

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Self-evaluation of project E340 “Improved sustainable urban development in 17 Norwegian cities”

I. Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to review the implementation and assess the extent to which the objectives of the UNECE project E340 “Improved sustainable urban development in 17 Norwegian cities” were achieved. The evaluation will assess the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the project.

The evaluation will also assess any impacts the project may have on progressing human rights, disability inclusion, climate change and disaster risk reduction in the context of this engagement. The evaluation will finally look at the activities repurposed to address the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, and assess, to the extent possible, UNECE’s COVID-19 early response through this project.

The evaluation should identify lessons learned from the implementation of the project and areas that need further attention and provide practical recommendations on how to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of future work on similar topics. The results of the evaluation will allow improving the planning and implementation of future subprogramme projects and activities.

II. Scope of activities for evaluation

The scope of evaluation will cover the full period of the project, from August 2019 to 31 December 2022, as the project was extended from its original July 2021 end date.

The universally recognized values and principles of human rights and gender equality will be integrated into all stages of the evaluation, in compliance with the United Nations Evaluation Group’s revised gender-related norms and standards. Therefore, the evaluation will assess how the project activities contributed to gender equality and women’s empowerment, as well as the realization of human rights, with an emphasis on ‘leaving no one behind’ and, if needed, it will make recommendations on how these considerations can be better addressed in future activities.

III. Background

UNECE, in cooperation with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), developed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on smart Sustainable Cities (SSCs) in 2016 to evaluate the performance of cities, set priorities for actions, achieve the SDGs at the local level and support the development of evidence-based policies. The KPI evaluation is implemented within a global initiative "United for Smart Sustainable Cities - U4SSC" which brings together 16 UN agencies. In 2018, UNECE signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Organization for International Economic Relations (OiER) to establish a Centre for Excellence on smart sustainable cities to implement concrete projects for investments and public private partnerships in the UNECE region. In 2019, the Government of Norway decided to evaluate 17 Norwegian cities against the KPIs and develop a smart sustainable cities project as part of the initiative of the Government's "Norway as a Smart Sustainable Nation". The project was implemented within the Joint Programme "University City 3.0" of the City of Trondheim and the Norwegian University of Technology and Science. The project partners were the City of Trondheim and UNECE.

The objective of the project were to be achieved through the following activities:

- A1.1. Collecting and analysing data for 17 Norwegian cities and the preparation of short city profiles;
- A1.2. Organizing two advisory missions to Norway;
- A1.3. Organizing a validation workshop in Norway;

A1.4. Conducting communication and dissemination activities (preparing press-releases, communicating through social media, presentations at relevant international events, preparation and publication of the final project report).

Additional activities were implemented beyond the tasks originally planned, as agreed with the donor in 2022, including the development of the Regional Guidelines for the SDG Voluntary Local Reviews, the establishment of the training-learning platform on the VLRs and a series of training session to implement the regional guidelines that were developed.

IV. Issues

The evaluation will answer the following questions:

Relevance

1. To what extent did the project activities respond to the priorities and needs of the beneficiary cities?
2. To what extent were the activities consistent with global and regional priorities on achieving the SDGs? How relevant were the activities vis-à-vis the programme of work of the UNECE? What value has UNECE's efforts added in this area?
3. How relevant were the activities to attaining major UN global commitments, inter alia, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris agreement?
4. Did the project apply gender, rights-based and disability inclusion approaches in the design and implementation of the activities?
5. To what extent have the project activities contributed to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as the realization of human rights?
6. How relevant was the project to the target groups' needs and priorities? Was there a focus on 'leaving no one behind'?

Effectiveness

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

Sustainability

9. To what extent will the benefits of the project continue after the completion of the project?
10. How likely is stakeholders' engagement to continue, be scaled up, replicated or institutionalized?
11. To what extent do the partners and beneficiaries 'own' the outcomes of the work?

V. Methodology

The evaluation will adopt a theory-driven, utilization-focused and gender and human rights responsive approach. The evaluator is required to use a mixed-method approach, including qualitative data gathering and analysis as the basis for a triangulation exercise of all available data to draw conclusions and findings.

The evaluation will be conducted on the basis of:

1. A desk review of all relevant documents over the period including:
2. Structured interviews and focus group discussions with: member cities representatives, key development partners, relevant staff from UNECE, other stakeholder organizations.

The report will summarize the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation in English. An executive summary (max. 2 pages) will summarize the methodology of the evaluation, key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

All material needed for the evaluation, will be provided to the consultant. In addition to the documents mentioned above in 1), the project manager will provide the list of persons to be interviewed/surveyed. ECE will provide support and further explanation to the evaluator as needed.

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

VI. Evaluation schedule¹

October 2022	ToR finalized
November 2022	Evaluator identified
Early December 2022	Evaluation contract signed. Evaluator starts the desk review
January 2022	Evaluator submits inception report including interview questions
End-January 2022	Data gathering and conduct of interviews, as needed
February 2022	Evaluator submits draft report
March 2022	Evaluator submits final report

VII. Resources

Ms. Gulnara Roll, project manager, will manage the evaluation with the support of the Housing and Land Management Unit staff. The Programme Management Unit (PMU) will provide guidance to the project manager and evaluator as needed on the evaluation design, methodology and quality assurance of the final draft report.

VIII. Intended use / Next steps

The evaluation will be consistent with the UNECE Evaluation Policy. The results of the evaluation will be used in the planning and implementation of future activities of the Housing, land management and population subprogramme in support of the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Paris agreement.

A management response to the evaluation will be prepared by ECE, and relevant recommendations implemented as scheduled in the management response. Progress on implementation of recommendations will be available on the ECE public website.

IX. Criteria for evaluation

The evaluator should have:

- An advanced university degree or equivalent background in relevant disciplines, with specialized training in areas such as evaluation, project management and social statistics.
- Knowledge of and experience in working with intergovernmental processes, particularly on localization of the sustainable development goals.
- Relevant professional experience in design and management of evaluation processes with multiple stakeholders, survey design and implementation, project planning, monitoring and management, gender mainstreaming and human-rights due diligence.
- Demonstrated methodological knowledge of evaluations, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for end-of-cycle project evaluations.
- Fluency in written and spoken English. Knowledge of another language may be an advantage.

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

¹ Final timetable to be agreed following engagement of the evaluator