PROJECT EVALUATION

Project E345 "Improve capacities of UNECE member States in developing evidence-based policy measures to meet their commitments under MIPAA/RIS and 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration: Ageing (Phase III)"

THE PROJECT

The project, implemented between 2020-2023 to support the implementation of the Programme of work of the Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWGA) to improve capacities of UNECE member States in developing evidence-based policy measures and in monitoring MIPAA/RIS implementation within the fourth cycle of review and appraisal 2018–2022 was evaluated in 2023 to assess its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation used a summative, mixed evaluation method to assess if and to what extent the planned project outputs were achieved, and to assess their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. Cross-cutting issues, such as gender, human rights, disability, and climate change were integrated in the evaluation design and analysis. Data and information were drawn from relevant project documents and publications, interviews with members of the Bureau of the Standing Working Group on Ageing and staff members of the UNECE Population Unit and an online survey of SWGA members and partners. Key findings were triangulated and presented in line with the questions contained in the Evaluation Matrix.

MAIN FINDINGS

Overall, the evaluation confirmed that the project and its main outputs are relevant, effective, and efficient, ensuring sustainability of the efforts to address ageing issues in the ECE region. Significant evidence was collected to confirm that national partners as well of those of international organizations and civil society, consider the work undertaken in the framework of this project valuable, effective, and efficient, despite certain drawbacks caused by the COVID 19 pandemic and unstable staffing situation of the population subprogramme.

RELEVANCE

The evaluation found that the project design is appropriate and relevant to the accomplishment of the SWGA's work programme 2018-2022. It is also considered relevant by the stakeholders to their policymaking needs. Its main knowledge-generation outputs were found highly relevant, confirming the need for their continuation in the future. The relevance of the Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing for improvement of policy making was underscored. The project has been useful to enhance capacities of governments to monitor MIPAA/RIS All project outputs (Reporting Guidelines, the Synthesis Report and MIPAA+20 Reports, and the Rome Ministerial Conference) were found relevant.   Cross-cutting issues like gender, human rights, disability, and environmental change have been integrated in the project activities to some extent, and they are relevant to the policymaking needs of stakeholders as is to the MIPAA/RIS monitoring capacities.

EFFECTIVENESS

The evaluation confirms that the project has been highly effective in delivering the expected outputs, and all but one project deliverables have been achieved, i.e., the Road Map for Kazakhstan, which was affected by

the COVID-19 pandemic and political developments in the country. The effective delivery of project outputs has led to positive changes in both national capacities for policy making and for monitoring MIPAA/RIS. While specific project outputs have been used regularly by the stakeholders, the evaluation could not ascertain the extent to which project outputs have been effective at outcome level, as direct correlation between project outputs and resulting policies could not be confirmed, mainly due to absence of baseline data on ageing policies in the region. The project has been effective in ensuring a successful MIPAA/RIS review, despite some concerns related to the format and length of the national reporting.

EFFICIENCY

The evaluation assessed the project as highly efficient in terms of financial inputs and the resulting outputs and benefits. It implemented all planned activities within the initially allocated budget. The assessment of project expenditures confirms that almost ninety percent of the initially planned project budget was used for staffing costs, resulting from the unstable staffing situation of the Population subprogramme, calling for action to address the issue and ensure stability and efficient use of staff know-how.

SUSTAINABILITY

Although the issues addressed by the project are part of the mandate of the ECE which contributes to the sustainability of the project, there are some areas where sustainability and ownership of the project results could be improved, as suggested in the recommendations below.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.   Strengthen the role and engagement with the national focal points on ageing in the activities of the SWGA, including through the development of Terms of Reference for national focal points on ageing that specify their roles and responsibilities.

2.   Further enhance the usefulness of project outputs to national policymakers by a) providing more guidance on practical issues and challenges related to policy implementation; b) providing a summary version of Policy Briefs to facilitate dissemination; c) encouraging translation of Policy Briefs into national languages; and d) developing a checklist for mainstreaming ageing into policies.

3.   Strengthen further the MIPAA/RIS review process to become a stronger accountability mechanism for governments, by (a) simplifying/standardizing the reporting process further, for example by focusing the reporting on fewer priority issues; (b) leveraging the UNECE Ageing Policies Database for continuous monitoring and reporting on MIPAA/RIS implementation; (c) enhancing the engagement of permanent missions in Geneva in the review process and ministerial conference preparations.

4.   Include cross-cutting issues such as gender, disability, human rights and climate change in the programming cycle more systematically by: (a) mainstreaming these issues in situation analyses and integration of gender-sensitive results and indicators; (b) encouraging disaggregated data collection and monitoring by governments and civil society; (c) ensuring that policy briefs and policy discussions take systematically account of regional diversity and cross-cutting issues, including by developing a checklist encouraging an approach that mainstreams cross-cutting issues.

5.   Address the instability of the staffing and budget situation in the Secretariat to ensure continuity and efficient use of the know-how of current staff and engage in fundraising for additional resources earmarked for: the work of the Standing Working Group on Ageing and its Secretariat.

6.   Increase the sustainability of project results by encouraging members of the SWGA Bureau, national focal points on ageing and partner organizations to undertake follow-up activities and continue working on processes already initiated to enhance ownership and ensure more sustainability of its work.