



Final Evaluation of the
UNDP project
'Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase IV'
(2018-2023)

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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Commissioned by UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub (IRH)

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PROJECT INFORMATION		
Project/outcome title	Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase IV	
Atlas ID	00105653	
Corporate outcome and output	<p>Outcome: Growth and development are inclusive and sustainable, incorporating productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for the poor and excluded</p> <p>Output: National and subnational systems and institutions enabled to achieve structural transformation of productive capacities that are sustainable and employment - and livelihoods intensive</p>	
Country	Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	
Region	Central Asia	
Date project document signed	3 rd May 2018	
Project dates	Start	Planned end
	1 st July 2018	31 st December 2023
Project budget	EUR 6,014,676	
Funding source	Government of Finland	
Implementing party	UNDP IRH	

EVALUATION INFORMATION		
Evaluation type	Project	
Final/mid-term/other	Final	
Evaluation period	Start	End
	25 th May 2023	20 th September 2023
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List of acronyms

ABD	Asian Development Bank
AfT	Aid for Trade
AWP	Annual Work Plan
B2B	Business to Business
CATI	Central Asian Trade Intelligence Portal
CAWG	Central Asian Working Group
CCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CO	UNDP Country Office
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality
DPP	Dry and Dried Products
DRS	Districts of Republican Subordination
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECI	Economic Complexity Index
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EPA	Export Promotion Agency
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FSSC	Food Safety System Certification
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoF	Government of Finland
GIZ	German Corporation for International Cooperation
GMP	Good Manufacturing Practices
GRES	Gender Results Effectiveness Scale
GSNI	Gender Social Norms Index
GSP	General System of Preferences
HACCP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IE	Individual Enterprise
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
ITC	International trade Centre
IRH	Istanbul Regional Hub
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LIIC	Local Innovation and Implementation Centre
LLC	Limited Liability Company
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSMEs	Micro Medium and Small Enterprises
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe
PPM	Project & Portfolio Management
RBM	Results Based Management
REX	Registered Exporter system
RRF	Results and Resource Framework

RPD	UNDP's Regional Program Document
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SES	Social and Environmental Screening
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
ToR	Terms of Reference
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VC	Value Chain
WB	World Bank
WEI	Wider Europe Initiative
WTO	World Trade Organisation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Evaluation Report (hereafter the report) presents an assessment of the 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia - Phase IV' project, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Istanbul Regional Hub (IRH), in collaboration with UNDP Country Offices (CO) and funded by the Government of Finland from 2018 to 2023. The report focuses on the extent to which the project achieved expected results, whether it was effective, sustainable, and cost-efficient and succeeded in supporting an enabling environment for trade-oriented private sector development in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

The project aims at promoting inclusive growth and jobs creation in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan through boosting of green forward-looking productive and export capacities of 'niche' products. Human rights, job creation, gender equality, and environmental sustainability are key cross-cutting themes addressed by the project intervention. The project is a follow-up of the three preceding phases, first of which kicked-off back in 2009. The project's Theory of Change serves as a roadmap, outlining the expected linkages between project activities and the desired outcomes, which can be summarized as follows:

By improving trade-oriented private sector development policies, regulations, and services in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, coupled with increased access to markets, finance, and technologies, the project aims to establish highly productive green niche value chains (Sub-Outputs). This, in turn, will create an enabling environment for job-rich growth and private sector development at the macro, meso, and micro levels (Outputs 2,3, and 4, one for each country). The enhanced regional cooperation and collaboration (Output 1) will further support national and sub-national systems and institutions in achieving the structural transformation of productive capacities (Final Output). Ultimately, this will lead to the creation of sustainable and employment-intensive productive capacities (Outcome), contributing to inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and the promotion of decent jobs (Impact), in alignment with SDG 8.

This final project evaluation is an external, impartial, and independent assessment fostering learning. The main purpose of the evaluation is to assess whether the 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase IV' project achieved expected results, if other unintended positive or negative results were observed, and whether the project made an effective, sustainable, and cost-efficient contribution to the achievement of Strategic Development Goals (SDGs), UNDP regional and countries' priorities and development priorities of target countries. The evaluation also seeks to identify valuable lessons learned and provide recommendations for the ongoing implementation of Phase V of the project. This will contribute to enhancing the effectiveness and success of the project as it progresses.

The evaluation spanned from May to September 2023 and involved several distinct phases. The inception phase occurred between May 25 and June 15, 2023, finalised with submission and approval of the Inception Report. Data collection phase followed, which entailed a field mission conducted from July 4 to July 20, 2023, covering all three countries participating in the project. In Kyrgyzstan, the field visit encompassed both the capital city, Bishkek, and the Issyk-Kul region. In Uzbekistan, it covered the capital city, Tashkent, as well as the Namangan, Andijan, and Fergana regions. In Tajikistan, the field visit took place in the capital, Dushanbe, and included the Khatlon and Sughd regions. Subsequently, data analysis and synthesis were carried out after a debriefing session held on August 4, 2023.

The evaluation process was guided by the Terms of Reference (ToR) included in Annex 1 of the Evaluation Report. It rigorously followed the OECD/DAC criteria, focusing on project relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact. The evaluation adhered to UNDP Evaluation Guidelines and UNEG Norms and Standards, ensuring a high-quality and comprehensive assessment. The evaluator prioritized data triangulation, sequencing, cross-analysis, and robustness assessment to ensure credible insights, while acknowledging limitations summarised in the Inception Report.

The chosen evaluation methodology was carefully designed to facilitate emerging insights, foster a culture of learning, and comprehensively assess the project's alignment with its Theory of Change. This approach incorporated a diverse range of data collection methods, including participatory techniques during field

visits, document reviews, semi-structured interviews, and online surveys, ensuring engagement with stakeholders at multiple levels. Over 60 key documents were reviewed, providing essential contextual information. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 102 stakeholders across the target countries, including 61 women. Online surveys reached 237 respondents, with nearly 50% being women, and these surveys targeted a diverse range of stakeholders, including government officials, Trade Support Institutions (TSIs), and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

Despite inherent challenges such as a limited timeline, logistical complexities, and variations in stakeholder engagement, the methodology was flexible and adaptable, optimizing data collection in remote areas and ensuring a robust evaluation process. Furthermore, ethical considerations were prioritized throughout, with informed consent, privacy protection, and cultural sensitivity upheld, in alignment with the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.' This comprehensive methodology allowed for a thorough evaluation of the project's impact, particularly in relation to gender-related aspects, while respecting the rights and confidentiality of all involved stakeholders.

A mixed methods approach was employed for data analysis, encompassing Theory of Change Analysis, Causal Analysis, Outcome Mapping, Follow the Money, Cost Variance Analysis, and various content and comparative analyses to gain insights and context. For gender analysis, the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) was used, examining quantitative and qualitative data from surveys and interviews to assess gender impacts and opportunities for women's empowerment. Environmental analysis employed the Social and Environmental Standards (SES) checklist to evaluate environmental compliance and contributions to sustainability, following the "Do No Harm" principle.

The evaluation, guided by 16 key questions and 70 sub-questions outlined in the Evaluation Matrix, assessed project relevance, effectiveness in achieving objectives, efficiency in resource allocation, and sustainability. Additionally, it evaluated the project's impact on economic growth, employment, gender equality, and job quality within specific regions, sectors, and demographic groups.

Throughout the evaluation process, a meticulous examination of the project's implementation and outcomes has yielded 18 findings. The summary below provides an overview of these findings, offering insights into the project's strengths and areas for improvement.

Relevance: In terms of relevance, the project demonstrates strong alignment with countries' export diversification goals, regional cooperation objectives, and UNDP's strategic documents. This alignment underscores its high relevance within the context of the participating countries. Additionally, the project's formulation for Phase IV shows a commitment to learning from previous phases and actively integrating insights gathered from stakeholder consultations in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. This approach enhances its relevance and adaptability to the evolving needs and priorities of the regions it serves. The project demonstrates a commitment to addressing cross-cutting issues, particularly gender-related activities, but lacks clearly defined environmental targets. Its design, as outlined in the Theory of Change and Results and Resources Framework, is fundamentally sound and pragmatic, although some areas could have been further enhanced.

Effectiveness: Effectiveness is a crucial criterion, and the project exhibits a mixed record in this regard. The project's collaboration with international organizations has improved regional cooperation, fostering a coordinated response to common challenges. At the macro level, the project has efficiently improved trade-oriented private sector development policies, contributing to a more conducive business environment. However, there is room for improvement in terms of public-private dialogue. On the meso level, the project has effectively strengthened TSIs, and these efforts have received positive feedback from the private sector. At the micro level, the project's focus on green, niche value chains showed promise, but they require considerable support beyond the project's timeframe and there is also more room to increase export products and markets diversification. Direct support to value chain participants was effectively provided through a comprehensive approach, comprising soft and hard interventions. Mentorship programs for women entrepreneurs promoted their economic empowerment and leadership despite social norms. While

outcome targets were objectively absent, the project appeared to facilitate structural transformation in production capacities, with private sector competitiveness improvements pending. While the project has achieved successful completion in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, it faces challenges in Uzbekistan where roughly half of the targets remain unmet. Despite these challenges, the project's adaptable approach has allowed it to navigate crises effectively, ensuring its overall effectiveness in contributing to regional development.

Efficiency: Efficiency is another important aspect of the evaluation. The project's management structure proved efficient in achieving expected outcomes in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. However, challenges arose in Uzbekistan, where the same management team was juggling multiple projects with a similar scope. The project's financial resource allocation exhibited adaptability but resulted in delays and deviations from planned expenditures, notably in Kyrgyzstan. Nevertheless, the project demonstrated commendable cost-effectiveness and garnered high satisfaction levels among its beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Sustainability: Sustainability is a critical consideration, and the evaluation findings emphasize the importance of addressing bottlenecks and enhancing capacities at various intervention levels to ensure long-term viability. Furthermore, the project's forward-looking approach, transitioning seamlessly to the next phase while maintaining momentum, reflects its commitment to sustainability. These efforts are essential for ensuring that the positive impacts of the project continue beyond its completion.

Impact: Finally, the evaluation assessed the project's impact on economic growth, employment, and the quality of life in participating countries. The project has facilitated structural transformation in production capacities, contributing to economic growth. While there have been improvements in private sector competitiveness, some aspects still require attention. The persistence of informality in participant countries poses a challenge to the quality of economic growth and highlights the need for continued efforts in this area.

In conclusion, the project has exhibited high relevance, effectively aligning with national and global objectives while drawing upon valuable lessons from previous phases. Its strategic design, characterized by a focus on promising value chains, cross-cutting themes of gender equality and environmental sustainability, and a three-level intervention framework, reflects adaptability and innovation. Nevertheless, complexities arising from a multi-tiered approach and concurrent crises presented challenges. Despite these challenges, the project's integration of soft and hard support mechanisms yielded tangible benefits, including policy improvements, private sector capacity enhancement, and substantial contributions to women's empowerment. It has proven cost-effective and contributed to intra-regional trade dynamics, but obstacles related to informality, access to finance, and environmental concerns persist. The transition to Phase V demonstrates UNDP's commitment to sustainability and building upon lessons learned, positioning the project for continued success in trade-oriented private sector development.

The ten recommendations summarised below outline concrete steps to refine project implementation, ensure data-driven decision-making, enhance inclusivity, and maximize its long-term impact, specifically:

Recommendation 1: Create a visually appealing summary of successful small-scale project initiatives that can be shared with prospective donors, development partners, and the public to enhance project visibility and showcase accomplishments.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen reporting efforts on environmental aspects by highlighting both successful environmentally friendly practices within the private sector and positive environmental impacts resulting from project interventions.

Recommendation 3: Establish baseline values for ongoing indicators and develop an integrated data management system to improve transparency and evidence-based decision-making.

Recommendation 4: Implement a methodology for assessing knowledge and skills development among policy makers and service providers, including pre-post tests and self-assessment questionnaires.

Recommendation 5: Broaden inclusivity by engaging stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, including returned migrants, refugees, and ethnic minorities, and highlight their involvement in progress reports.

Recommendation 6: Enhance mentorship programs for women entrepreneurs by tailoring them to diverse needs, conducting budget reviews for women-related activities, and establishing clear monitoring mechanisms.

Recommendation 7: Maintain and empower women local ambassadors from beneficiary communities to act as advocates for the project's impact and objectives.

Recommendation 8: Improve reporting transparency regarding overlapping projects in Uzbekistan to facilitate better understanding of project contributions and outcomes.

Recommendation 9: Strike a balance between flexibility and output quality, with a focus on sustainability and the establishment of post-project sustainability plans.

Recommendation 10: Leverage data from Phase IV evaluation surveys as a foundational baseline for evaluating Phase V to streamline progress tracking and assess project performance comprehensively.

Drawing from evaluation findings and conclusions, several lessons can be derived. Firstly, tailoring support to the specific requirements of different types of enterprises within the project has proven to be more effective than providing generalized assistance. Secondly, prioritizing in-depth engagement in a single value chain, rather than spreading resources across multiple chains, can yield greater effectiveness and efficiency. Thirdly, it is necessary to consider strengthening local economies alongside global trade to address economic disparities and environmental challenges. Fourthly, seamless integration of gender equality considerations into every facet of project planning, implementation, and evaluation is crucial for inclusive development. Finally, exploring a portfolio management approach offers potential for enhanced efficiency and alignment with UNDP's strategic goals, with Quantum Project & Portfolio Management presenting promising opportunities. These lessons provide insights for the project's future endeavours and sustainable development in the region.

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This Evaluation Report (hereafter the report) presents an assessment of the 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia - Phase IV' project, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Istanbul Regional Hub (IRH), in collaboration with UNDP Country Offices (CO) and funded by the Government of Finland from 2018 to 2023. The report focuses on the extent to which the project achieved expected results, whether it was effective, sustainable, and cost-efficient and succeeded in supporting an enabling environment for trade-oriented private sector development in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

The following sections provide an outline of the evaluation process, including an overview of the evaluation objectives, scope, and criteria. The report also includes a description of the proposed evaluation methodology, along with insights into the data collection and analysis tools. The following sections encompass the key findings, which are structured in accordance with the evaluation criteria and follow the intervention sequence guided the analysis of project outputs, outcome, and impact. Additionally, the report includes conclusions, along with a set of recommendations and lessons drawn from the project's implementation.

Furthermore, the report annexes include the evaluation's Terms of Reference (Annex 1), the Evaluation Matrix and data collection instruments (Annex 2), the list of individuals and groups interviewed or consulted, and sites visited (Annex 3) and the list of supporting documents reviewed (Annex 4).

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVENTION

The 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia - Phase IV' project is financed by the Government of Finland and implemented by UNDP during 2018-2023. It aims at promoting inclusive growth and jobs creation in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan through boosting of green forward-looking productive and export capacities of 'niche' products¹. The project is a follow-up of the three preceding phases, first of which kicked-off back in 2009.

