the ERBP.

strengthened collaboration among partners in different regions, while local consultants played a key role as the interface between IEs and local stakeholders.

The project was aligned with multiple SDGs at the design stage but some ERBPs did not explicitly reflect the comprehensive approach to development promoted by the SDGs, pointing to opportunities for a more integrated approach. While the approach outlined in the DPT left ample room for adjusting the thematic focus depending on the priorities of each city, environmental sustainability was not included among the dimensions covered by DPT, possibly leading to missed opportunities to identify options for green recovery, which were driven by local interests and the ongoing work of each IE. While contemplated to a certain extent in the DPT, social sustainability does not figure prominently in the city diagnostics and in the ERBPs, partly due to limited availability of disaggregated data at the city level and the predominantly economic focus of the DPT. Some of the actions proposed in the ERBPs, however, have the potential to produce social and environmental co-benefits.

The gender perspective was adequately considered in the project design and, to a certain extent, in stakeholder discussions and other project activities, but is not fully mainstreamed into the DPT, city diagnostics and ERBPs, mainly due to the lack of disaggregated data at the city level. The same can be said for the rights of the persons in situation of vulnerability and with disabilities. Project design and activities were aligned with a human rights perspective, especially by fostering inclusive processes, but the DPT provided limited guidance on how to integrate it in diagnostics and plans, where it remained implicit.

### ***Coherence***

Opportunities for complementarity and coordination with other work undertaken by project partners were clearly identified at project design. In some cities, synergies were established with VLRs, while in others, IEs integrated the project into ongoing collaboration to foster synergies and ensure continued support after project end. Project partners also harnessed synergies to integrate the data collected and the DPT into subsequent projects.

Despite the efforts made to engage United Nations (UN) Country Teams and other UN entities, coordination remained limited due to their multiple engagements and stretched capacities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the specific focus of the project on economic resilience at the city level, with implementation in cities that are not capitals, while UNCTs work mostly at the national level. Limited evidence was found of coordination with the UN COVID-19 Response & Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund, although potential synergies might have been explored in at least one case.

### ***Effectiveness***

A clear methodology for urban economic resilience analysis and planning was developed and applied in all cities. With support from the IEs, economic resilience diagnostics, ERBPs, and information notes with sources of financial support were developed for the 16 pilot cities, in addition to several knowledge products and events, and additional project outputs to address emerging needs and opportunities. City diagnostics provided clear and comparable assessments of urban economic resilience. ERBPs provided a menu of options to address the gaps identified in the diagnostics but the proposed actions would have benefited from being prioritized and, in some cases, from being formulated in a more specific and measurable manner. Information briefs on sources of financial support came late in project implementation and did not fully address local governments' need to increase their capacities to access funding opportunities.

Overall, the project achieved its planned outcomes, thus contributing to increased knowledge on urban economic resilience. However, it was not always successful in increasing cities' capacities to access finance, and its contribution to improving implementation and monitoring capacities was limited. In some cities, governments have already started using the capacities gained through the project for economic recovery planning. Promising actions have been taken by some local governments as a result of project support, such as integrating ERBPs in their planning frameworks and establishing funding mechanisms to support their implementation, but economic, social, and environmental benefits have yet to materialize. The project also had the positive, unintended result of strengthening coordination among IEs and of positioning economic resilience in their agendas, which also paved the way for further collaboration with some pilot cities.

Overall, local stakeholders consider that the project was useful for city governments' response to the economic impacts of COVID-19, and positively value the quality and the timeliness of the support provided. This is partly due to the fact that, while following a unified implementation approach with clear deliverables and milestones, IEs adapted the nature and focus of project activities as relevant to address emerging local priorities.

The DPT is a key contribution and legacy of the project. This tool, developed by UNCDF specifically for this project, proved particularly effective in providing a snapshot of urban economic resilience and in highlighting key gaps, while allowing comparisons between different periods and across cities. While relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tool is easily applicable to other contexts, thus ensuring its continued relevance and replicability. The application of the DPT in the pilot cities provided valuable lessons that can be harnessed to strengthen the tool. These include considering limited data availability, providing training and advice throughout implementation given limited technical capacity at the local level, and strengthening the mainstreaming of environmental and social sustainability.

Effective project management and governance was the main enabling condition for project outputs and outcomes. Project implementation faced several barriers, including COVID-19 restrictions, government changes, limited data availability and access, and overlapping crises in Beirut and Kharkiv, which were managed adequately.

### *Efficiency*

Key project outputs were completed by project end in all cities despite some delays experienced during implementation, partly thanks to the fact that risks were correctly anticipated and managed. In some cases, however, delays and sequencing issues affected the timeliness and relevance of project outputs, particularly the information briefs.

Project partners were adequately selected, with the five UN Regional Commissions providing an adequate platform to support project implementation, as they brought to the project their networks and in-depth understanding of each region, as well as their internal expertise on the multiple themes linked with urban economic resilience. Overall, the clear division of labor among project partners, together with clearly established processes for decision-making, communication, information-sharing and knowledge management, ensured efficient implementation.

Weekly Steering Committee meetings were an effective mechanism to coordinate activities, monitor progress, discuss emerging challenges, and exchange experiences. Frequent communication at these

meetings also helped create closer ties among project partners and identify additional opportunities for collaboration, thus strengthening interregional work. Coordination with other UNDA IEs in the framework of the response to COVID-19 was however limited.

### ***Sustainability***

As the project provided short-term support to address emerging needs in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not equipped with a funded sustainability strategy. Nevertheless, several measures were implemented to foster ownership by local governments, including letters of endorsement, continued engagement through events, spin-off and follow-up projects, as well as communication and knowledge management. Despite these measures, some risks to the sustainability of project outcomes in the future still need to be monitored, especially in relation to funding and to government changes that could affect political ownership. To a lesser extent, limited technical capacities in local governments and institutional frameworks also pose some challenges.