The Phase IV was shaped in light of the developments in the three countries, systemic problems, and the political and economic context at that juncture. Central Asia has recorded notable economic growth and poverty reduction rates since 2000², yet economic growth rates in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were volatile, revealing lingering vulnerabilities and structural weaknesses³. The economies of these countries primarily depend on exporting commodities and labour, with a particular focus on key trading partners like Russia and China. As a result, these economies were significantly affected by the economic downturn experienced in Russia in 2015 and the gradual deceleration of China's economy undergoing structural reforms and facing growing debt levels⁴. Uzbekistan experienced consistent economic growth since 2000, being slightly less relying on remittances and gaining upper hand with the meaningful progress in economic diversification since 2017⁵.

Despite variations in performance, all three countries exhibited vulnerability to economic shocks, necessitating the adoption of a new growth paradigm centred on sustainable and inclusive models that can generate more decent jobs and higher incomes. The 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase IV' project was designed to support this endeavour. As such, as per the Project Document, economic growth and diversification, with focus on *forward-looking production capacities, niche products, value chains (VC), green and employment-rich sectors*, are at the core of Phase IV project concept.

The project intervention revolves around two output-level components, namely:

¹ Niche products are those which target, or are relevant to, a small but specific target audience.

² *Enhancing Competitiveness in Central Asia*, OECD, 2018

³ *Regional Economic Outlook: Middle East and Central Asia*, IMF, 2018

⁴ *The Global Economic Recovery 10 Years After the 2008 Financial Crisis*, IMF Working Paper, 2019

⁵ *Insights on the business climate in Uzbekistan*, OECD, 2023

1. Supporting an enabling environment for job-rich growth.
 - a. Enabling policies and regulations for inclusive and trade oriented private sector development;
 - b. Trade support institutions that provide efficient services to the private sector.
2. Supporting market opportunities for all through more efficient and competitive producers and processors.

It applies a multi-tiered holistic approach, working on several levels and sectors and engaging diverse actors to support structural transformation, specifically:

Figure 1. Multi-tiered approach to project intervention.



Human rights, job creation, gender equality, and environmental sustainability are key cross-cutting themes addressed by the project intervention.

The project operates through the Direct Implementation Modality (DIM), with the UNDP IRH serving as the project implementing partner. The IRH assumes responsibility for project coordination and oversees the implementation of the regional component. The UNDP Country Offices in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are entrusted with the implementation of the country components, operating under Delegated Authority. In each country, the project teams led by national project coordinators are assigned to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the project. Currently, there are coordinators in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, the appointment for Tajikistan is still pending. The Project Board, led by the UNDP IRH Manager and consisting of representatives from the Government of Finland and the three UNDP COs, and other senior IRH representatives in roles of senior supplier and quality assurance, serves as the governing body that offers guidance and strategic oversight for the project.

The total, as per the Project Document, the budget allocated for the period of 2018-2023, which includes the Uzbekistan country component, stands at EUR 6,151,697.796⁶. Specifically, the funding designated for the Uzbekistan output spanning from 2021 to 2023 was received in June 2021, amounting to EUR 1,214,676.00. Implementation activities in Uzbekistan commenced in September 2021.

⁶ The budget consists of EUR 6,014,676 as per the project document and EUR 137,021.79 of Phase III unspent funds, equivalent to \$161,012.68 at exchange rate USD/EUR 0.851 transferred to Phase IV (Regional component) to support to increase business linkages between Finland and participating countries and for other activities as per the November 2020 board decision.

The outputs for Tajikistan were finalized on June 30, 2022, whereas those for Kyrgyzstan were completed on September 30, 2022. However, Phase IV of the project was extended until December 2023 to accommodate the implementation of the Uzbekistan output. Similarly, the regional component of the project was extended until the end of 2023 to effectively manage project monitoring, reporting, and final evaluation activities.

A series of severe, overlapping, and compounding crises surfaced during project implementation. The COVID-19 pandemic (commenced in March 2020) and war in Ukraine (began in February 2022) led, among other things, to disruption in economic activity, trade and tourism, high inflation and drop in remittances. The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan has spilled over project participant countries, posing security and economic risks. Water management and resource utilization issues, including transboundary water disputes, have been a persistent concern in the region during project implementation, along with natural disasters such as severe flooding and droughts. All in all, the effects of these multi-layer crises called for reallocating project resources, adjustment of activities and switching in the first place to online interaction among project stakeholders.

The Phase V of the project commenced in October 2022 while Phase IV was still ongoing. The Phase V is designed to carry forward the strategy of fostering inclusive and sustainable growth by promoting green value chains and enhancing competitiveness in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. It aims to strengthen economic structures that are more resilient, gender-responsive, and adaptable to the emerging trends resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Phase V builds upon previous interventions at the macro, meso, and micro levels, with a particular focus on regional collaboration, economic empowerment of women and youth, digitalization, and e-commerce. The Phase V of the project is scheduled to conclude in December 2025.

2.1. Project's Theory of Change

The project's Theory of Change serves as a roadmap, outlining the expected linkages between project activities and the desired outcomes, which can be summarized as follows:

By improving trade-oriented private sector development policies, regulations, and services in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, coupled with increased access to markets, finance, and technologies, the project aims to establish highly productive green niche value chains (Sub-Outputs). This, in turn, will create an enabling environment for job-rich growth and private sector development at the macro, meso, and micro levels (Outputs 2,3, and 4, one for each country). The enhanced regional cooperation and collaboration (Output 1) will further support national and sub-national systems and institutions in achieving the structural transformation of productive capacities (Final Output). Ultimately, this will lead to the creation of sustainable and employment-intensive productive capacities (Outcome), contributing to inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and the promotion of decent jobs (Impact), in alignment with SDG 8.

The Theory of Change employs a dynamic and participatory approach to intervention implementation, emphasizing stakeholder engagement and collaboration at all stages. Key actors, such as government agencies, local communities, business associations, service providers, enterprises, women, and young entrepreneurs, are actively involved to foster ownership and collective responsibility. This inclusive approach ensures contextual relevance and addresses diverse needs. Mechanisms for capturing and sharing lessons learned and best practices enable evidence-based decision-making and promote innovation. Knowledge-sharing platforms facilitate peer learning, extending project benefits beyond direct beneficiaries. Partnerships with international organizations, academia, and the private sector leverage expertise and resources. Building local institutional and organizational capacity sustains outcomes and leads to long-term development gains.

The proposed intervention in the Theory of Change aims to tackle a significant and common problem faced by all three countries. In particular, it aims to overcome the limited utilization of trade potential in promoting inclusive and sustainable development pathways. The problem statement, approach, and methods

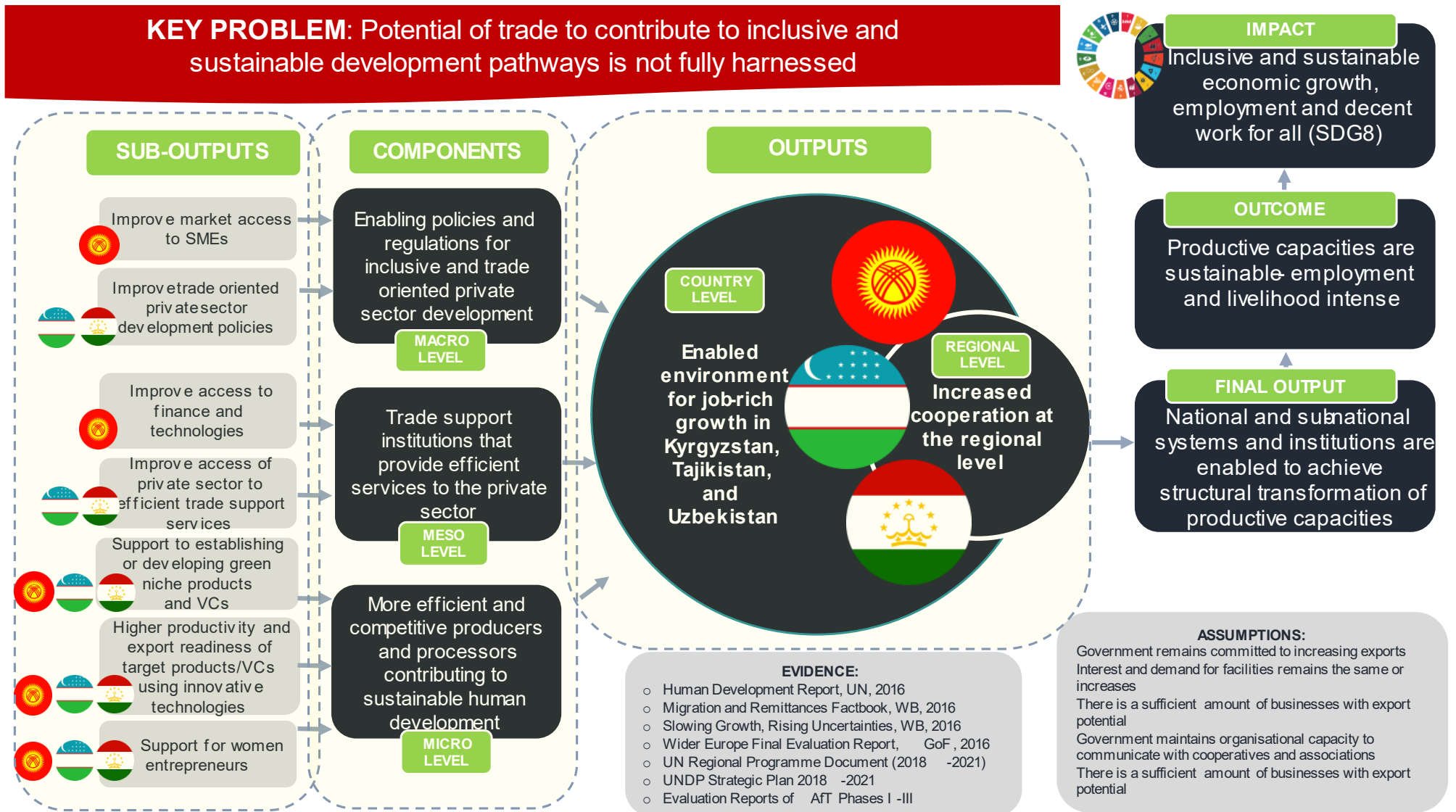
employed in the intervention are grounded in evidence, drawing upon lessons learned from previous project phases, as well as comprehensive factbooks, statistics, and studies available at the time. By leveraging this existing body of knowledge, the intervention aims to ensure a well-informed and evidence-based approach to address the identified problem effectively.

The intervention relies on a set of underlying assumptions, specifically regarding the commitment of the government to enhance exports, the maintenance of organizational capacity to engage with the private sector, and the presence of a sufficient number of interested businesses with export potential.

The intervention proposed in the Theory of Change considers various risks that may arise, such as potential delays resulting from governmental or institutional changes, economic downturns, security issues, natural disasters, and fluctuations in exchange rates. To mitigate these risks, the intervention remains flexible and adaptable, allowing for necessary adjustments as needed.

The Figure 3 below depicts the Theory of Change drawn from the Project Document, with some slight changes. The formulation of project Impact: *Inclusive and sustainable growth and poverty reduction (SDG8)* and Outcome: *Growth and development are inclusive and sustainable, incorporating productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for the poor and excluded* are very alike in the original version. Therefore, to ensure a logical thread in assessing project intervention, the revised Theory of Change proposed by the evaluator removes the repetition from the first part of the Outcome: *Growth and development are inclusive and sustainable* and only addresses the second part of the Outcome: *Productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for the poor and excluded*.

Figure 2. Project's Theory of Change



3. EVALUATION SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

This final project evaluation is an external, impartial, and independent assessment fostering learning. The main purpose of the evaluation is to assess whether the 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase IV' project achieved expected results, if other unintended positive or negative results were observed, and whether the project made an effective, sustainable, and cost-efficient contribution to the achievement of Strategic Development Goals (SDGs), UNDP regional and countries' priorities and development priorities of target countries. The evaluation also seeks to identify valuable lessons learned and provide recommendations for the ongoing implementation of Phase V of the project. This will contribute to enhancing the effectiveness and success of the project as it progresses.

The main objective of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which the project achieved its overall objectives and outputs, as identified in the Project Document, project Theory of Change, Results and Resource Framework (RRF) annual working plans. More specifically, the evaluation is based on the streamlined objectives from the Terms of Reference (ToR), outlined in the evaluation Inception Report namely:

- Review the effectiveness of the overall project intervention, assess what worked well and less well, whether targets were achieved, and the extent to which the project was responsive to changing countries' needs and priorities;
- Review and evaluate the extent to which project outputs have reached the intended clients at the regional/country, macro/meso/micro levels;
- Assess the sustainability of project outputs and benefits after completion of the project and the mechanisms that are in place to assure project sustainability;
- Identify gaps/weaknesses in the project design and provide recommendations as to their improvement;
- Identify lessons learned, as well as best practices from project implementation, through assessment of the project overall approach, delivery methods and management structure.

The evaluation has a wide-ranging scope, accounting to the multidimensional approach illustrated in Figure 1 above, specifically:

- a. **Programmatic scope:** the evaluation is expected to cover all project activities during the period from 1 July 2018 to 5 August 2023 when the last Mid-Year Progress Report was issued, assessing the output and outcome of the intervention and venturing to identify plausible impact of the project.
- b. **Geographic scope:** the evaluation is expected to cover activities conducted within the territory of three participant countries, specifically:
 - Kyrgyzstan: Bishkek (capital), Naryn, Issyk-Kul, Osh and Jalal-Abad regions;
 - Tajikistan: Dushanbe (capital), Sughd, Khatlon regions and DRS (Districts of Republican Subordination);
 - Uzbekistan: Tashkent (capital), Andijan, Namangan and Fergana regions.
- c. **Thematic scope:** The evaluation is primarily centred on trade-oriented private sector development as a pivotal component of the project's Theory of Change, examining the performance of enterprises and value chains established, the enhancement of productive capacities within the agricultural, food-processing, and tourism sectors, the efficacy of trade and private sector policies and legislation, the effectiveness of services provided to entrepreneurs, the strength of partnerships forged at the national, regional, and international levels, and the promotion of women entrepreneurship.
- d. **Target groups:** the evaluation analyses the effects of the project on both immediate beneficiaries (duty bearers and right holders) and final beneficiaries (community members in target regions). The following target groups are covered:

- National authorized executive branch institutions, ministries/agencies, and local authorities;
- Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), producers, processors, cooperatives, business associations, and value chains actors located in rural areas;
- Special focus is given on women entrepreneurs, as well as women working at target value chains.

The evaluation was designed to primarily serve a summative purpose, focusing on comprehending the project's effects and ensuring accountability, while also incorporating formative elements to facilitate organizational learning and informed decision-making. The evaluation findings will be disseminated to the Project Board, relevant UNDP COs, and national stakeholders to promote knowledge sharing and informed actions.