## **7. Lessons learned / good practices**

**1. A multidimensional approach is needed to build urban economic resilience.** The DPT spanned five areas, namely labor market, business environment, financial environment, economic governance, and basic infrastructure and connectivity. While zooming in on these areas provided a snapshot of economic resilience at the city level, this multidimensional approach can be complemented to ensure that ERBPs integrate opportunities for green recovery and targeted measures to strengthen the economic resilience of women, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable groups. Through this wider lens, building urban economic resilience becomes a steppingstone to the achievement of the SDGs.

**2. Building local government capacities to access funding should be a key component of any project directed towards building urban economic resilience.** Providing information on potential sources of financing is not enough for local governments in developing countries to be able to actually access additional funding, given their limited capacities and strong reliance on public budgets. Capacity building for local governments to access funding (including how to increase their revenues, formulate project proposals, and establishing Public-Private Partnerships) should start early in implementation and engage national governments, which are a key source of support for local governments. Regional Commissions also have a key role to play in linking planned actions with ongoing or future projects, including of other UN agencies and multilateral development banks.

**3. A unified but adaptable implementation strategy is key for multi-partner projects than span several regions and cities.** The efficiency and effectiveness of the project is in large part attributable to its implementation strategy, which established a clear division of labor among project partners and defined a clear set of deliverables and milestones, whose specific contents could however be adapted to diverse local needs, capacities, and opportunities. This unified but flexible implementation strategy was reflected in the project's governance arrangements, which ensured clear leadership from two lead agencies supported by a project manager and frequent interaction among project partners through weekly meetings, coupled with decentralized management at the regional level, and a presence in each city through local consultants with strong local networks. Regular virtual meetings and training sessions were organized with local governments and other local stakeholders, thus ensuring ongoing capacity building

throughout the duration of the project. The use of online tools was key to ensure efficient communication, information flows and knowledge management at all levels of this decentralized governance structure. Altogether, these elements were instrumental to the achievement of project results, in addition to facilitating project monitoring and reporting.

## 8. Recommendations

### *Recommendations to ensure the sustainability of project results*

**1. ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA, with support from UN-Habitat and UNCDF as relevant, should continue efforts to engage pilot cities in their respective regions and help them further develop their capacities to access funding for their plans.** The evaluation identified some risks to the sustainability of project results, including limited access to funding, decreased political ownership following possible government changes in the future, low social ownership and, to a lesser extent, limited technical capacities within local governments and institutional arrangements that hinder the adoption of ERBPs. To address these risks, the following actions should be considered:

- **Continue engaging local governments from the pilot cities in ongoing or upcoming projects and activities** to provide them with continued support to access funding and to improve their technical capacities for the implementation and monitoring of the ERBPs. Cities would particularly benefit from continued and practical advice on how to tap on existing opportunities for increasing public revenue, and on how to access international and private-sector funding for the most cost-intensive actions included in the ERBPs (e.g., those related with basic infrastructure). Advice is particularly needed to develop a pipeline of projects and match them with adequate types of funding from different sources.
- **Continue providing spaces for experience exchange among pilot cities**, both at the regional and global level, including joint events in different fora and the integration of local governments into ongoing initiatives, such as the Making Cities Resilient 2030 network, the Asia – Pacific Mayors Academy (launched by ESCAP, UN-Habitat and other organizations), and the Malaga Global Coalition for Municipal Finance led by UNCDF. This would provide local governments with opportunities to access expert advice and capacity building to implement their ERBPs, while at the same time fostering long-term engagement in resilience building. Ideally, experience exchange should go beyond mayors to involve local focal points and other city officials.

**2. ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, UN-Habitat and UNCDF should consider mobilizing resources (UNDA or other) for a follow-up project to support the implementation and monitoring of the Economic Resilience Building Plans (ERBPs) in the pilot cities.** A draft concept note for a UNDA 16<sup>th</sup> tranche project was developed to support urban economic resilience building for inclusive responses and recovery regarding natural, man-made disasters, internal and external shocks. If implemented in some of the pilot cities, this proposed project could help them update their urban resilience diagnostics, track progress in the ERBPs, and continue building their capacities in relation with resilience planning, monitoring (including data collection and management), and implementation in the context of the multiple economic crises that cities are facing in the current international juncture.

**3. ECA and ECE, with support from ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, UN-Habitat and UNCDF as relevant, should systematize the lessons learned from this project.** The project produced a large number of knowledge products and deliverables, most of which are available on the project website. It would be useful to distil this vast knowledge into policy guidelines for economic resilience building that would provide practical and concise guidance to national and subnational governments regarding how to strengthen urban economic resilience in face of external shocks.

#### *Recommendations for future projects*

**4. UNCDF, with support from UN-Habitat, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA as relevant, should update the Diagnostic and Planning Tool (DPT) based on lessons learned and pilot its use in tandem with other diagnostic instruments.** The evaluation found that, while the DPT was a relevant and effective tool to assess urban economic resilience, there are opportunities to strengthen it based on the lessons learned from its application in the 16 pilot cities. It is therefore recommended that UNCDF updates the DPT drawing on these lessons, including those related with the mainstreaming of social and environmental sustainability into economic resilience. Among other aspects, practical guidance should be provided to a) assess and address the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on urban economic resilience; b) identify vulnerable groups and the specific impacts of external shocks on the economic resilience of those groups, including persons with disabilities; and c) mainstream the gender and human rights perspectives in the application of the tool. Input could be provided by UN Regional Commissions based on their experience in this project. The application of the DPT in tandem with other diagnostic instruments, such as UN-Habitat's City Resilience Profiling Tool,<sup>47</sup> should also be piloted.

**5. ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, UN-Habitat and UNCDF should continue implementing joint, global projects** to fully harness potential synergies and multiply outcomes. Future joint projects should replicate the project's governance arrangements, including the appointment of a leading agency supported by a project manager, weekly Steering Committee meetings, knowledge management systems, and a unified implementation strategy with clear but adaptable deliverables and milestones.

**6. UNDA projects should support capacity building throughout implementation.** While supporting diagnostic and planning processes is key to advance urban economic resilience, and more broadly the 2030 Agenda, so is developing implementation capacities, especially at the local level. As already mentioned above, efforts should focus, in particular, on helping local governments strengthen their capacities to increase public revenues and develop a pipeline of projects matched with adequate types of funding from different sources. The proposed UNDA 16<sup>th</sup> tranche project mentioned above is a promising step in this direction.

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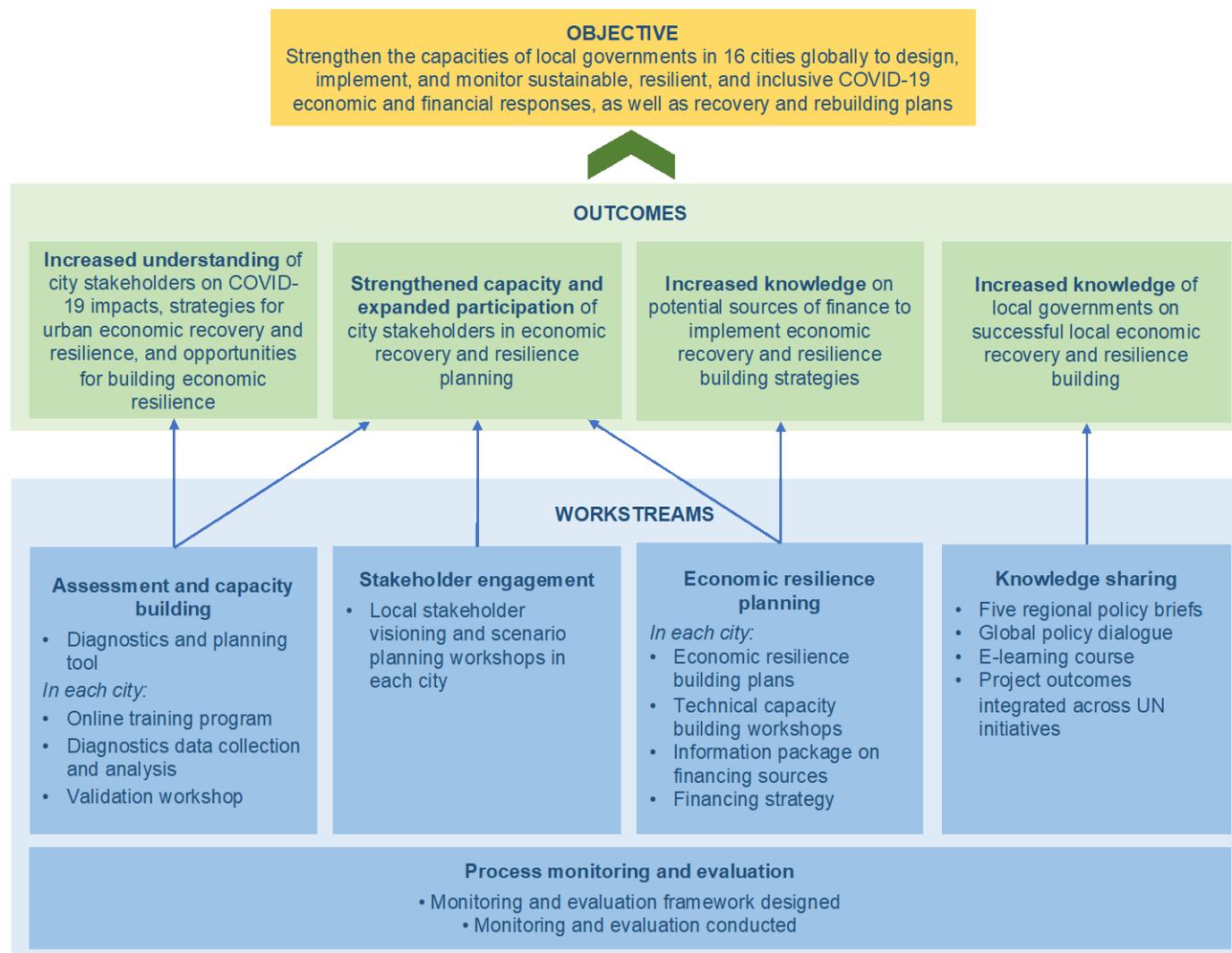
<sup>47</sup> See: <https://unhabitat.org/guide-to-the-city-resilience-profiling-tool>

# Annexes

## I. Project's Theory of change

**Key Assumption:**  
City stakeholders use strengthened capacities to respond to the key economic and financial challenges arising from COVID-19.

**Key assumption:**  
City stakeholders actively and continuously participate in project activities



## II. Evaluation ToR

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### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### Evaluation of UNDA Project 2023AA

#### Building Urban Economic Resilience during and after COVID-19

##### I. Purpose

The main purpose of this evaluation is organizational learning, namely to contribute to lessons learnt on the implementation and results of the project, as well as developing the existing knowledge base; improving evidence for future decision making by providing credible and reliable evidence on ways to improve developmental outcomes; and promotion of accountability for results.

The evaluation will provide an assessment of the results attained by the project (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and coherence), as well as on project design, project management, implementation, partnerships, contribution to SDGs, the extent of gender and human rights mainstreaming and disability inclusion; it will also identify good practices and lessons for future implementation of similar projects.

The primary audiences of the project evaluation are the implementing entities and project partners (ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, UN-Habitat and UNCDF). The findings of the evaluation will also feed into the programme-level evaluation of the DA's response to COVID-19, scheduled to be initiated in late 2022, for which the primary audiences will include the DA Steering Committee and the DA-Programme Management Team (DA-PMT). The results of the programme-level evaluation will also be presented to the General Assembly, through the biennial progress report on the implementation of the DA.

##### II. Evaluation scope and questions

The evaluation will be guided by the objectives, indicators of achievement and means of verification established in the logical framework of the project documents. The evaluation will cover the duration of the project from May 2020 to 30 April 2022, encompassing all clusters of the project.

This final evaluation of the project has the following specific objectives:

- Determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and coherence of the project results in light of its goals and objectives;
- Document the results and achievements in each of the clusters of the project, as well as at the project level (including synergies built across the clusters);
- Assess the response delivery and external coordination<sup>48</sup>, including appropriate gender and human rights dimensions; and

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<sup>48</sup> The OIOS COVID-19 response evaluation protocol identifies the following three cross-cutting focus areas: 1) response delivery; 2) external coordination (or “Delivering as one”); and 3) business continuity. “Response delivery” is further defined as consisting of delivery of: 1) the existing mandate needed to implement previously

- Identify good practices and lessons learned from the project and formulate action-oriented, forward-looking recommendations addressed to the implementing entities for improving future interventions.