The evaluation spanned from May to September 2023 and involved several distinct phases. The inception phase occurred between May 25 and June 15, 2023, finalised with submission and approval of the Inception Report. Data collection phase followed, which entailed a field mission conducted from July 4 to July 20, 2023, covering all three countries participating in the project. In Kyrgyzstan, the field visit encompassed both the capital city, Bishkek, and the Issyk-Kul region. In Uzbekistan, it covered the capital city, Tashkent, as well as the Namangan, Andijan, and Fergana regions. In Tajikistan, the field visit took place in the capital, Dushanbe, and included the Khatlon and Sughd regions. Subsequently, data analysis and synthesis were carried out after a debriefing session held on August 4, 2023.

4. EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODS

The evaluation process was guided by the ToR included in Annex 1. It rigorously followed the OECD/DAC criteria, focusing on project relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact. The evaluation adhered to UNDP Evaluation Guidelines and UNEG Norms and Standards, ensuring a high-quality and comprehensive assessment. The evaluator prioritized data triangulation, sequencing, cross-analysis, and robustness assessment to ensure credible insights, while acknowledging limitations summarised in the Inception Report.

The chosen evaluation methodology was designed to accommodate emerging insights, promote a culture of learning, and thoroughly assess the project's alignment with its Theory of Change. This methodology incorporated conventional data collection, research, and analytical techniques, ensuring engagement with a diverse array of stakeholders at various levels.

Data for the evaluation was collected through a diverse range of methods, meticulously chosen to ensure comprehensive and reliable insights (Annex 2). A participatory approach was embraced, employing participatory data collection methods to gather input from key stakeholders during field visits. Additionally, the UNDP management team's involvement throughout the evaluation process provided essential inside knowledge. The following data collection tools were utilized:

- 1. Document Review:** Over 60 key documents were thoroughly reviewed to provide insights into the project and its context (Annex 4). This encompassed programmatic documents, progress reports, financial reports, minutes from stakeholder meetings, knowledge products, assessments, and relevant policy and legislation. UNDP strategic documents and statistical data were also examined to provide broader context and statistical insights.
- 2. Semi-structured Interviews (On-site and Online):** Semi-structured on-site interviews were conducted with a total of 98 stakeholders, encompassing project management staff, government representatives, Trade Support Institutions (TSIs), MSMEs, and international organizations across Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. These interviews took place in both capital cities and various regions within these countries. The evaluator, in collaboration with the project management team, made efforts to ensure a gender-balanced representation among the interviewees. However, achieving gender balance was particularly challenging at the macro and meso levels, where a

majority of representatives were male. Nevertheless, the evaluator interviewed 44 stakeholders in Kyrgyzstan, with 59% being women, 27 stakeholders in Uzbekistan, with 40% women, and 27 stakeholders in Tajikistan, with 26% women. Four online interviews were conducted with UNDP IRH and the Government of Finland (two men and two women). These interviews were designed to verify project achievements and uncover issues related to design and implementation. The list of interviewed stakeholders is included in Annex 3.

3. **Online Surveys:** Online surveys were prepared in Russian and local languages and conducted in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan over two weeks starting from July 3, 2023, each targeting government officials at the policy level, TSIs, MSMEs. To improve response rates, the surveys were repeated in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan for two weeks in August. These surveys aimed to gather data on stakeholder self-assessed capacity, changes attributed to the project, project performance, current priorities, and needs. Survey participants were selected based on a stakeholder mapping process conducted during the inception phase. This mapping considered an extensive list of direct stakeholders compiled by UNDP managers in each country. In total, 964 direct beneficiaries were identified, with 137 in Kyrgyzstan, 482 in Tajikistan, and 345 in Uzbekistan. It's noteworthy that over 60% of these stakeholders were women. Efforts were made to achieve a sample size representing approximately 10-20% of the total stakeholder population, with attention to maintaining gender balance. As a result, a total of 237 responses were collected, with 49.8% being women. The responses were distributed as follows: 108 from Kyrgyzstan, 59 from Uzbekistan, and 70 from Tajikistan (Table 1). Despite employing various data collection methods, including email and in-person assistance, achieving the desired response rate among MSMEs in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan remained challenging. Consequently, the evaluator has cross-referenced survey findings with data obtained from interviews and on-site observations to address this limitation.

Table 1. Survey responses

Country	Kyrgyzstan			Uzbekistan			Tajikistan		
	Policy	TSIs	MSMEs	Policy	TSIs	MSMEs	Policy	TSIs	MSMEs
Intervention level									
Number of respondents	12	45	51	16	16	27	19	21	30
% of surveyed women	66.7%	66.7%	45.1%	18.8%	62.5%	66.7%	21.1%	52.4%	36.7%
Response rate, %	109%	84.9%	69.9%	35.5%	37.2%	10.5%	45.2%	25%	8.43%

4. **On-site Observations:** On-site observations were conducted during field visits to witness project implementation, interactions with stakeholders, project impact, compliance with legal frameworks, and potential risks. These observations helped verify and cross-check data collected during the evaluation.

The evaluation of the project aligned with international standards and adopted a gender-responsive lens, as recommended by the UNEG guidance document "Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations," to ensure comprehensive addressing of gender-related issues throughout the evaluation process. The evaluator collected disaggregated data by gender, conducted document reviews, and employed surveys and interviews to assess gender integration in project planning and implementation, as well as explore women's access to resources and the challenges they face.

The evaluation methodology was designed with an awareness of potential challenges and limitations due to the intricate nature of the project and the array of evaluation tools employed. These challenges, described in the Inception Report, encompassed the constrained evaluation timeline, potential difficulties in collecting data from remote areas, intricate demands for data analysis, logistical complexities during field visits, variable levels of stakeholder engagement, and possible constraints in applying findings considering the ongoing next project phase. To proactively address these challenges, the methodology integrated strategies

such as optimizing data collection methods, incorporating qualitative approaches in remote areas, meticulous planning for field visits, and adapting lessons and recommendations to the evolving project context. Flexibility, stakeholder engagement, and thorough planning played a pivotal role in addressing these challenges and ensuring a robust and credible evaluation process.

The evaluation of the project involves vulnerable populations, making it essential to prioritize ethical considerations. In order to uphold ethical standards, informed consent was obtained, and measures were taken to ensure privacy, confidentiality, and minimize any potential harm. The evaluation strictly adhered to the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation', demonstrating respect for the rights and confidentiality of participants, interviewees, and stakeholders. The evaluator approached the evaluation process with sensitivity, respecting cultural norms, local contexts, and fostering trust and open communication. The information obtained was used solely for evaluation purposes and will not be shared without explicit authorization.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

A mixed methods approach was employed for data analysis, incorporating Theory of Change Analysis, Causal Analysis, and Outcome Mapping. Theory of Change Analysis helped outlining project outcomes and causal relationships, while Causal Analysis examined causal mechanisms. Outcome Mapping tracked changes among stakeholders. Follow the Money and Cost Variance Analysis were used to evaluate financial aspects and project efficiency. Content Analysis, Comparative Analysis, Descriptive Analysis, and Narrative Analysis provided insights and context to the collected data.

For gender analysis, the evaluator utilised the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES), which measures the project's impact on gender equality and women's empowerment. Quantitative and qualitative data collected through surveys and interviews were analysed to understand differential impacts, identify barriers, and highlight opportunities for women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship.

In terms of environmental analysis, the evaluator employed the Social and Environmental Standards (SES) checklist. This checklist assesses the project's adherence to environmental standards, including biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation, and consideration of broader social implications. The evaluator assessed the extent to which the private sector promotes environmentally sustainable practices and technologies, ensuring compliance with relevant environmental laws, regulations, and impact assessment requirements. The evaluator analysed data to determine the project's contributions to environmental conservation and sustainability, while also considering potential risks and unintended negative consequences through the application of the "Do No Harm" principle.

Within the confines defined by the 16 key evaluation questions and 70 sub-questions outlined in the Evaluation Matrix in Annex 2, the evaluation aimed to facilitate a learning process for UNDP by engaging with emerging findings. In terms of relevance, it assessed how well the project aligned with national development goals, UNDP RPD, Strategic Plan, Gender Equality Strategy, relevant SDGs, and the project's utilization of prior insights. It also examined how effectively the project addressed stakeholder needs and priorities, promoted inclusivity, gender equality, and access to markets, and addressed disparities and environmental concerns. Effectiveness was evaluated by assessing the extent to which the project achieved its output-level objectives related to trade, export diversification, and competitiveness, and whether it created an enabling environment for structural transformation. Additionally, the evaluation looked at whether the project successfully achieved its intended outcome of sustainable productive capacities. Efficiency was examined by assessing resource allocation, timely delivery of results, cost-effectiveness, project management, coordination, decision-making processes, and monitoring and evaluation framework. Sustainability was assessed in terms of long-term viability, financial sustainability, institutional capacity, policy and regulatory environment, local ownership, and efforts for project phase transition. The impact assessment focused on changes in economic growth and employment, addressing disparities, gender equality, and job quality, particularly within the targeted regions, sectors, and demographic groups.

6. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1. RELEVANCE

Finding 1: The project's alignment with the countries' export diversification goals, regional cooperation objectives, as well as UNDP's strategic documents underscores its high relevance.

The "Aid for Trade in Central Asia - Phase IV" project aligned effectively with the overarching national development strategies and trade and private sector development initiatives that were in effect in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan at the time of project design. The project's emphasis on enhancing productive and export capacities resonated with and complemented the trade promotion efforts undertaken by these countries.

In Kyrgyzstan, the project aligned with the Export Development Strategy 2015-2017, the Export Development Program for 2019-2022 and the National Development Strategy 2018-2040, which emphasize economic diversification, job creation, and private sector growth as key drivers of sustainable development. Similarly, in Uzbekistan, the project aligned with the Action Strategy for the Further Development of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021, which underscored the significance of economic modernization, trade expansion, and private sector development. In Tajikistan the project correlated with the State Program on Export Promotion and Import Substitution 2016–2020 and the National Development Strategy 2030, which prioritize private sector development and economic diversification.

By enhancing productive and export capacities of niche products, the project directly supported these countries' efforts to diversify their economies and expand their export base. The project's focus on creating an enabling environment for job-rich growth, including trade-oriented private sector development and efficient trade support institutions, aligned with the countries' goals of attracting investments, fostering entrepreneurship, and boosting trade competitiveness. Additionally, the project's emphasis on green and forward-looking production methods echoed the commitment of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to sustainable development and environmentally responsible practices. Overall, the project stands as a catalyst for these countries' endeavours to strengthen their trade sectors, promote private sector engagement, and achieve inclusive economic growth.

The project aligned well with the United Nations (UN) regional and country-level programmes and plans, emphasizing the importance of private sector engagement and partnership to achieve SDGs.

The UNDP Regional Programme Document (RPD) for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) 2018-2021 outlined three main program outcomes to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs in the Europe and CIS region. These outcomes included accelerating structural transformations through effective governance, addressing poverty and inequalities through inclusive growth, and building resilience to shocks and crises. The theory of change at the core of the RPD recognized the significance of robust governance systems, greener and more inclusive economies, and development pathways that factor in risks. By increasing capacities at all intervention levels - government, TSI's, and companies in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, alongside a focus on niche and green export products, the project aimed to foster job creation and improved livelihoods, aligning effectively with the goals of the regional program. Moreover, it seamlessly integrated into the RPD that centres on partnerships, innovation, and scaled-up development.

The UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021 highlighted the critical role of the private sector as a development partner. The plan emphasized partnering with governments and others to implement SDG-related policies, encourage sustainable investment, and adopt business practices that promote inclusive development. The plan also aimed to enhance UNDP's ability to partner effectively with the private sector to support policy priorities, a dimension that was inherently embedded in the project intervention.

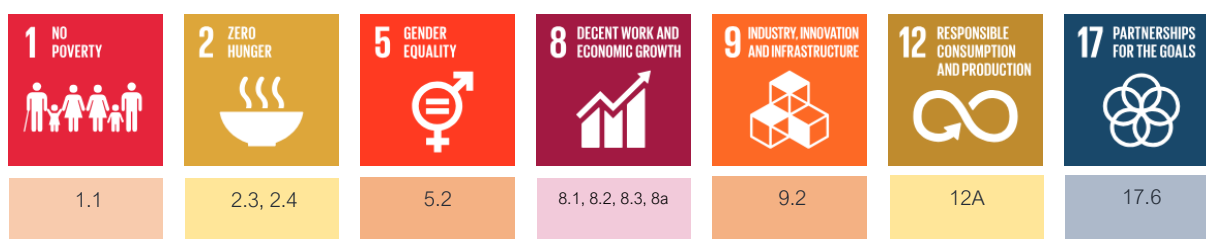
The UNDP's Private Sector Development and Partnership Strategy 2018-2022 sought to define and develop a service provision that facilitates partnerships, creating an enabling environment for private sector

funding aligned with government priorities and mobilizing private capital for country development. The project's goal to support trade-oriented private sector growth by creating an enabling environment for job-rich expansion and regional cooperation aligned with the UNDP's push for private sector advancement.

The UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021 emphasized the importance of partnerships with governments and the private sector to promote gender equality. The strategy focused on extending gender-responsive services, including digital, empowering women economically, and advocating for regulations that uphold gender equality. Additionally, the strategy aimed to enhance access to essential services, assets, and finance for marginalized groups, including women, while addressing structural barriers through partnerships and advocacy efforts. Within the project's dimensions lies a commitment to gender-responsive practices. The project's aim to foster the establishment and growth of women-led enterprises and to enhance women's employment aligns closely with the gender equality strategy's core objective of advancing economic opportunities for women. The project's proactive outreach, including mentoring women and advocating for activities and regulations that uphold gender equality, mirrors the strategy's emphasis on promoting women's rights and dismantling structural barriers.

Respectively, the project aligned with and supported the countries' endeavours to address multiple SDGs, specifically (Figure 3)⁷:

Figure 3. SDGs addressed by the project.



The project's core focus on job creation and livelihood improvement directly addresses SDG 1 by providing economic opportunities that help lift people out of poverty. Although not a primary goal, the project's efforts to stimulate economic growth indirectly support SDG 2 by enhancing food security through increased income generation for local communities. The project contributes to SDG 5 by promoting gender equality through initiatives that empower women entrepreneurs and create an inclusive environment for their participation in economic activities. It also aligns seamlessly with SDG 8 by actively fostering decent work opportunities, especially in sectors related to niche and green products, and by promoting sustained economic growth. In line with SDG 9, the project places a strong emphasis on enhancing productive capacities and fostering innovation within the targeted value chains. While not its primary focus, the project indirectly supports SDG 12 by encouraging sustainable production practices and responsible resource management in the value chains it engages with. The project's commitment to partnerships and collaboration aligns with SDG 17's emphasis on achieving sustainable development through collective efforts with regional and international stakeholders.

In line with the above, survey respondents from participant countries and all intervention levels have consistently expressed that the project was relevant and that it has effectively addressed the needs and development priorities of their respective countries and is pertinent to the entities they represent. Most respondents agree or strongly agree that the project has effectively addressed the requirements of their countries, sectors, and institutions/organizations/enterprises, while also considering gender equality and environmental aspects (Figures 4, 5 and 6).

⁷ <https://www.undp.org/eurasia/sdgs>

Figure 4. Assessment of project relevance in Kyrgyzstan

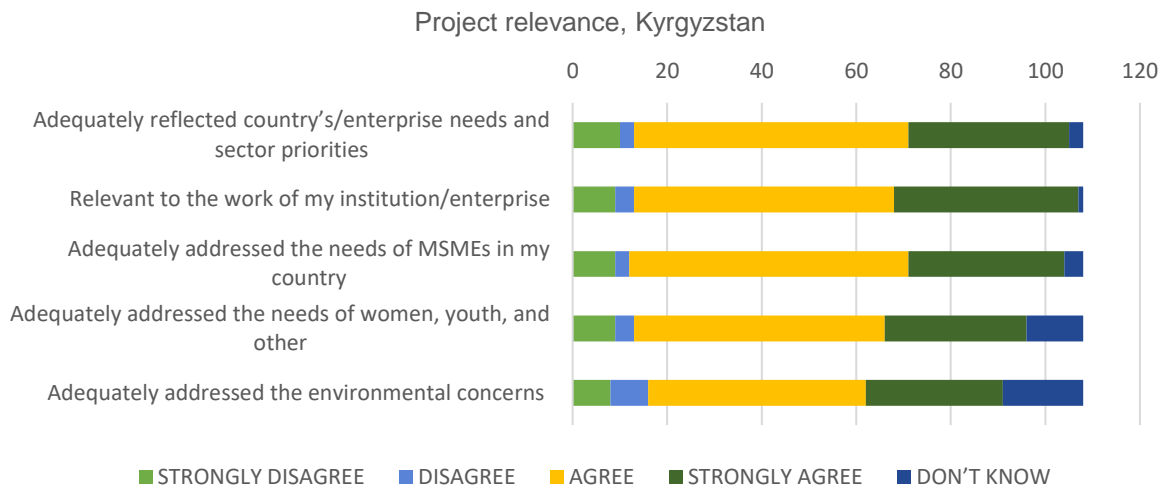


Figure 5. Assessment of project relevance in Uzbekistan

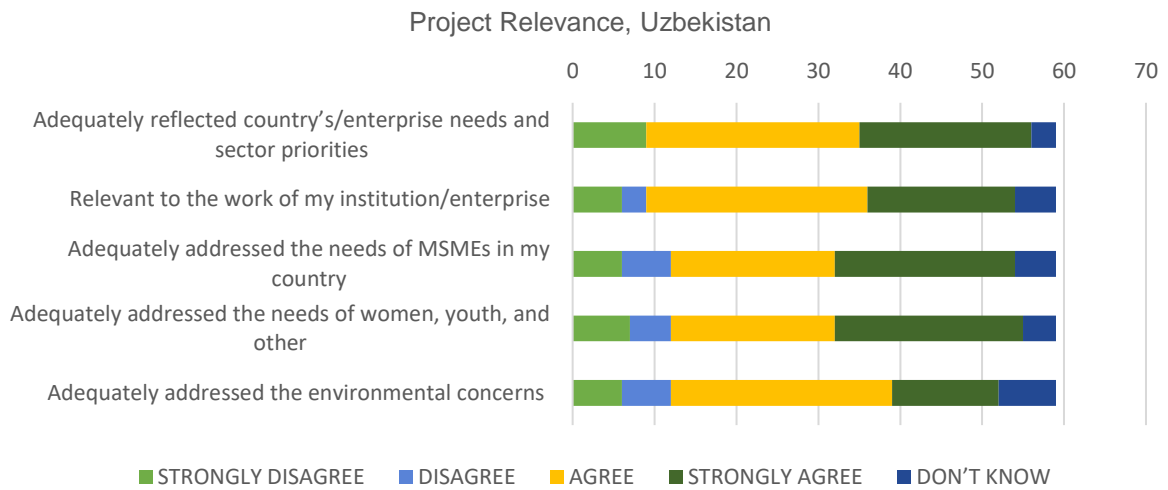
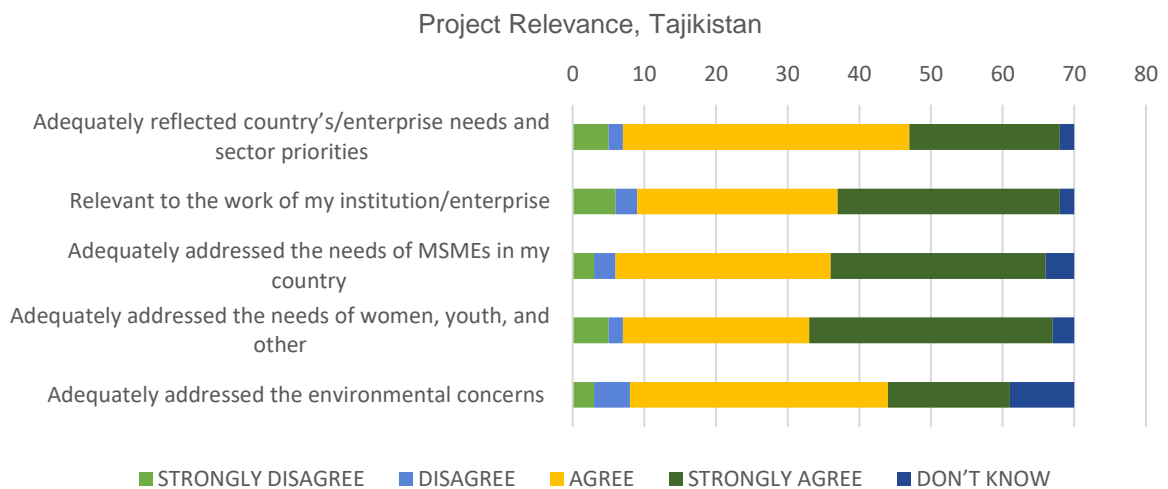


Figure 6. Assessment of project relevance in Tajikistan



Furthermore, the project's alignment with the global Aid for Trade initiative is evident specifically in its focus on trade capacity building. In conjunction with the global initiative's other key priorities, such as trade facilitation and the reduction of trade barriers, the project synergizes with the endeavours of prominent donors like the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), the European Union (EU), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). This collective approach empowers participant countries to engage more successfully in international trade and work towards sustainable development.

Finding 2: The formulation of project's Phase IV incorporates lessons assimilated from its preceding phases, while also integrating insights gathered and documented from stakeholder consultations in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

In general, based on discussions with the project teams and key project stakeholders, as well as review of the Project Document it was established that the project draws from the experiences gained in its three prior phases, with the initial phase starting in 2009. It's important to mention, though, that Phase IV began while Phase III was still ongoing, and the evaluation report for Phase III was completed afterward. This situation somewhat limited its immediate applicability to Phase IV. Despite that, UNDP leveraged the lessons collected and insights gained from Phase III to inform Phase IV's design, as well as considered insights from other projects (e.g., the Wider Europe Initiative cooperation programme evaluated by Government of Finland in 2016) to shape its strategy in Phase IV.

Given this context, while Phase III adopted a comprehensive approach that encompassed macro, meso, and micro levels with a regional focus, Phase IV, although operating at similar levels, pursued a more specific and targeted strategy. It placed a greater emphasis on fostering private sector growth beyond macro trade policy and expanding support services through TSIs at the meso level. Shifting focus from traditional to niche products and value chains is among the crucial takeaways, responding to the persistent challenges of price-based competition within a fragmented production landscape in participant countries.

Also, while Phase III had a broad mandate, Phase IV honed its focus on enhancing productive capacities to facilitate inclusive and sustainable growth. This entailed diversifying exports, targeting resilient and environmentally friendly value chains, and adapting to emerging trends. Gender equality emerged as a prominent theme, with a particular emphasis on advancing women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship as drivers of holistic and sustainable development. To advance the goal of increasing women engagement throughout the project's stages, Phase IV introduced dedicated gender equality programs exclusively tailored for women entrepreneurs.

The project's design phase also incorporated findings from stakeholders' needs analysis, embodying the project's commitment to inclusivity and effective collaboration. Main project beneficiaries - government officials, TSIs, and MSMEs, including women-led organizations and companies, categorised by influence and importance participated in stakeholders' consultations in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, ensuring an understanding of stakeholder needs.

In Kyrgyzstan, stakeholders underscored challenges such as an unfavourable business environment, inadequate capacity of TSIs to provide value-added services for trade promotion, and businesses' weak entrepreneurial capacity. These encompassed issues like insufficient adherence to market-demanded standards, inability to translate trade-related information into export contracts and deliveries, and suboptimal management and production processes among SMEs, impeding international competitiveness. The most critical concern was access to markets, along with service provision barriers, market obstacles, limited laboratory access, technological gaps, and restricted entry to affordable finance.

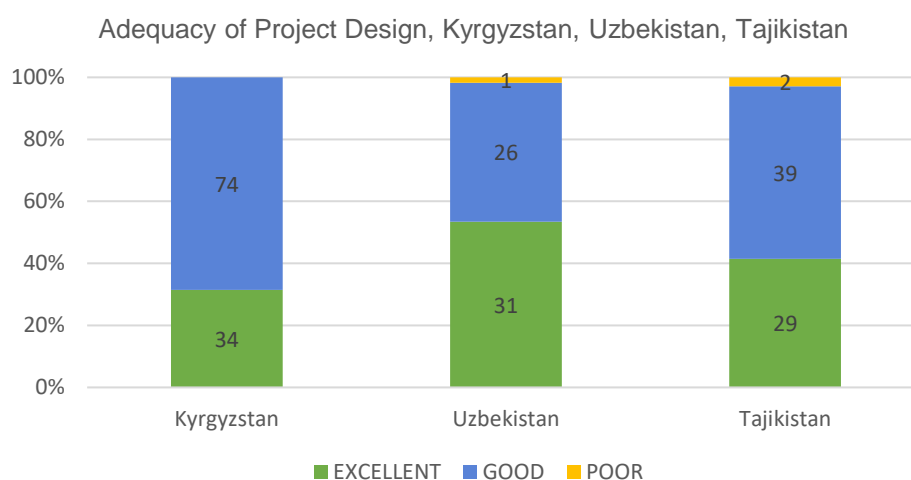
Similarly, stakeholders in Tajikistan highlighted taxing and inspection complexities, high taxation burdens, and onerous costs associated with production and importing/exporting, particularly tariffs. They also voiced concerns about an underdeveloped business climate, constrained access to affordable financing, and inadequate private sector support. Insufficient technological and standards assistance were other salient concerns.

It is important to note that while the Project Document does not explicitly mention stakeholder consultations or needs assessment in Uzbekistan, the identified issues in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan offer insights that could potentially be relevant to Uzbekistan's context.

The stakeholders' needs assessment resulted in a list of requirements, some of which the project sought to address in Phase IV. In addition, the project's approach to intervention was marked by consideration of the capacities of key stakeholders, including availability of resources and the level of expertise among the involved parties. Taking these factors into account, the project aimed to establish objectives that were based on identified needs while also being realistic and achievable.

The project's relevance and its consideration of stakeholders' needs are further evident in the survey results. Participants from all countries and intervention levels have consistently rated the project design as highly satisfactory, with the majority deeming it excellent or good (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Assessment of project relevance



Finding 3: The project exhibits a commitment to addressing cross-cutting issues, with a focus on gender-related activities but lacks clearly defined environmental targets.

Human rights, job creation, gender equality, and environmental sustainability are key cross-cutting themes addressed by the project intervention. Gender equality and human rights considerations have been thoughtfully integrated into the project design, drawing insights from existing sources at that time (e.g., the Micronarrative Study on 'Barriers to Female Entrepreneurship in Tajikistan' 2016, the Human Development Report, 2016). While a comprehensive gender analysis was not conducted, the project's alignment with the Gender Marker 2 and the use of gender-disaggregated indicators indicate a concerted effort to incorporate gender considerations from the project's inception. The assignment of the Gender Marker 2 to the project is well-justified, reflecting its substantive engagement with gender considerations despite the absence of a dedicated analysis.

The project's approach was deemed relevant for the incorporation of gender related activities and women in at least 30% of all activities. Furthermore, according to the Project Document a dedicated allocation of 15% of the budget was envisaged towards supporting women entrepreneurs, encompassing capacity-building initiatives and women-centred job creation endeavours through mentorship programmes and beyond.

The project also focused on promoting the right to work, as outlined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) Article 6.1, and eliminating discrimination against women as per the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Article 14. It also emphasized the implementation of safe labour standards based on International Labour Organization (ILO) recommendations.

At the same time, although an environmental assessment was not conducted prior to the project's initiation, the project design took into account its environmental impact by drawing on findings from existing studies at that time, including the 'Climate Change and Security in Central Asia – Regional Assessment Report' (OSCE, 2017). The Project Document specifies various environmental areas that the project is related to, such as the reduction of CO2 emissions, engagement in climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts, sustainable management of natural resources, and the integration of disaster risk considerations into decision-making processes. Consequently, the project's design adheres to standards outlined by the Convention on Biological Diversity, ensuring sustainable resource utilization and the equitable distribution of benefits arising from natural resources.

In addition, the Project Document encompasses results of the Social and Environmental Screening, classifying the environmental risk associated with supported companies as having low significance. Likewise, the SES categorized the risks related to women participation in trade, particularly in agriculture, and informal employment as having a similarly low level of significance. Therefore, it was deemed that the environmental impact of the supported companies is unlikely to be significant, and though challenges regarding women participation and informal employment may exist, they are deemed manageable within the project's scope. Nevertheless, it's crucial to underline that categorizing these issues as having low significance doesn't diminish their importance, and ongoing monitoring and mitigation measures must be implemented to address them effectively. While the project has conducted an overall examination of women participation and analysed jobs from the perspectives of permanent and seasonal character, it did not monitor the environmental impact generated by the companies involved in the project.

Consequently, the project did not assign any specific OECD/DAC RIO markers for climate environment-related development⁸, nor did it establish specific environmental targets with indicators. It is important to note that the 'Analyses of Green Products Value Chain and Export Opportunities' (2019) conducted by Euromonitor in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and by a local company in Uzbekistan provide valuable insights that could have served, among other things, as a baseline for the project's environmental initiatives, including targets, even if they were established during the course of project intervention.

Finding 4: The project's design, as presented in its Theory of Change and Results and Resources Framework, is fundamentally sound and pragmatic, with areas that could have benefited from enhancement.