The evaluation criteria are relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, coherence, gender and human rights.

Relevance:

1. To what extent was the response designed to target the new needs and priorities of developing country Member States' local authorities as a result of COVID-19, including those enunciated in the country's COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP)<sup>49</sup>?
2. To what extent was the response, including its activities and modality, relevant to the new environment created by the pandemic?
3. To what extent were gender and human rights perspectives integrated into design and implementation of the project? What results can be identified from these actions? How can gender and human rights perspectives be better included in future projects design and implementation?
4. To what extent have the activities of the project taken into account the rights of persons with disabilities and the perspective of vulnerable groups?

Efficiency:

5. How well coordinated was the response internally, both among the entities implementing the joint project (at project level) and among the implementing entities (at programme level)?
6. Was the response implemented according to plan? If not, was timely corrective action taken where necessary? Was additional support identified or provided to overcome implementation challenges?
7. To what extent did the programme and project governance and management structures and processes enable, or hinder, the efficient implementation of the joint project and its results achievement?

Effectiveness:

8. To what extent has the response effectively addressed the new priorities of Member States' local authorities that emerged as a result of COVID-19?
9. What were the significant results and achievements of the project?
10. What difference did the project make to the local governments' responses to COVID-19?
11. What innovative approach or tool, if any, did the response use, and what were the outcomes and lessons learned from its application?
12. To what extent did the programme and project governance and management structures and

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mandated activities in the new environment created by the pandemic; and 2) the COVID-19 specific response (health and non-health) needed to address the pandemic specifically. See OIOS (October 2020), "COVID-19 Response Evaluation Protocol", para 3-4.

<sup>49</sup> Plans can be accessed from: <https://data.uninfo.org/Home/ DocumentTracker>

processes enable, or hinder, the effective implementation of the joint project and its results achievement?

#### Sustainability

13. What measures were adopted to ensure that outcomes of the response would continue after the project ended?

#### Coherence:

14. To what extent was the project complementary to, and coordinated with, other work undertaken by the implementing entities?
15. To what extent has the DA's response to COVID-19 been coordinated with, and complementary to, that of other UN entities (Secretariat and non-Secretariat) in delivering socio-economic support to Member States, including the work financed by the UN COVID-19 Response & Recovery Multi-Party Trust Fund (MPTF) and the UN Country Teams (UNCTs)?

### **III. Evaluation methodology**

The evaluation will adopt a theory-driven, utilization-focused approach. It will be guided by the project-results framework and ensure a gender and human rights responsive evaluation<sup>50</sup>. The evaluator is required to use a mixed-method approach, including qualitative as well as quantitative data gathering and analysis as the basis for a triangulation exercise of all available data to draw conclusions and findings.

In view of the current global pandemic situation, innovative methods for data collection are required.

Methods for data gathering for this evaluation may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Desk review of project documents and relevant materials;
- Collection and analysis of relevant web and social media metrics related to the outputs of the project;
- Observation and/or watching of the recordings of a sample of virtual meetings, webinars and other activities to be implemented by the project, as appropriate;
- Virtual focus group discussions;
- Telephone/virtual interviews with project teams and a balanced sample of project participants, project partners and other relevant stakeholders;
- Online surveys of beneficiaries of the project, and other stakeholders, as may be required; follow-up interviews as may be necessary;
- In case travel is possible, missions to a sample of participating countries may be envisaged, as appropriate.

The evaluator will further elaborate on the evaluation methodology in the Inception Report, determining thereby the exact focus and approach for the exercise, including selecting one city per region for an in-depth assessment, in consultation with project managers, developing tailor-made questions that target different stakeholders (based on a stakeholder analysis), and developing the

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<sup>50</sup> With reference to [Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation: Towards UNEG Guidance](#)

sampling strategy and identifying the sources and methods for data collection. The evaluation team is to ensure a wide representation of stakeholders, bearing in mind the need to include those in a disadvantaged or minority position as appropriate. Inception Report Guidelines will be provided to the Evaluation Team.

The evaluation will be conducted in line with the UNEG and Development Account Evaluation Guidelines and will strive to employ development best practices with regard to promoting **gender equality** and a **human rights-based approach**, including the **rights of persons with disabilities**. The evaluator will explicitly explain how human rights, gender, disability, SDGs, and environmental considerations will be taken into account during the evaluation.

#### IV. Management of the evaluation (roles and responsibilities)

The independent final project evaluation will be led by ECE and ECA Evaluation Units, in coordination with an **Evaluation Management Committee (EMC)** that comprises a representative of each of the evaluation units of the partner entities (ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, UN-Habitat and UNCDF). ECE and ECA Evaluation Units will serve as secretariat of the EMC and ensure that the key milestones of the evaluation are met on time. The EMC primarily serves a quality assurance function. Specific responsibilities of the EMC include:

- Review and approve the evaluation TOR;
- Agree on the selection of the evaluation consultant(s) based on recommendations made by ECE and ECA Evaluation Units to ensure that the selection is based on the required skills and qualifications;
- Approve the Inception report, including proposed survey and interview questions; and
- Review, comment on, and clear the final evaluation report.

An **Evaluation Reference Group (ERG)** consisting of a representative from each UN partner entity (usually the project focal points), the DA-PMT, and if possible and appropriate, at least two representatives of participating governments will review<sup>51</sup> and contribute inputs to key steps in this evaluation such as the TOR and draft final report. More specifically, ERG members will be expected to:

- Review the draft evaluation report and provide substantive feedback, including coordinating feedback from other sections, units and offices from headquarters and from the field to ensure accuracy, quality and completeness;
- Participate in the validation meeting of the final evaluation report with the EMC;
- Play a key role in disseminating the findings of the evaluation and implementation of the management response, in coordination with their evaluation units as appropriate.