The project's planned outputs and outcomes exhibit a satisfactory level of coherence and feasibility. The project is structured around four main outputs, with Output 1 focusing on regional cooperation between trade policymakers, private sector entities, and national export promotion agencies to promote job-rich green growth at the regional level. The subsequent three outputs are country-specific, aimed at creating an enabling environment for job-rich growth in Kyrgyzstan (Output 2), Tajikistan (Output 3), and Uzbekistan (Output 4). These country's outputs are intended to be achieved through a common set of sub-outputs closely linked to project components, namely: a) fostering inclusive and trade-oriented private sector policies and regulations; b) enhancing the efficiency of trade support institutions serving the private sector; and c) improving the efficiency and competitiveness of producers and processors, thereby contributing to sustainable human development. Each sub-output is further detailed with a set of proposed activities, which generally vary from one country to another.

Project design employs an overall well-established and logical link between the project's inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and intended impact. These elements are overall clearly formulated, contributing to an adequate framework that guides project implementation. In Kyrgyzstan, a notable discrepancy between project outputs and activities was evident however, specifically in Sub-Output 1.1, which aimed to establish enabling policies and regulations for inclusive and trade-oriented private sector development. The corresponding section in the RRF Matrix appears to primarily address support for SMEs in gaining market

⁸ OECD/DAC RIO markers for climate and environment-related development are tools used to assess and classify development projects based on their environmental impact and alignment with global environmental goals, like the SDGs. They help ensure projects promote environmental sustainability and contribute to these goals by categorizing them as RIO Marker 1, 2, or 3, depending on their environmental impact and alignment.

access rather than supporting policy development. As a side note, it must be mentioned that the approach observed in Phase V's RRF with the standardization of sub-outputs and activities across countries is commendable. This is likely to streamline overall project management, monitoring, and reporting processes.

The project has diligently identified key assumptions and risks, fostering a proactive approach to addressing potential challenges. Furthermore, it has continuously assessed and taken into account new risks that emerged during project implementation, while also implementing mitigation measures to manage these risks effectively.

The horizontal logic of the RRF Matrix is overall adequate. The choice of indicators has been made to ensure relevance and alignment with project objectives. Data availability, target values, and disaggregation have been systematically addressed, reflecting a comprehensive planning process. The sources of verification exhibit a commitment to gender-disaggregated data and an insightful reflection upon women-specific conditions and needs.

However, it's essential to highlight that the project did not set up any indicators to gauge advancements towards attaining the final output and outcome. Also, while capacity building was a significant component of the project, the measurement of capacity itself was not systematically conducted at the macro and meso levels within the participating countries. Instead, the project primarily utilized indicators related to the number of participants in capacity-building activities or the number of events conducted. This approach, while informative in terms of project outputs, does not provide a comprehensive assessment of the development and strengthening of capacities at these intervention levels. In addition, it would have been advantageous to establish relevant baseline values for indicators that continue across various project phases, rather than starting with a baseline value of zero. Again, as a side note, it is important to note that these issues are also relevant to Phase V.

Introducing a robust mechanism to measure the environmental impact of the project's interventions would have allowed ensuring a holistic evaluation of its results. By quantifying environmental changes resulting from project activities, such as reduced carbon emissions or improved natural resource management, the project could have effectively demonstrated its contributions to environmental conservation and sustainability. Also, incorporating the number of producers who have adopted improved agricultural practices as an indicator would have also provided insight into the project's contribution to enhancing agricultural productivity, resource efficiency, and environmental sustainability, aligning with broader development and sustainability goals.

It is worth noting that within the scope of the project's target countries, Kyrgyzstan distinguished itself by undertaking a baseline assessment for specific selected value chains. This assessment comprehensively covered indicators such as productivity, job creation, and export potential. However, it's important to highlight that this initiative was not accompanied by a subsequent post-intervention assessment. The preparation of thorough baseline and post-intervention assessment reports would have provided a robust foundation for measuring and evaluating the project's intervention. These reports would not only serve as points of reference but also facilitate transparent and evidence-based assessments of the project's results, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of its achievements and areas for refinement.

6.2. EFFECTIVENESS

Finding 5: Despite challenges and crises, the project's adaptable approach has led to successful completion in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, while in Uzbekistan roughly half of the targets have yet to be attained.

The project implementation was carried out amidst a backdrop of numerous severe, overlapping, and compounding crises, requiring adaptive strategies and resourceful approaches to navigate the challenges and ensure its successful execution. The COVID-19 pandemic (commenced in March 2020) and war in Ukraine (began in February 2022) led, among other things, to disruption in economic activity, trade and tourism, high inflation and drop in remittances. The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan has spilled over project

participant countries, posing security and economic risks. Water management and resource utilization issues, including transboundary water disputes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, have been a persistent concern in the region during project implementation, along with natural disasters such as severe flooding and droughts. Government shifts in Kyrgyzstan and substantial staff turnover in certain Uzbekistan government institutions posed challenges in maintaining consistent engagement and coordination, potentially affecting the project's pace and effectiveness.

Economic disruptions, trade and tourism downturns, high inflation, and a decrease in remittances resulted from these crises. These factors collectively impacted economic stability and project activities, making it challenging to conduct, among other things, offline trainings, study visits, international exhibitions, and B2B missions as originally planned.

In Kyrgyzstan, the project focusing on honey, dried fruits and nuts, and adventure tourism value chains faced significant challenges, considering disruption of economic activities, trade, and tourism. In Uzbekistan, the project started in mid-2021, which meant that it was less impacted by the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, ongoing economic disruptions from the war in Ukraine have affected trade and export prospects for dried fruits, mung beans, peanut products, and jams. In Tajikistan, the value chains centered around honey, mung beans, peanuts, apricot kernel oil, and dried fruits encountered similar challenges, but unique issues arose. Beyond trade disruptions and transboundary water disputes, a poor apricot harvest year affected the dried fruits and apricot kernel oil value chains.

Survey respondents from all countries and intervention levels have identified the COVID-19 pandemic as the most significant factor negatively impacting project implementation. Interestingly, in Kyrgyzstan, most respondents view political instability and government staff turnover as having only a slight or no impact on the project. A similar perspective is observed regarding the war in Ukraine, which most respondents believe has either a minor or no adverse influence on the project. In Uzbekistan, while the influence of the war in Ukraine is perceived somewhat more significantly by survey respondents, government staff turnover is generally not considered a critical issue. In Tajikistan, respondents perceive the war in Ukraine as having a slightly lesser impact on the project when compared to challenges related to exchange rate fluctuations and adverse weather conditions. Notably, concerns regarding the quality and timeliness of project support are particularly pronounced among respondents representing TSIs in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as MSMEs in Uzbekistan.

All in all, the effects of these multi-layer crises called for reallocating project resources, adjustment of activities and switching in the first place to online interaction among project stakeholders. However, access to the internet and low digital literacy, especially in rural areas, posed challenges in implementing digital-based components of the project, potentially affecting the reach and effectiveness of certain project initiatives.

Overall, the project's resilience, adaptability, and proactive strategies allowed it to overcome most challenges and continue making substantial strides towards its objectives. Participant countries also demonstrated resilience, rebounding from adversities caused by currency exchange rate fluctuations, drop in remittance inflows and Gross Domestic Product (GDP), thereby making impressive progress in the achievement of the targets.

In this context, the project has made progress in its execution, achieving successful completion of activities in Tajikistan in June 2022 and in Kyrgyzstan in September 2022. In Uzbekistan, the project's initiation was delayed, and it is presently ongoing, having achieved 9 out of 17 output-level targets as of August 2023. Notably, several targets remain outstanding in Uzbekistan, including the objective to enhance government policies governing the private sector with a gender-focus, with only 25% of the necessary recommendations having been provided by the project. Also, the efficacy of integrating these recommendations into policies remains uncertain. At the meso level, targets related to strengthening business and advisory services provided by TSIs and establishing linkages with international partners are still pending. Additionally, due to delays in equipment procurement, the realization of two interconnected targets linked to increased productivity and income also remains outstanding. Furthermore, two mentorship programs are yet to be organized as part of the project's efforts. With only four months remaining until the project's conclusion, while there is a possibility that Uzbekistan may meet its targets, the quality of the results achieved could be a subject of concern given the need for expedited progress.

Finding 6: The project has enhanced regional cooperation through its effective collaboration with other international organisations, contributing to a more coordinated approach to addressing shared challenges.

The regional component of the project involved collaboration with similar initiatives supported by the EU, such as the 'Regional Integration and Capacity Building to Boost Agribusiness MSMEs Competitiveness and Trade Promotion in Central Asia' project (CANDY V) implemented by Hillfswerk International (Austria). This synergetic initiative aimed to strengthen Business Intermediary Organizations (referred to as TSIs in the UNDP project) by introducing quality standards for fresh and dried fruits and vegetables, implementing food safety standards, enhancing their capacity to support value chains, promoting interaction between businesses and education, and developing strategies for market development and product promotion, including Geographical Indications. Another shared focus was the facilitation of a regional private-public dialogue on product standards and quality, which involved the Central Asian Working Group on Export Promotion of Agricultural Produce (CAWG) for promotion of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) standards, a collaborative effort involving public and private experts through cross-border cooperation between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. This joint effort was also supported by the GIZ regional programme 'Trade Facilitation in Central Asia'.

The CAWG, initially established by the business sector and later supported by regional governments and country development partners, successfully addressed several key issues related to the implementation of UNECE quality standards prior to start of Phase IV of the project. This included amending UNECE Standard DDP 15 for dried apricots, initiating reviews and new standards for various agricultural products, and coordinating policy approaches among regional countries. The efforts of CAWG received recognition from the Working Group for UNECE Agricultural Standards at the UN headquarters in Geneva.

Activities of the CAWG continued throughout Phase IV. As a follow up of the 4th regional meeting, regional quality standards for dried apricots were approved in 2018, and new standards for melons were developed in 2019, contributing to enhanced competitiveness of regional agricultural products in international markets. The 5th regional meeting organised in 2021 focused on amending UNECE's quality standards for priority export products, drafting explanatory materials, and strategizing joint efforts to implement food safety standards, fostering linkages of value chain actors to global markets. At the 6th regional meeting, which took place in 2022, discussions revolved around coordinating plans, developing a unified stance on promoting commercial quality standards, ensuring food safety, and boosting regional competitiveness. Priority issues included the development and promotion of new UNECE standards, including those for sweet apricot kernels, dried persimmon, and raw and roasted inshell peanuts.

This collaboration within the CAWG has contributed, among other things, to harmonization of the adoption of international quality and food safety standards, including UNECE commercial standards, ISO 22000, GLOBAL G.A.P., and Food Safety System Certification (FSSC), leading to improvement in the quality of agricultural products along the entire value chain. Consequently, domestically produced items have shown an elevated level of conformity to international quality benchmarks.

Under regional output, the project's contribution also extends to the launch of the Central Asian Trade Information Portal (CATI), a digital platform delivering real-time market information developed and launched by International Trade Centre (ITC) with project support. CATI, as a centralized platform for trade-related information, is commendable in its efforts to streamline trade activities and provide valuable data to various stakeholders. Its comprehensive coverage of market access, trade statistics, business contacts, and quality requirements addresses a critical need in the region. By enabling exporters, importers, investors, and trade support institutions to access necessary information, CATI effectively empowers decision-making and promotes transparency. At the same time, drawing from interviews conducted during the evaluation process, the awareness about this platform and its full utilization by project stakeholders needs to be further ensured.

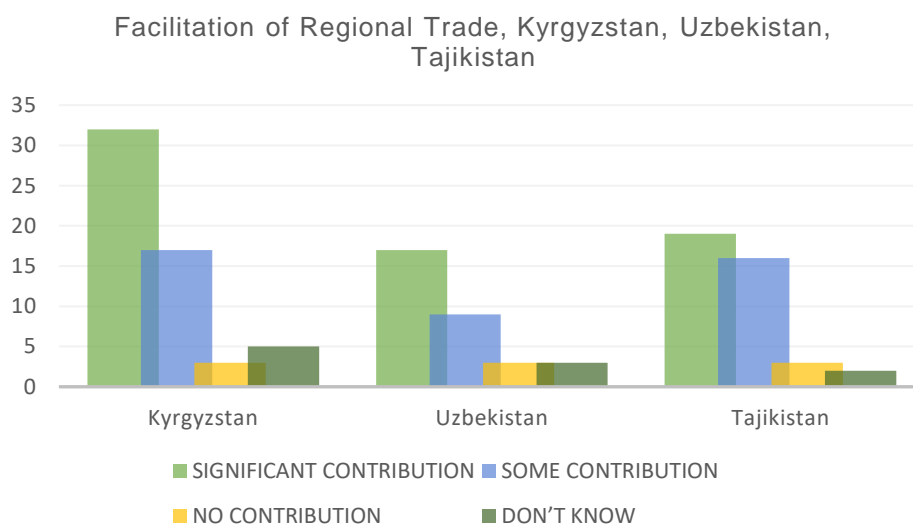
Beyond development of CATI portal, it is noteworthy to highlight the project's collaboration with the ITC, within the broader context of ITC's implementation of the EU-funded project 'Ready4Trade in Central Asia.' This initiative is dedicated to fostering trade within Central Asia, both regionally and internationally, by strengthening the business environment, empowering enterprises, and facilitating cross-border e-commerce.

Within the regional output, the project has also initiated collaborative activities among participating countries and fostered connections in trade and education between Finland and the participant countries. In addition, under the regional output, in 2018 and 2019, the project, in collaboration with regional and country teams, laid the foundation for its activities by conducting in-depth research on green, employment-rich value chains and export opportunities, refining its model for calculations in partnership with Euromonitor International. This research enabled the project to identify key niche products and value chains with a focus on competitiveness, job creation, and environmental sustainability. The project also facilitated the dissemination of best practices in the development of green value chains, drawing from the expertise of the EU and Finland. This transfer of knowledge has acted as a catalyst, leveraging the experience from these countries to expedite the adoption of sustainable practices and strategies in project's participant countries. Further, in 2020, the project extended its impact globally, assisting UNDP in developing guidance notes for SMEs and the private sector's response to COVID-19, drawing upon its extensive experience. The project also addressed emerging trends by creating a concise guidance note on megatrends and trade intelligence.

The research activities under the regional output are underway, the project examining informality in the agriculture and agri-industry sectors of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, with the goal of formulating policy recommendations to enhance formal employment and social protection. With the necessary efforts, this activity is likely to be completed by the end of the project.

Project efforts under the regional output have been appreciated by stakeholders. Based on the survey responses from policy and TSI representatives in all participating countries, it is evident that the majority perceive the project's role in facilitating regional trade as either having a significant or some contribution (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Assessment of contribution to regional trade



It's worth emphasizing that the efforts carried out as part of the regional output have effectively fostered partnerships in alignment with the objectives outlined in SDG 17. In terms of overall progress among participating countries toward achieving SDG 17, there are notable developments, particularly in Uzbekistan⁹ and Tajikistan¹⁰, where trends indicate a moderate improvement in this regard as of 2023. However, it's important to note that progress in Kyrgyzstan appears to be stagnant¹¹.