**Both the EMC and the ERG** commit to submitting substantive comments and additional supporting evidence on a timely basis. Comments will be invited on a 'non-objection' basis (no response=agree) so that the process is not delayed for an unnecessarily long time.

An **evaluator** will be recruited to undertake this assignment. ECA Evaluation Unit will administrate the consultancy contract. The evaluator is responsible for conducting the evaluation, applying the methodology as appropriate and for producing the evaluation report. The evaluator will participate in briefing and debriefing meetings, discussions, online workshops, and will lead the evaluation,

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<sup>51</sup> Possibly representatives of the cities selected for an in-depth assessment.

writing the final draft and final report. The evaluation report will be prepared based on the DA project evaluation report outline. The evaluator will develop its own evaluation tools and framework, within the available timeframe and resources. The evaluator is fully responsible for the report, which may not reflect the views of any of the implementing entities of the project. The evaluation report is subject to quality control and clearance by the EMC, as set out above.

The evaluator should possess a mix of evaluation skills and technical or sectoral/thematic knowledge relevant to the evaluation, including gender analysis and human-rights due diligence.

The evaluator will be provided by the Project Manager(s)/Project Design Team full access to all project reports, documentation, and stakeholder lists and contact information.

**The Project Steering Committee** will be expected to:

- Review the draft evaluation ToR and provide substantive feedback;
- Provide access to the evaluator to relevant project documentation and stakeholders from their respective entities;
- Submit to the evaluator project documentation, including data and information residing with the other participating entities, immediately following the completion of the project;
- Collect and consolidate other requested data and information from their respective entities, as requested by the evaluator;
- Support the evaluation process, including through facilitating the evaluators' access to the project's beneficiaries and other key stakeholders;
- Provide an updated list of stakeholders, and facilitate the administration of questionnaires;
- Provide contacts, references, information about activities and logistical support to the evaluator as requested at the start of the evaluation and during the evaluation;
- Participate in the ERG;
- Coordinate the preparation of a response to the evaluation recommendations directed to the implementing entities, including an action plan;
- Facilitate the cooperation and contribution of the relevant colleagues in their respective entities to the evaluation process, as requested;
- Review the draft evaluation report and provide substantive feedback to the EMC when requested.

## V. Evaluation timeline

Taking into consideration the significant coordination requirements for an evaluation of this project that involves seven entities and many distinct clusters/workstreams, planning of the evaluation was initiated more than three months before the project completion date.

The independent final evaluation of the project will be completed within nine months of the end of the project after the agreed-upon project completion date.

- Completion of the project – 30 April 2022
- Delivery of the final (project) report – No later than 31 July 2022
- Delivery of the terminal evaluation report – No later than 31 January 2022

The provisional timeline of the evaluation is as follows<sup>52</sup>:

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Action</b>
March 2022	TOR approved by the Evaluation Management Committee (EMC)
April 2022	Evaluator selected by the EMC
May 2022	Contract signed. Evaluator starts the desk review
June 2022	Evaluator submits inception report for clearance by the EMC
July 2022	EMC clears the inception report
July 2022	Evaluator launches data gathering and conducts interviews
September 2022	Evaluator submits draft report to the EMC
October 2022	EMC provides feedback on draft report
October 2022	Evaluator submits final report and Evaluation Brief and presents the report to the EMC

## **VI. Resources**

An independent consultant will be engaged to conduct the evaluation, within a budget of US\$ \$25'000. This amount will cover all costs related to the evaluation, including evaluation consultancy contract, travel, translation, dissemination and communication costs.

## **VII. Intended Use/Follow-up and dissemination plan**

Upon finalization of the evaluation report, the project management team will be responsible for coordinating the preparation of a response to the recommendations, including an implementation plan.

The results from the evaluation including key lessons learned, best practices and recommendations will be shared widely with participating entities, partners and stakeholders, and member States. In particular, the following modes of communication could be used:

- A workshop with all relevant stakeholders to present the key findings, recommendations and lessons learned;
- A copy of the final evaluation report will be published on the Development Account website and the websites of the implementing entities, as appropriate;
- An Evaluation Brief will be produced presenting a brief summary of the key evaluation findings, highlighting the results of the project in particular, and lessons learned.

## **VIII. Criteria for Evaluators**

Evaluators should have:

- An advanced university degree or equivalent background in evaluation

<sup>52</sup> Final timetable to be agreed following engagement of the evaluator. The contract of the evaluator ends after the submission of the final report.

- Specialized training in areas such as evaluation, collaboration between private sector and UN entities, project management, gender analysis, human rights.
- Advanced skills in statistical research and analysis.
- Demonstrated relevant professional experience in design, management and conduct of evaluation processes with multiple stakeholders, including within the UN system, survey design and implementation, project planning, monitoring and management.
- Demonstrated methodological knowledge of evaluations, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for end-of-cycle project evaluations.
- Possess a mix of evaluation skills and technical or sectoral/thematic knowledge relevant to the evaluation, including gender analysis and human-rights due diligence.
- Demonstrated knowledge in the areas of urban development policies, urban planning and management.
- Expertise in local government and urban contexts
- Fluent in written and spoken English. Knowledge of another official UN language desirable for the purpose of being able to seek inputs from national authorities in their native tongue.
- Evaluators should declare any conflict of interest to UNECE before embarking on an evaluation project, and at any point where such conflict occurs.