⁹ <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/profiles/uzbekistan>

¹⁰ <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/profiles/tajikistan>

¹¹ <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/profiles/kyrgyz-republic>

Finding 7: Effective project support at the macro level improved trade-oriented private sector development policies, but there is room for enhancing public-private dialogue.

At the macro level, the project engaged in support to policy development, underpinning a dynamic trade landscape and fortifying the capabilities of key stakeholders. In Kyrgyzstan, the project actively supported the preparation of a new Export Development Program for 2023-2026, aimed at enhancing export volumes across sectors with high potential and addressing cross-sectoral areas like access to finance, export promotion, and quality infrastructure. In Uzbekistan, the project supported the preparation of the New Development Strategy 2022-2026, outlining seven priority areas for economic growth. In Tajikistan, the project assisted in drafting the State Export Development Programme 2021-2025 to enhance private sector exports, boost competitiveness, and access new markets. Additionally, the project facilitated the formulation of 6 by-laws to implement the Law on State Services, necessary for streamlining public service delivery to citizens and the private sector in Tajikistan.

Policy makers operating at the macro level, representing specifically entities such as ministries of economy/trade across participant countries and the Ministry of Justice in Tajikistan, were involved in diverse project activities. These encompassed a spectrum of engagements, ranging from learning exchanges within and outside each country and on-the-job training to awareness-raising initiatives and policy advice. Notably, these endeavours were undertaken to enhance their capacities. However, gauging the extent to which capacity growth was achieved within the partner ministry remains challenging due to the absence of quantifiable metrics.

The project's effectiveness at the macro level in each country is also, to some extent, contingent upon the degree to which local authorities are integrated and well-informed about the project's intentions and outcomes. Given that a significant portion of businesses and vulnerable populations supported by the project are situated within communities, ensuring equitable engagement and awareness of local authorities becomes a key consideration.

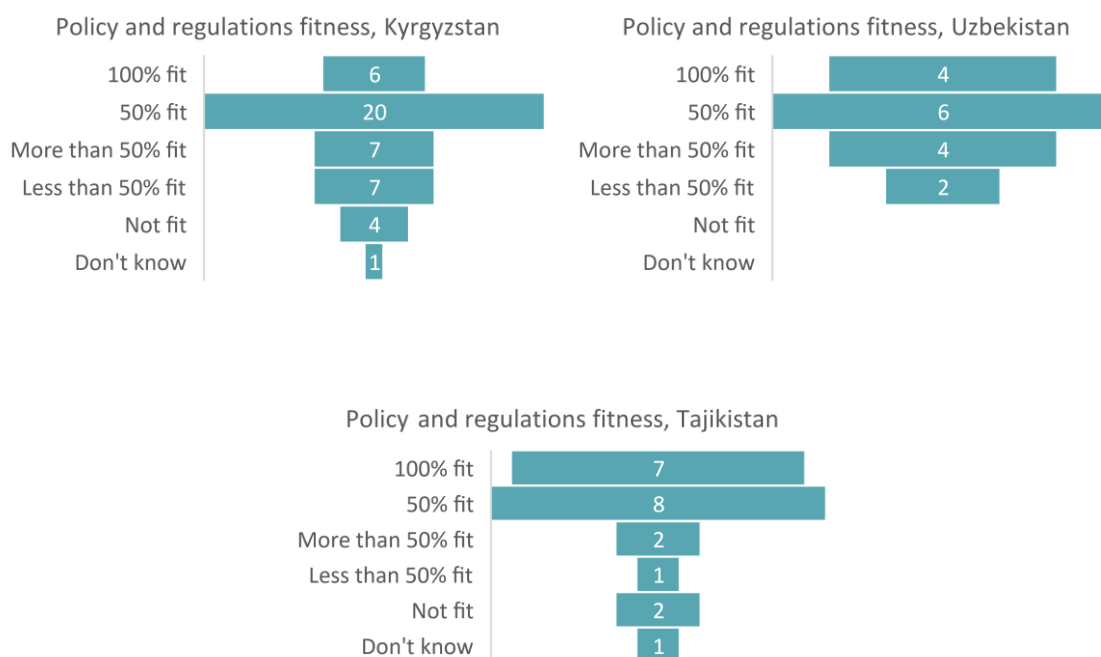
Notably, regarding engagement of local authorities in project implementation, distinct trends emerged across the project's partner countries drawing from interviews. In Tajikistan, local representative demonstrated a commendable grasp of the project's intricacies and a clear understanding of its overarching objectives. Conversely, in Kyrgyzstan, there appeared to be a relatively diminished level of awareness among interviewed local representatives. Interviews planned in Uzbekistan were abruptly cancelled at short notice, thereby hindering the formulation of findings.

The project also encompassed a deliberate focus on enhancing public-private dialogue, with participating countries leveraging a range of platforms to facilitate such engagements. Notable mechanisms include the Consultative Council on Improvement of Investment Climate and the National Development Council, overseen by the President, serving as consultation channels in Tajikistan. At the grassroots level, regional consultative councils aim at fostering private sector and non-governmental involvement. Within Kyrgyzstan, the Investment Council under the Cabinet of Ministers, contributes to dialogue. The Agency for Strategic Reforms, operating under the auspices of the President of Uzbekistan, alongside the Business Ombudsman, emerge as platforms for dialogue. Furthermore, the Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CCIs) intricately serve as additional arenas for fostering public-private dialogue in participant countries.

Despite earnest efforts to foster dialogue between the public and private sectors, including through existing platforms and working groups, feedback from private sector representatives across all countries suggests that engagement occurs, but there is a preference for a more substantive and collaborative approach to policy dialogue from the governments. Interviewed private sector representatives engaged by the project have expressed a desire for greater influence on public policies and regulations supporting trade-oriented private sector development. While they appreciate the dialogue facilitated by the project, they perceive that the outcomes of these discussions may not always lead to significant policy changes. This suggests that despite their awareness of existing platforms, challenges persist in adequately addressing their concerns in policymaking.

At the same time survey respondents from participating countries, specifically the TSIs, generally view the policies and regulations supporting trade-oriented private sectors as generally adequate (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Assessment of policy and regulations fitness



The perspective of surveyed policymakers regarding the alignment of existing trade and private sector development policies with the requirements of different vulnerable groups displays variations across countries. As a general trend, however, most respondents believe that policies and regulations effectively address the concerns of women and youth to a significant or moderate degree. In comparison, a slightly smaller portion of respondents share the same perspective regarding people with low incomes and disabilities. Also, there is a perception that policies are less accommodating or that respondents are less aware of the extent to which they address the needs of returned migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and ethnic minorities.

An equally significant aspect, beyond the mere existence and quality of policies, is their effective enforcement and implementation. While governments from all participant countries strive to foster supportive environments for entrepreneurs and exporters through their policies and regulations, it is notable that Uzbekistan has exhibited a more robust and expansive approach in this regard through providing a wide range of subsidies. The government supports exporters through measures like partial transportation cost reimbursement and offers financial incentives to active exporters, including tax reductions and product-specific export facilitation. The state fund for entrepreneurship provides substantial loans to entrepreneurial projects, promoting job creation. Uzbekistan is also moving towards sustainable finance with plans for green bonds and green loans. Initiatives like the "Women's Notebook" and "Iron Notebook" aid women in entrepreneurship and support families in difficult socio-economic situations through employment assistance and land utilization support.

A noteworthy distinction emerges when comparing subsidies in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to those in Uzbekistan. While both countries have also instituted measures to support businesses and individuals, Uzbekistan's comprehensive approach to subsidizing export promotion, entrepreneurship, and diverse sectors stands out. However, it remains imperative to approach such subsidies with a profound understanding of their alignment with international trade regulations and agreements. This becomes particularly pertinent in light of Uzbekistan's aspiration to accede to the World Trade Organization (WTO), highlighting the delicate equilibrium between domestic economic incentives and global trade norms.

It is essential to highlight that while the project has played a significant role in enhancing government institutions in participating countries, thereby contributing to the realization of SDG 16, which focuses on peace, justice, and strong institutions, the degree of progress achieved by each country towards this goal varies. For instance, according to SDG dashboards, the data indicates a moderate improvement in Uzbekistan, while there appears to be a stagnation in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the year 2023.

Finding 8: The project successfully operated at the meso level, strengthening TSIs to provide enhanced export promotion services that garnered overall positive feedback from the private sector.

The project's intervention spanned at the meso level, empowering TSIs across participant countries to offer more efficient export promotion services to the private sector by facilitating, among other things, their access to cutting-edge trade and market intelligence, supported by the utilization of robust big data tools, largely promoting ITC's Trade Map and Market Access Map.

In the context of Kyrgyzstan, the project primarily collaborated through organisation of exports caravans and development and dissemination of market profiles on www.export.gov.kg with the National Investment Agency under the President. This entity underwent several rebranding exercises over the course of project implementation and is characterized by its modest staffing of only four individuals. There is anticipation surrounding the imminent establishment of an Export Promotion Centre, poised to provide a clearer direction towards export-oriented objectives in Kyrgyzstan. The project's engagement extended to partnerships with the CCI, business associations and companies functioning as service providers across three distinct value chains. The collaborative effort also encompassed engagement with women's associations and organizations dedicated to mentorship programs. Additionally, the Open Joint Stock Company "Guarantee Fund" collaborated with the project, facilitating the implementation of corporate governance systems in ten enterprises.

Shifting to Uzbekistan, the project closely collaborated with the Export Promotion Agency under the Ministry of Investments, Industry and Trade, for which a capacity needs assessment was conducted early during the project and support in upgrading the export portal www.epa.uz provided. While interactions with the CCI were also undertaken, a notable development was the significant turnover of staff within the department following institutional reorganization. The project's involvement extended to business women's associations operating across several target regions. A noteworthy development was the engagement with the export support centre from Fergana, established in 2021 and manned by a single individual.

In Tajikistan, the project's activities were concentrated around the Export Agency under the Government with trade portal www.tajtrade.tj, with relatively less involvement from the CCI. Nonetheless, the project supported the State Institutions on Formation and Development of Entrepreneurship (business incubators), created across five distinct regions of Tajikistan. It also supported the State Committee on Investment and State Property Management in the operation of the task force for women, youth, and people with disabilities. The project's interactions extended to public organizations actively participating in mentorship programs. Collaborations were also established with several business associations (e.g., on export of dried fruits, on agribusiness and on dekhkan farms). The Quality Management Centre was also supported to facilitate adherence to quality standards and conduct laboratory testing with mobile equipment provided by the project.

In its efforts to facilitate increased access to services provided by the TSIs, the project aimed to strengthen the provision of online services, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, challenges in remote areas, limited internet access, and email usage were hindering digital opportunities in these regions. This has been confirmed during data collection through surveys and field visits, where it was noted that some of the target project's regions and beneficiaries face challenges related to internet access. While the situation is slightly better in Kyrgyzstan in terms of internet coverage and speed, limited digital literacy in the remote areas remains an issue across all countries. The focus of Phase V of the project on strengthening digital capabilities among TSIs and enterprises, with further considerations from UNDP's 'Gender Equality in Digitalisation' paper, which explores gender disparities and promotes inclusivity in digital transformation efforts are appreciated¹².

Regarding the diversification of financial instruments for exporters, a key focus in Kyrgyzstan, the project aided in drafting a decision for financing export-oriented businesses and introducing factoring; the decision awaits adoption, and factoring is not yet functional. At the same time, the revolving fund for honey value chain and women entrepreneurs piloted by the project garnered positive feedback from businesses and extended access to affordable loans to a broader spectrum of MSMEs. While it is important to acknowledge

¹² <https://www.undp.org/eurasia/publications/gender-equality-digitalization>.

challenges (e.g., some beneficiaries haven't fully returned the borrowed funds) these mechanisms serve as compelling models for potential replication and scaling up.

While numerous models exist for offering affordable financing, some of which were piloted under the project's previous phases (such as the Business Challenge Fund providing micro-finance for women in Tajikistan) targeting project beneficiaries, there is a stronger preference for a sustainable solution. On a broader scale, Kyrgyzstan is striving to diversify financial instruments and draw lessons from the experiences of other countries. The effective implementation of the DAMU Fund in Kazakhstan has garnered significant attention in this regard¹³.

Although the interest in financial tools like factoring and venture funds was evident in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan as well, their introduction is pending. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that, based on insights from interviews, businesses, in general, maintain reservations about engaging with banks and exploring credit opportunities. These reservations stem from concerns about high interest rates, stringent collateral requirements, and a fundamental lack of trust in the financial system. Also, the quality of business plans submitted to financial institutions often falls short. Hence efforts are necessary to bolster businesses' ability to formulate robust business plans and instill trust within the financial sector, thereby encouraging them to embrace credit avenues.

In the realm of international trade, the journeys of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan have been shaped by their pursuit of WTO accession. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan joined the WTO in 1998 and 2013, respectively, while Uzbekistan is presently in the process of seeking membership. Although they have secured trade preferences from the European Union - Kyrgyzstan with GSP+ status in 2013, Tajikistan with GSP status in 2014, and Uzbekistan with GSP+ status in 2017 - they have not fully harnessed the benefits of these arrangements. Hence the project supported participant countries by helping enterprises transition to the EU's Registered Exporter system (REX). This transition enables exporters to qualify for tariff preferences within EU preferential trade agreements. The REX system simplifies the certification of goods' origin by economic operators, significantly reducing transaction costs for exports to the EU.

As a side note, it is important to note that while Kyrgyzstan is the only full-fledged member of the Eurasian Economic Council (EEU) among participant countries, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan did not seem inclined to become members anytime soon, despite the fact that Uzbekistan became an observer state to the EEU in December 2020. The project reports mention random activities related to the EEU in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan until 2022 with no direct or indirect support provided or mentioned further.

The perception of project stakeholders regarding the quality of the provided services is generally positive, as indicated by survey responses. Surveyed policy makers generally hold a positive perception of the suitability of TSIs to effectively deliver services for the trade-oriented private sector. However, there is significant variation across countries, with 75% of respondents in Kyrgyzstan, 40% in Uzbekistan, and 36.8% in Tajikistan indicating that TSIs are either 100% fit or more than 50% fit for this purpose.

Conversely, TSIs' self-perception of their fitness to effectively deliver services varies notably from that of policy makers. Only 28.9% in Kyrgyzstan, 50% in Uzbekistan, and 33.3% in Tajikistan believe that TSIs are either 100% fit or more than 50% fit for this purpose. Nevertheless, TSIs hold the view that the quality of services they provide has improved significantly since 2018, with 48.9% in Kyrgyzstan, 56.3% in Uzbekistan, and 28.6% in Tajikistan indicating such an enhancement.