### III. Evaluation matrix

Question	Indicators	Information sources	Data collection methods
<b>1. RELEVANCE</b>			
<p><b>1.1</b> To what extent was the project designed to target the new needs and priorities of developing country Member States' local authorities as a result of COVID-19, including those enunciated in the country's COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Degree of alignment between the project objective, outcomes, and outputs with the needs and priorities of local governments in the 16 pilot cities</li> <li>Extent to which local stakeholders were consulted during project design</li> <li>Level of clarity and specificity of the situation analysis in the Project Document</li> <li>Extent to which a clear and evidence-based relationship was established in the Project Document between the situation analysis and project objective, outcomes, and workstreams</li> </ul>	<p>Project Document, SERP</p> <p>IEs (especially project design team members), technical collaboration partners, local government focal points, local consultants, and other local stakeholders</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews Survey Deep dives</p>
<p><b>1.2</b> To what extent was the project, including its activities and modality, relevant to the new environment created by the pandemic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which planned project activities and their modes of implementation addressed the new conditions created by the pandemic (e.g., risks and restrictions to in-person work)</li> </ul>	<p>Project Document</p> <p>IEs, technical collaboration partners, local government focal points, local consultants</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews Deep dives</p>
<p><b>1.3</b> To what extent was the project aligned with the SDGs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of alignment of the project (objective, outcomes, and outputs) with the SDGs</li> </ul>	<p>2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Project Document</p> <p>UNDESA, IEs, technical collaboration partners</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>
<p><b>1.4</b> To what extent were gender and human rights perspectives integrated into the design and implementation of the project? What results can be identified from these actions? How can gender and human rights perspectives be better included in future projects design and implementation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of alignment of project design and implementation with relevant UN frameworks</li> <li>Number and quality of measures in project design and implementation that address a) gender inequalities in the economic impacts of COVID-19 and the diverse needs of project and b) gender-differentiated needs and capabilities to respond to COVID-19</li> <li>Number and quality of measures in project design and implementation to enable equitable participation of women in project activities.</li> <li>Examples of lessons learned</li> </ul>	<p>Project Document, city-level deliverables, UN Human Rights Based Approach, Leaving No One Behind framework, resolution on global solidarity to fight COVID-19, UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19, UN Comprehensive Response to COVID-19</p> <p>IEs, technical collaboration partners, local government focal points, local consultants, and other local stakeholders</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Survey Interviews Deep dives</p>

Question	Indicators	Information sources	Data collection methods
1.5 To what extent have the activities of the project taken into account the rights of persons with disabilities and the perspective of vulnerable groups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and quality of measures in project design and implementation that address a) inequalities in the economic impacts of COVID-19 for persons with disabilities and vulnerable groups; b) the diverse needs and capabilities of persons with disabilities and vulnerable groups to respond to COVID-19</li> <li>Number and quality of measures in project design and implementation to enable equitable participation of persons with disabilities and vulnerable groups in project activities</li> </ul>	<p>Project Document, city-level deliverables</p> <p>IEs, technical collaboration partners, local government focal points, local consultants, and other local stakeholders</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Survey Interviews Deep dives</p>
<b>2. COHERENCE</b>			
2.1 To what extent was the project complementary to, and coordinated with other work undertaken by the IEs and the technical collaboration partners?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of linkages (or lack thereof) with other interventions undertaken by the IEs in the context of UNDA response to COVID-19 and urban resilience</li> </ul>	<p>Project Document, UNDA response to COVID-19</p> <p>UNDESA, IEs, technical collaboration partners, local government focal points, local consultants</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews Deep dives</p>
2.2 To what extent was the project coordinated with, and complementary to, the response to COVID-19 of other UN entities (Secretariat and non-Secretariat) in delivering socio-economic support to Member States, including the work financed by the UN COVID-19 Response & Recovery Multi-Party Trust Fund (MPTF) and the UN Country Teams (UNCTs)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of linkages (or lack thereof) with other interventions undertaken by other UN entities (Secretariat and non-Secretariat) in the context of the UN response to COVID-19 and urban resilience</li> </ul>	<p>Project Document, UNDA response to COVID-19, resolution on global solidarity to fight COVID-19, UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19, UN Comprehensive Response to COVID-19</p> <p>UNDESA, IEs, technical collaboration partners, local government focal points, local consultants</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews Deep dives</p>
<b>3. EFFECTIVENESS</b>			
3.1 What were the significant results and achievements of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of achievement of the project outputs, outcome indicators, and objective</li> <li>Evidence of unintended results (positive or negative)</li> </ul>	<p>Project Document (results framework), Phase 1 &amp; 2 Progress Report, Draft Final Report, project-level and city-level deliverables</p> <p>UNDESA, IEs, technical collaboration partners, local government focal points, local consultants, and other local stakeholders</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Survey Interviews Deep dives</p>

Question	Indicators	Information sources	Data collection methods
<b>3.2</b> What difference did the project make to the local governments' responses to COVID-19?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of the contribution of the project to local governments' responses to COVID-19</li> <li>• Evidence of actions taken by local governments to which the project has contributed</li> <li>• Examples of economic impacts</li> <li>• Examples of social and environmental co-benefits</li> </ul>	Local government focal points, local consultants, and other local stakeholders	Survey Deep dives
<b>3.3</b> To what extent has the project effectively addressed the new priorities of Member States' local authorities that emerged as a result of COVID-19?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degree of alignment of actual project outputs and outcomes with the emerging priorities of local authorities as a result of COVID-19</li> <li>• Examples of adaptations in project activities and outputs that were made to address these emerging priorities</li> </ul>	City-level deliverables  Local government focal points, local consultants, and other local stakeholders	Document review  Survey Deep dives
<b>3.4</b> What innovative approach or tool, if any, did the project use, and what were the outcomes and lessons learned from its application?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of innovative approaches or tools used by the project to meet the unprecedented needs brought by the pandemic</li> <li>• Evidence of the contribution of these innovative approaches or tools to project outputs and outcomes</li> <li>• Examples of lessons learned</li> </ul>	Project Document, project-level and city-level deliverables  IEs, technical collaboration partners, international consultants, local consultants	Document review  Interviews Deep dives
<b>3.5</b> What factors and actors have enabled or hindered the achievement of project outputs and outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of enabling conditions or barriers towards the achievement of outputs and outcomes</li> </ul>	Steering Committee minutes, Phase 1 & 2 Progress Report, Draft Final Report  IEs, technical collaboration partners, local government focal points, local consultants	Document review  Interviews Deep dives
<b>4. EFFICIENCY</b>			
<b>4.1</b> Was the project implemented according to plan? If not, was timely corrective action taken where necessary? Was additional support identified or provided to overcome implementation challenges?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timing and sequence of outputs against work plan</li> <li>• Extent to which the Project Document anticipated the risks faced during implementation</li> <li>• Quality of the risk mitigation strategies identified and implemented</li> <li>• Examples of adaptive management actions taken to address emerging challenges</li> </ul>	Project Document, Phase 1 & 2 Progress Report, Draft Final Report, Steering Committee minutes  UNDESA, IEs, technical collaboration partners	Document review  Interviews

Question	Indicators	Information sources	Data collection methods
<b>4.2</b> To what extent did the program and project governance, management structures and processes enable, or hinder, the efficient implementation of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of clarity in roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Level of clarity in processes for decision-making, communication, and information-sharing</li> <li>• Evidence of any bottlenecks in decision-making, communication, and information-sharing</li> <li>• Perceived efficiency of program and project governance, management structures and processes</li> </ul>	<p>Steering Committee minutes, Phase 1 &amp; 2 Progress Report, Draft Final Report</p> <p>UNDESA, IEs, technical collaboration partners, local government focal points, local consultants</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Deep dives</p>
<b>4.3</b> How well coordinated were IEs and technical collaboration partners at the project level, and with other UNDA IEs at the program level (i.e., in the framework of UNDA response to COVID-19)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of coordination mechanisms at the program and project level, and frequency of their use</li> <li>• Perceived efficiency of coordination mechanisms</li> </ul>	<p>Steering Committee minutes</p> <p>UNDESA, IEs, technical collaboration partners</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>
<b>5. SUSTAINABILITY</b>			
<b>5.1</b> What measures were adopted to ensure that project outcomes would continue after the project ended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of implementation of sustainability measures</li> <li>• Quality of the sustainability measures implemented</li> </ul>	<p>Project Document, Phase 1 &amp; 2 Progress Report, Draft Final Report</p> <p>IEs, technical collaboration partners</p>	<p>Desk review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Deep dives</p>
<b>5.2</b> To what extent have these measures addressed the existing risks for sustainability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existence of risks to the sustainability of project outcomes, including those related with technical capacities; legal, institutional and policy frameworks; political and social ownership of project outputs; and funding</li> <li>• Extent to which sustainability measures addressed these risks</li> </ul>	<p>IEs, technical collaboration partners, local government focal points, local consultants, and other local stakeholders</p>	<p>Interviews</p> <p>Survey</p> <p>Deep dives</p>

## IV. List of documents reviewed

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### Planning and monitoring documents:

- Project Document
- Phase 1 & 2 Progress Report
- Final Project Report
- Weekly Steering Committee minutes
- Stakeholder Engagement Template
- Communication report 2021: Building Urban Economic Resilience during and after COVID-19
- Updated budget data provided by DA-PMT on December 12, 2022
- List of spin-off projects

### Project-level deliverables:

- Urban Economic Recovery and Resilience: Diagnostic and Planning Tool
- Regional Policy Briefs
- Minutes of the Global Policy Dialogue on urban recovery and resilience
- Materials of the e-learning course “Introduction to Urban Economic Resilience Diagnostics and Action Planning in the context of COVID-19”
- Project website: <https://urbaneconomicresilience.org/>

### City-level deliverables:<sup>53</sup>

- Workshop agendas and minutes
- Urban economic recovery and resilience diagnostics
- ERBPs
- Information briefs on sources of finance
- Global Compendium of Practices – city case studies
- City policy briefs
- Endorsement letters

### Relevant UN frameworks:

- The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation: Towards a Common Understanding Among UN Agencies (2003)
- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)
- Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development: The United Nations System Shared Framework for Action (2016)
- Global solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) – Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 2 April 2020
- A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 (April 2020)

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<sup>53</sup> Reviewed only for the five selected cities. DPTs, ERBPs and information briefs were consulted as relevant for other cities. Endorsement letters were reviewed as available.

- UN Comprehensive Response to COVID-19 (2021 update)
- UNDA response to COVID-19: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/da/da-response-to-covid-19/>
- SERPs<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Reviewed only for the five selected cities.

## V. List of individuals interviewed

Name	Role in the project	Gender	Date of interview
<b>Project level interviews</b>			
Marios Pournaris	Focal point, ECA	Man	31/08/2022
Curt Garrigan	Focal point, ESCAP	Man	31/08/2022
Esteban Leon	Focal point, UN-Habitat	Man	05/09/2022
Dmitry Pozhidaev	Focal point, UNCDF	Man	05/09/2022
Gulnara Roll	Focal point, ECE	Woman	06/09/2022
Enkel Leskaj	Project management consultant, ECE	Man	
Diego Aulestia	Head of the Human Settlements Unit, ECLAC	Man	06/09/2022
Estefania Forero	Focal point, ECLAC		
Sukaina Al-Nasrawi	Focal point, ESCWA	Woman	06/09/2022
Nisreen Alaraj	Regional consultant, ESCWA	Woman	
Martin Kraus	DA-PMT, UNDESA	Man	27/10/2022
<b>City level interviews</b>			
Walid Marrouch	Local consultant, Beirut	Man	15/09/2022
Yusra Sidani Balaa	Local focal point, Beirut	Woman	19/09/2022
Prosper Chitambara	Local consultant, Harare	Man	16/09/2022
Wendy Chávez	Local consultant, Guayaquil	Woman	04/10/2022
Maria Eugenia Naranjo Rivas	Project participants, Municipal Housing Company, Guayaquil	Woman	05/10/2022
Nicole Denisse Farah			
Nadia Verónica Alarcón		Woman	
Mazón		Woman	
Maria Luisa Guerra Gavica			
Miguel Angel Unda		Woman	
Joshua Castro		Man	
Mayra Vargas		Woman	
Nga Vuong	Local consultant, Hoi An (diagnostic)	Woman	17/10/2022
Huynh Huy Hoa	Local consultants, Hoi An (ERBP)	Man	19/10/2022
Hoa Mai		Woman	
Thao Le Ngoc	Local focal points, Hoi An	Man	10/11/2022
Le Ngoc Lynh Vy		Woman	
Bakyt Satybekov	Local consultant, Bishkek	Man	19/10/2022
Meerim Kydyralieva	Local focal points, Bishkek	Woman	20/10/2022
Aigul Kochorbaeva		Woman	