Satisfaction levels among MSMEs regarding the services offered by TSIs are generally high. Approximately 93% in Uzbekistan, 85% in Kyrgyzstan, and 78% in Tajikistan express satisfaction or high satisfaction with the services provided by TSIs. While MSMEs largely find these services affordable, there is some variation between countries, with 68.6% in Kyrgyzstan, 88.9% in Uzbekistan, and 86.7% in Tajikistan considering them as such.

¹³ <https://damu.kz/en/>

Finding 9: The project's focus on green, niche value chains, at the micro level, showed promise; however, it became evident that these value chains face substantial challenges that couldn't be fully addressed within the project's timeframe.

At the micro level, the project worked directly with entrepreneurs largely supporting creation or strengthening of value chains. A balanced strategy, prioritizing rural, emerging, and women-led enterprises, alongside larger companies operating in value chains, has overall led to favourable results. The selection process for MSMEs was transparent and based on alignment with specific value chain sector - agriculture, agro-processing and tourism, presence of export and job-creation potential and commitment to diligently participate in project activities and deliver results. Notably, some Phase IV beneficiaries had previously benefited from the project, showcasing its continuous support to development.

The project's selection of types of value chains was driven by the analysis of a plethora of value chains, leading to the identification of 12 spanning the three countries. The emphasis was placed on identifying and selecting value chains with niche, green, future-proof attributes, alongside significant potential for export expansion and job creation, specifically:

Table 2. Value chains in participant countries

Kyrgyzstan	Uzbekistan	Tajikistan
Honey	Dried Fruits and Vegetables	Mung Beans
Dried Fruits and Nuts	Mung Beans	Honey
Adventure Tourism	Peanut and Peanut Butter	Peanuts
	Jams, Purees and Juices	Apricot Kernel Oil
		Dried Fruits

While not all criteria can be uniformly applied to every selected value chain, the majority do overall align with the established criteria, particularly if specific segments are being considered:

- Honey production holds a niche status owing to its reliance on distinct floral sources, yielding specialty varieties in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. By incorporating eco-friendly beekeeping practices and innovative techniques, the allure of these specialty honey types can be elevated, resonating particularly with environmentally and health-conscious consumers.
- Within the dried fruits, vegetables, and nuts value chains, while the overall category is not inherently niche, certain products, such as snack bars, fruit and berry fillers, as well as distinct regional varieties in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and blends could successfully carve out niche markets. Coupled with sustainable cultivation, adequate storage, eco-friendly processing and packaging methods these value chains could ensure long-term competitiveness.
- Apricot kernel oil is niche due to its potential in the cosmetic and health sectors in Tajikistan and beyond. Notably, apricot kernel oil stands out for its qualities that align with current trends, including being no waste, environmentally friendly, and health conscious.
- Specialty peanut and peanut butter varieties, such as organic or unique flavours, can create a niche market in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Innovation in flavour profiles and production techniques could ensure ongoing competitiveness in evolving markets.
- While mung beans are not inherently considered niche, their exceptional nutritional value elevates them to the status of a superfood. By emphasizing eco-friendly cultivation practices and obtaining organic certifications, mung beans can successfully position themselves as niche products in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, effectively catering to a specific segment of health-conscious and environmentally aware consumers.
- Adventure tourism is a niche segment due to Kyrgyzstan's stunning landscapes and authentic experiences across Issyk-Kul area. Incorporating modern technologies and sustainable practices enhances the resilience of adventure tourism.

Overall, the project has endeavoured to streamline the value chains, focusing specifically on niche segments, and supporting actors through, facilitating partnerships, capacity building and the provision of equipment. In total the project has reportedly supported 842 participants (336 women) in value chain

networks and cooperation initiatives, aligning with SDG 2. Beneficiaries include all value chain actors having one or several of the following roles: suppliers, producers, processors, traders, retailers, and exporters.

The surveyed enterprises across all participating countries, have varying roles and perceptions concerning the value chains. Specifically, in Kyrgyzstan, the respondents are composed of a diverse group of enterprises: 64.7% are small enterprises, 27.5% are micro-enterprises, and 7.8% are medium-sized enterprises. Remarkably, over half of these enterprises are led by women entrepreneurs, representing various sectors such as agriculture, apiculture, tourism, and agro-processing. An impressive 68.6% of these enterprises actively participate in the value chain, with a significant portion (85.7%) having been established after 2018. It's noteworthy that smaller companies often play dual roles in the value chain, functioning as both producers and processors, while larger companies encompass trading and exporting activities. In terms of satisfaction, 11.4% of the surveyed companies express very high satisfaction with their involvement in the value chain - 48.6% are satisfied, and 37.1% report partial satisfaction with their value chain activities.

In Uzbekistan, the surveyed business landscape reveals that 55.6% of the enterprises fall into the category of micro-enterprises, while 44.4% are categorized as small enterprises. An interesting aspect is that a significant majority (66.7%) of these enterprises are led by women entrepreneurs. The predominant sectors of operation for these businesses are agriculture, followed by agro-processing and textiles. Impressively, 70.4% of these enterprises are actively involved in a value chain, with a substantial portion (68.4%) having been established after 2018. Within the value chain, these enterprises assume various roles, often combining multiple functions, although slightly more than half of the respondents primarily function as processors. As for satisfaction levels, 36.8% of the surveyed enterprises express very high satisfaction with their value chain activities, 31.6% are satisfied, and an additional 31.6% report partial satisfaction with the value chain.

In Tajikistan, the surveyed enterprises are distributed as follows: 53.3% fall into the category of small enterprises, 40% are classified as micro-enterprises, and a minor 6.7% are categorized as medium-sized enterprises. Notably, a majority (56.7%) of these businesses are led by men entrepreneurs. The key operational sectors for these enterprises encompass agro-processing and agriculture, with textile production and apiculture also featuring prominently. Impressively, 63.3% of these enterprises actively participate in a value chain, a substantial portion (68.4%) of which were established after 2018. Within the value chain, these enterprises take on diverse roles, sometimes combining multiple functions. Satisfaction levels among value chain participants are notably high, with 78.9% expressing satisfaction and an additional 21.1% reporting very high satisfaction with their value chain activities.

At the same time, the overall resilience and robustness of value chains seem to be somewhat constrained, each marked by bottlenecks and vulnerabilities at various levels and among different actors. According to the majority of survey respondents across all countries and intervention levels, the most significant challenges for businesses emanating on the value chains are related to access to finance, technology, and markets. It is important to note that these constraints are also perceived as the most significant barriers for women entrepreneurs. Additionally, challenges related to access to information, a qualified labour force, and a lack of management skills are considered significant obstacles for women. Notably, gender-based barriers and discrimination, as well as access to affordable childcare, are ranked lower in terms of importance, according to all survey respondents across all participant countries.

In addition, drawing from interviews it was obvious that the production and export of products, particularly within niche segments, faced substantial challenges on multiple fronts. Apart from the prevalent intense competition, companies struggled with issues related to the quality and safety of raw materials, often encountering hurdles in maintaining international standards and acquiring necessary certifications. Despite their attempts to innovate and carve out unique markets, companies frequently found themselves relying on traditional export routes to established markets. This preference stemmed from a pragmatic inclination to prioritize existing client relationships over venturing into niche segments, where potentially smaller profit margins were projected due to limited production volumes. Consequently, the forthcoming Phase V of the project is strategically poised to address these challenges. By encompassing a diversified product range – spanning high-quality niche offerings in smaller quantities as well as platform-based products – the project design introduces adaptability in scenarios where the production and export of niche items face obstacles.

Finding 10: Direct support to value chain participants was effectively provided by adopting a comprehensive approach that encompasses both soft and hard support mechanisms.

The project's unwavering commitment to the growth and competitiveness of MSMEs across Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan's value chains spans a myriad of strategic initiatives considering the needs of each type of company. These activities, designed to cater to the unique needs of each country, encompass diverse thematic areas that collectively drive sustainable economic progress.

The cornerstone of this approach was the direct supply of essential equipment, enabling businesses to modernize their operations and enhance overall efficiency. By equipping enterprises with advanced tools and machinery, the project aimed to elevate productivity, streamline processes, and establish a competitive advantage in the market. This tangible backing was geared towards empowering businesses to meet industry standards, optimize their operations, and gain a strong foothold both domestically and internationally.

At the same time, the project's approach extended beyond hardware provision, including capacity building, policy advise and facilitation of partnerships, reflecting a keen understanding of collaborative dynamics in the business ecosystem. Hence, key achievements emerged through a combination of soft and hard support, including capacity building interventions, study tours, Business-to-Business (B2B) missions, active participation in international fairs and exhibitions, heightened awareness about international quality and safety standards, and the procurement of essential equipment for MSMEs. Overall, key activities could be summarised as follows:

- **Study tours:** Recognizing the potential of immersive learning, the project has organized a series of study tours that span various countries. These include study tours to Austria, delving into agricultural clusters and Geographic Indications, and visits to Finland to explore sustainable tourism development for Kyrgyzstan. Further study tours encompassed destinations like France, Italy, and Turkey, specifically tailored for cherry producers from the Fergana Valley in Uzbekistan. Moreover, a comprehensive array of study tours unfolded both across participant countries and within individual countries.
- **B2B Missions:** The project's strategic B2B missions cultivated strong cross-border partnerships. These missions encompassed diverse initiatives, including a delegation of Finnish businesses to Uzbekistan, a B2B mission integrated with a study tour in Austria, and connections between Uzbekistan enterprises and counterparts in Latvia and Israel. Additionally, the project facilitated both online and offline B2B interactions in Kyrgyzstan, involving Russian retailers (before the war in Ukraine) and UAE companies, as well as Dutch buyers. A dynamic roadshow highlighted Kyrgyzstan's tourism companies in Dubai and New Delhi, expanding their global presence. B2B missions were also tailored to foster collaboration between Tajikistan and Azerbaijan firms, while dedicated B2B matching events were organized for EU wholesale buyers across the participant countries.
- **Exhibitions and Fairs:** The project facilitated the engagement of MSMEs in various exhibitions and fairs, allowing them to showcase their products to a broader audience. Notable instances include Tajikistan's participation in VitaFoods Europe and Gulf Food Dubai International Exhibition, Uzbekistan's women-led companies at Dubai Organic Expo and the Middle East Organic and Natural Products Expo 2021, and Kyrgyzstani companies at WorldFood Moscow Exhibition 2021 (before the war in Ukraine) and Foodexpo Qazaqstan Exhibition. Moreover, the project enabled participation in key events such as the Kyrgyzstan-Saudi Arabia – 2022 business forum, ProdExpo Exhibition 2022, Qatar's AgriteQ, UAE's Arabian Travel Market 2022, and South Korea's Import Goods Fair 2022.
- **Trainings and Workshops:** The project's effectiveness resonates through an array of workshops and training sessions that have fortified the capacities of MSMEs. The tailored interventions encompassed a diverse spectrum, addressing value chain development and business growth. Inclusivity was upheld with dedicated modules for women entrepreneurs, ensuring equal access to skill enhancement. Specialized training, like GLOBAL G.A.P certification, raised Kyrgyzstan companies' quality standards for international competitiveness. Cross-border traders' training empowered women entrepreneurs in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, expanding market reach.

Mentorship through Training of Trainers sessions nurtured adept mentors for sustaining entrepreneurs. In parallel, mentees underwent business skill-enhancing training. Collaboration with the 'Russian Export Centre' in Moscow (before the war in Ukraine) bolstered regional trade through workshops on trade promotion and export strategies. Geographic outreach included a key workshop in Almaty, Kazakhstan, reinforcing regional economic growth.