## VI. Data collection instruments

### Interview questionnaires

<b>Questions</b> <i>* The questions below are based on the evaluation matrix and were tailored to each interviewee. Follow-up questions were asked as relevant considering the indicators included in the evaluation matrix or to explore emerging themes.</i>	DA-PMT	IEs and technical collaboration partners	Local government focal points and local consultants
<b>General</b>			
How long have you been involved in the project and what is the nature of your involvement (specific activities)?	X	X	X
<b>Relevance</b>			
To what extent was the project designed to target the new needs and priorities of developing country Member States' local authorities as a result of COVID-19, including those enunciated in the country's SERP?		X	X
To what extent was the project, including its activities and modality, relevant to the new environment created by the pandemic?	X	X	X
To what extent was the project aligned with the SDGs?	X	X	
To what extent were gender and human rights perspectives integrated into the design and implementation of the project? What results can be identified from these actions? How can gender and human rights perspectives be better included in future projects design and implementation?		X	X
To what extent have the activities of the project taken into account the rights of persons with disabilities and the perspective of vulnerable groups?		X	X
<b>Coherence</b>			
To what extent was the project complementary to, and coordinated with other work undertaken by the IEs and the technical collaboration partners?	X	X	X
To what extent was the project coordinated with, and complementary to, the response to COVID-19 of other UN entities (Secretariat and non-Secretariat) in delivering socio-economic support to Member States, including the work financed by the MPTF and the UNCTs?	X	X	X
<b>Effectiveness</b>			

<b>Questions</b> <i>* The questions below are based on the evaluation matrix and were tailored to each interviewee. Follow-up questions were asked as relevant considering the indicators included in the evaluation matrix or to explore emerging themes.</i>	DA-PMT	IEs and technical collaboration partners	Local government focal points and local consultants
What were the significant results and achievements of the project?	X	X	X
What difference did the project make to the local governments' responses to COVID-19?			X
To what extent has the project effectively addressed the new priorities of Member States' local authorities that emerged as a result of COVID-19?			X
What innovative approach or tool, if any, did the project use, and what were the outcomes and lessons learned from its application?		X	X
What factors and actors have enabled or hindered the achievement of project outputs and outcomes?		X	X
<b>Efficiency</b>			
Was the project implemented according to plan? If not, was timely corrective action taken where necessary? Was additional support identified or provided to overcome implementation challenges?	X	X	
To what extent did the program and project governance, management structures and processes enable, or hinder, the efficient implementation of the project?	X	X	X
How well coordinated were IEs and technical collaboration partners at the project level, and with other UNDA IEs at the program level (i.e., in the framework of UNDA response to COVID-19)?	X	X	
<b>Sustainability</b>			
What measures were adopted to ensure that project outcomes would continue after the project ended?		X	X
To what extent did these measures address the existing risks for sustainability?		X	X
<b>Lessons learned and recommendations</b>			
In your opinion, what are the lessons learned and good practices from the project that should be considered for future projects?	X	X	X
Do you have any recommendations for future interventions on urban economic resilience?	X	X	X

## Survey questionnaire

This online survey is conducted in the context of the evaluation of the project **Building Urban Economic Resilience During and after COVID-19**, implemented between May 2020 and April 2022 in 16 cities across the world, with funding from the United Nations Development Account.

The purpose of this survey is to gather the views of project participants on the contribution of the project to the response to COVID-19 in their respective cities, and to identify lessons learned that can inform future projects.

This survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. All your individual answers will be processed by an external evaluator and will remain fully confidential. Note that you can select the language in which you wish to reply by using the drop-down menu in the top right-hand corner of the survey. Also note that you can start and then come back to the survey to complete it later. Your responses in progress will be automatically saved for one week after your last use.

Thank you in advance for your participation!

**1. Country:** \* [drop-down list]

**2. City:** \* [drop-down list]

**3. What was your role in the project?** \*

- Focal point in the local government
- Local consultant
- I participated in one or more project activities
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. What were the main economic impacts of COVID-19 in your city? Select all that apply.** \*

- Loss of jobs in the formal and / or informal sector
- Reduced revenues for private businesses
- Closure of micro, small, and medium enterprises
- Disruptions in supply chains
- Reduced local government revenues
- None
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. What challenges did the local government face to address these negative impacts? Select all that apply.** \*

- Lack of information on the economic impacts of COVID-19 in the city
- Lack of a planned response
- Lack of funding
- None
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. How useful was the support provided by the project to help the local government respond to these challenges? \***

- Very useful
- Useful
- Somewhat useful
- Not useful
- Do not know

Please explain:

Text box

**7. How would you rate the timeliness of the support provided by the project? \***

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor
- Do not know

**8. How would you rate the quality of the support provided by the project? \***

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor
- Do not know

**9. To what extent did project activities address gender-differentiated needs and capabilities to respond to COVID-19? \***

- To a high extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a low extent
- Not at all
- Do not know

**10. To what extent did project activities address the diverse needs and capabilities of persons with disabilities? \***

- To a high extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a low extent
- Not at all
- Do not know

**11. To what extent did project activities address the diverse needs and capabilities of persons in situations of vulnerability?** \* *In this survey, vulnerability is understood as the inability or limited ability to cope with and recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19. Persons in situations of vulnerability might include persons living in poverty, persons with chronic health conditions, migrants, persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities, or LGBT+ persons, among others.*

- To a high extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a low extent
- Not at all
- Do not know

**12. What was the most important result achieved in your city thanks to project support?** *A result is a positive change that would have not been achieved, or achieved with greater difficulties, without project support.* \*

- Result: \_\_\_\_\_
- None ([Go to Q15](#))
- Do not know ([Go to Q15](#))

**13. How likely is it that this result will be maintained in the future?** \*

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Do not know

**14. What are the main risks for this result to be maintained? Select all that apply \***

- Lack of staff
- Staff turnover
- Limited technical capacities
- Government change
- Lack of funding
- None
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Do not know

**15. Are there any lessons learned or good practices from the project that should be considered for future projects?**

Text box

**16. Do you have any final comments or recommendations?**

Text box