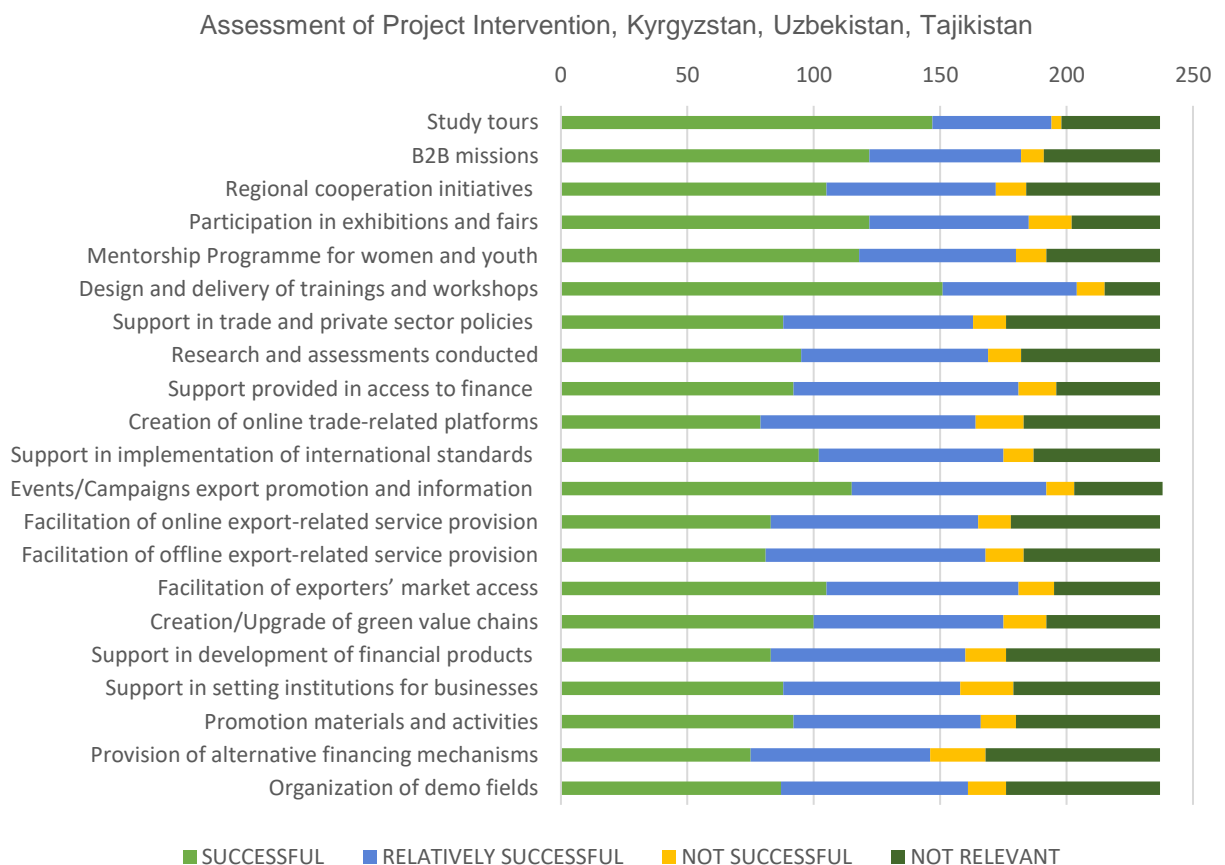
- **International Standards and Certification:** The project aimed to enhance value chain actors' expertise in areas like veterinary and phytosanitary requirements, certification procedures, quality standards, and production safety protocols. This helped them implement global standards like UNECE, Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), FSSC 22000, International Organisation for Standardisation's (ISO) 22000, GLOBAL G.A.P., ISO 14000, and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), boosting the competitiveness of their products. For instance, in Kyrgyzstan, the project supported three farmers in obtaining GLOBAL G.A.P. certification, which brought positive outcomes. While the project's capacity-building initiatives led some companies to adopt measures like eco-passports, Organic or ISO 14001 certifications, and GLOBAL G.A.P. certification, the absence of follow-up assessments in annual progress reports, particularly regarding ongoing compliance, raises questions about ongoing compliance and sustained impact.
- **Equipment:** The project has aided value chain actors through the procurement and distribution of essential equipment. Beneficiaries have shown their commitment to contribute by establishing suitable operational conditions, creating job opportunities, potentially expanding production lines, increasing sales, and enhancing productivity. Specifically, the project has facilitated the following initiatives:
 - The equipment for honey value chain in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan encompassed honey-making machines, a cutting table for honeycomb printing, beehives, an electric drive for honey-making, dispenser pumps for honey, modern beekeepers' equipment and tools for honey production, equipment for honey processing and bottling, and production of beeswax foundation. These tools and machinery aimed to enhance the efficiency and quality of honey production processes, from extraction to processing and packaging.
 - The project also supplied equipment for the dried fruits, vegetables and nuts value chain actors in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. This equipment included electric cookers, compressors, workshop equipment (such as washers and shelves), a moulding and cutting machine for dried fruit bars, and cultivators for farmer groups. These tools and machinery were designed to support various stages of dried fruits production, from processing to packaging, contributing to improved efficiency and product quality within the value chain.
 - The project furnished equipment pertinent to the mung beans value chain in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, encompassing innovative solutions to enhance various aspects of cultivation and processing. This equipment covered a range of functions, including cleaning mung beans from their shells, packaging using jute bags, as well as technological tools for harvesting, packaging, and processing. These modern tools aimed to streamline operations, improve product quality, and contribute to the development of value-added products derived from mung beans.
 - Within the peanut and peanut butter value chain in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the project offered a suite of modern and innovative equipment to bolster efficiency and product quality. This encompassed technological tools for harvesting, processing, and packaging peanuts, with a particular focus on the production of high-value products such as peanut butter. The provision of state-of-the-art machinery aimed to enhance the overall peanut production process, enabling the creation of diverse peanut-based products while maintaining quality and meeting market demands.
 - Within the apricot kernel oil value chain in Tajikistan, the project strategically facilitated the acquisition of advanced equipment, meticulously to bolster the production of this distinct product. The focus was on maintaining uncompromised quality while adhering to environmentally conscious methodologies. State-of-the-art machinery for efficient oil extraction and refining was deployed, resulting in the creation of premium apricot kernel oil.
 - In support of enhancing adventure tourism in Kyrgyzstan, the project contributed an array of equipment to Kyrgyzstan's tourism sector. This included building yurts and integration of solar panels into traditional yurts, a strategic move aimed at combining modern amenities with sustainable practices. Furthermore, the provision of horse-riding equipment enriched the

exploratory aspects of tourism, fostering more interactive and immersive experiences for visitors. Enhancing the overall camp facilities by furnishing them with essential amenities like lavatories and furniture underscored the project's dedication to elevating the comfort and satisfaction of tourists, thereby creating a holistic and improved adventure tourism experience.

Despite varying needs depending on enterprise size and performance, technical support emerges as the most valued aspect for all beneficiaries according to interviews, especially considering limited access to financing and technology. It's noteworthy that unlike Project Document's provisions grants were offered (supposedly in line with the list of exceptions) and were highly valued by beneficiaries, particularly the value chain contractors, ultimately serving as a key motivator for their engagement in project activities. A similar positive reception was observed for the introduction of the revolving fund for the honey value chain and women entrepreneurs in Kyrgyzstan – instrument fully in line with Project Document focus on microfinancing. Opportunities offered by the project, such as participation in international fairs, exhibitions, and B2B missions, follow closely in terms of preference. Conversely, it appeared that capacity building activities, when conducted in isolation without accompanying technical support and opportunities for collaboration with partners, generate less enthusiasm and interest among beneficiaries.

At the same time, survey respondents across all countries and levels generally perceive project activities they participated in as successful or relatively successful, with particular appreciation for the design and delivery of training, study tours, and export promotion events. In contrast, support for providing alternative financing mechanisms is considered the least successful (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Assessment of project intervention



It is important to highlight that project support, particularly in disseminating innovative production practices and providing advanced equipment, has contributed to progress towards achieving SDG 9, which focuses on industry, innovation, and infrastructure. Notably, positive developments were observed in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, where there has been a moderate improvement in the attainment of this goal in 2023. However, it's important to note that in Tajikistan, progress in this regard appears to have stagnated.

Finding 11: The project's mentorship programs have enabled women entrepreneurs across sectors, promoting their economic empowerment and leadership despite social norms and gender biases.

The project's commitment to achieving a minimum of 30% women's participation in its activities has been successfully fulfilled. A total of 3,880 women-led enterprises, including women farmers, have been reported to benefit from project's support, which represent about 65% of all MSMEs supported by the project. The project has reported to have enhanced the capacities of over 600 women entrepreneurs and traders in participant countries by delivering tailor-made mentorship initiatives for business and trade development, fostering networking opportunities, and facilitating access to investment and affordable finance programs throughout the project's duration. Furthermore, based on lists of project beneficiaries compiled during stakeholder mapping in the evaluation inception phase, it's worth noting that in Tajikistan, 65% of beneficiaries across all intervention levels are estimated to be women, followed by 60.9% in Uzbekistan and 58.4% in Kyrgyzstan.

At the same time, the project's commitment for women's participation extends beyond numerical representation, encompassing the creation of an enabling environment that champions women's economic empowerment, leadership, and capacity development. Despite existing social norms and biases against women in participant countries, the project's mentorship program has successfully fostered active engagement, leading to significant advancements in women's economic empowerment through personalized guidance, business coaching, and skill enhancement. Through a combination of one-on-one interactions and group sessions, mentors offered valuable insights, empowering women entrepreneurs to overcome obstacles and realize their full potential. This transformative initiative, upon successful completion, culminated in a business plan contest designed to further empower and bolster women's entrepreneurial ventures.

A selection process was carried out to identify the most promising business plans that showcased exceptional potential and viability. Those women entrepreneurs who exhibited outstanding proposals were bestowed with equipment and support tailored to their specific business requirements. An important aspect of this approach was, similarly to the value chain actors, the active involvement of the selected women-entrepreneurs in setting up conditions for work, extending production lines and maintaining equipment.

Regarding Kyrgyzstan, three distinct mentorship programs were carried out by women's organizations within the project. Despite varying program durations (12, 9, and 1 month), challenges in transitioning to an online format, and the task of encouraging active engagement from mentors while ensuring effective pairings of men mentors with women mentees, the programs have achieved overall success in nurturing and empowering women entrepreneurs. Moreover, these initiatives bore the fruits of empowerment as some mentees transformed into mentors themselves, reinforcing the ecosystem's growth and development. It is important to note, however, that the involvement of men mentors wasn't always well-received by women's relatives, slightly hindering the learning process.

Transitioning to Uzbekistan, the Women's Business Association led a mentorship program in collaboration with regional branches, involving women from each of the Namangan, Andijan, and Fergana regions. This four-month initiative enlisted both men and women business coaches but exclusively featured women mentors. Notably, seven participants are still awaiting the delivery of specialized equipment for their business ventures, which focus on products such as mung beans, dried fruits, peanuts, and peanut butter. As the program neared its conclusion, these women entrepreneurs were expected to achieve specific targets related to productivity, job creation, sales, and income, but this remains challenging due to the equipment delay. It is important to note that by the end of the project the team is supporting establishment of a Mentorship School by the Women's Business Association, with the aim of expanding mentoring opportunities and furthering the professional growth of women in the entrepreneurial sphere. Additionally, two more mentorship programs are scheduled to take place before the project's conclusion.

In Tajikistan, one mentorship program was divided into two phases. While Tajikistan drew lessons from Kyrgyzstan's experience, it encountered other challenges. Some participants engaged in other sectors such as apiculture, textile, and beauty salons joined the programme; the latter were subsequently excluded due to the discovery of falsehoods about land ownership. Despite these issues, there are notable success stories with some engaged women, despite social norms, emerging as breadwinners and building on ambitions to tap into the local market potential and create a collective of women from their community.

Additionally, the participatory approach in the Khatlon region, where women gained insights from counterparts in the more affluent Khudjand region, is noteworthy. However, drawing from progress reports and interviews, it's worth noting that two other planned mentorship programs do not appear to have been organized.

To sum up, there were several challenges underpinning mentorship programmes. In Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, where the Gender Social Norms Index (GSNI)¹⁴ is exceptionally high at approximately 98% (UNDP, 2023), implementing projects that promote gender equality can be very challenging due to deeply ingrained social norms and biases against women. As such, despite initial efforts to align participants with selected value chains, challenges arose in identifying suitable candidates engaged within the value chains supported by the project. In response, the project adopted a strategic approach aimed at fostering an inclusive and empowering environment for women from diverse sectors, accepting women engaged in other fields and facilitating their participation. The project also faced challenges in the identification and recruitment of suitable mentees that are not requiring family consent for participation. Entrenched traditional gender roles in the respective countries often dissuaded women, particularly in remote areas, from pursuing entrepreneurial endeavours. Additionally, difficulties arose in attracting mentors willing to participate on a pro bono basis and ensuring their active engagement, which necessitated the use of a motivational approach to attract and retain suitable mentors.

Notwithstanding difficulties, women interviewed who had won the business plan contest reported significant improvements in their performance, including increased productivity, job creation, and higher sales, following the receipt of equipment. The exception is Uzbekistan, where equipment provision was delayed and expected in August 2023. While the mentees' businesses cannot be directly compared to mainstream businesses supported by the project, most of those interviewed expressed intentions to expand cultivated land, diversify crops, enhance production, processing, and packaging, and explore new international markets in the long term. Their membership in women's associations, initiated either before or during the project, offers an additional avenue for support. Notably, the interest in mentorship programs hinges to a great extent on the continuation of technical support and equipment provisions, which allow them to elevate their status within their families and communities, thus contributing to genuine empowerment. In the hierarchy of preferences, the second choice is to involve women in cross-country learning exchanges. Furthermore, although capacity building ranks third in priority, there is a clear expectation that capacity-building programs should be customized to not only address the specific needs of women entrepreneurs but also align with their existing capabilities and education levels.

In line with the above, survey responses also provide interesting insights. Approximately two-thirds of survey respondents among policy and TSIs representatives in all three countries believe that the project has contributed to women's empowerment and gender equality to some extent or significantly in their respective countries. Additionally, most survey respondents across all countries and intervention levels noted that women entrepreneurs encounter similar challenges to their men counterparts, yet gender-based barriers persist, highlighting the need for ongoing efforts to address these disparities.

On top of that, when employing the Gender Results Effectiveness Framework, it becomes evident that the project outcomes are positioned on the spectrum as gender-targeted, concentrating on the quantifiable engagement of women. However, project outcomes lean towards being gender-responsive (attending to the diverse requirements of women and striving for balanced benefit distribution), rather than transformative (yielding shifts in norms, cultural dynamics, and power configurations).

It's essential to underscore that the project's efforts in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment have made a significant contribution to the realization of SDG 5. This impact is particularly noteworthy in Uzbekistan, which is making substantial progress toward achieving the gender equality goal, as indicated by the SDG Index for 2023. However, it's important to note that in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, progress towards SDG 5 appears to be stagnant.

¹⁴ <https://hdr.undp.org/content/2023-gender-social-norms-index-gsni#/indicies/GSNI>

Finding 12: The absence of outcome targets has hindered its assessment but based on output attainment and evidence from interviews and surveys, the project appears to have facilitated structural transformation in production capacities in participating countries, with improvements in private sector competitiveness still pending.

After conducting a comprehensive analysis of project results, which includes desk reviews, interviews, and surveys, it can be asserted that the project has made a contribution to strengthening the foundation for job-rich growth in the participant countries (Output). This has been achieved through interventions at three levels – macro, meso and micro. The project supported active engagement with key stakeholders, including policymakers, who were guided in the formulation of policies and regulations conducive to trade-oriented private sector development. Additionally, the project has provided support to TSIs, enhancing their ability to deliver efficient services to the private sector. Notably, MSMEs have directly benefited from support aimed at bolstering their productive capacities. By implementing strategic initiatives, offering targeted services and equipment, and building the capacity of all stakeholders involved, the project has effectively cultivated an environment conducive to the transformation of productive capacities. As a result, the project has facilitated export contracts worth USD 156 million and catalysed an average growth rate of 20% in productivity, income, and export volumes within the specified value chains.

These reported figures can be largely substantiated by survey results. According to survey results, since 2018, an impressive 94% of surveyed companies in Kyrgyzstan, 93.8% in Tajikistan, and 92.6% in Uzbekistan have reported increased sales. In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, more than half of the companies stated that their overall performance over the past five years was rated as either good or very good, despite facing various crises. However, in Uzbekistan, over a half of companies reported their performance as merely satisfactory.

Overall, the enterprises express satisfaction with the working conditions within their entities. Based on the self-assessment of surveyed MSMEs, they generally rate the conditions within their enterprises as excellent or acceptable in terms of decent payment, equal opportunity employment, compliance with occupational safety and health standards, utilization of environmentally friendly processes and technologies, adequate production capacities, and compliance with international standards. Notably, the top priority for enterprises differs by country, with compliance with international standards being most prosperous in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, while in Tajikistan, it is the decent payment for workers and equal employment opportunities.

The majority of survey respondents, including policy and TSIs representatives from participant countries, view the project's efforts as either successful or relatively successful in terms of achieving outputs, specifically enabling policies and regulations to support private sector development, enhancing the efficiency of TSIs in providing services to the private sector, and supporting competitive producers and processors contributing to human development. Notably, enabling policies and regulations is perceived as less successful across all countries. In terms of specific achievements, both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan view the project's greatest success in supporting competitive producers and processors, while in Uzbekistan, respondents consider the enhancement of TSIs' efficiency to be more successful.

In terms of perceived project contributions at the outcome level illustrated in Figure 11,12 and 13, survey respondents, including policy and TSIs representatives from all participating countries, view the project's most significant contributions as enhancing export competitiveness (particularly in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) and promoting export diversification, along with increased productivity in the farming and agriculture sector (notably in Uzbekistan).

Figure 11. Assessment of project contribution at outcome level in Kyrgyzstan

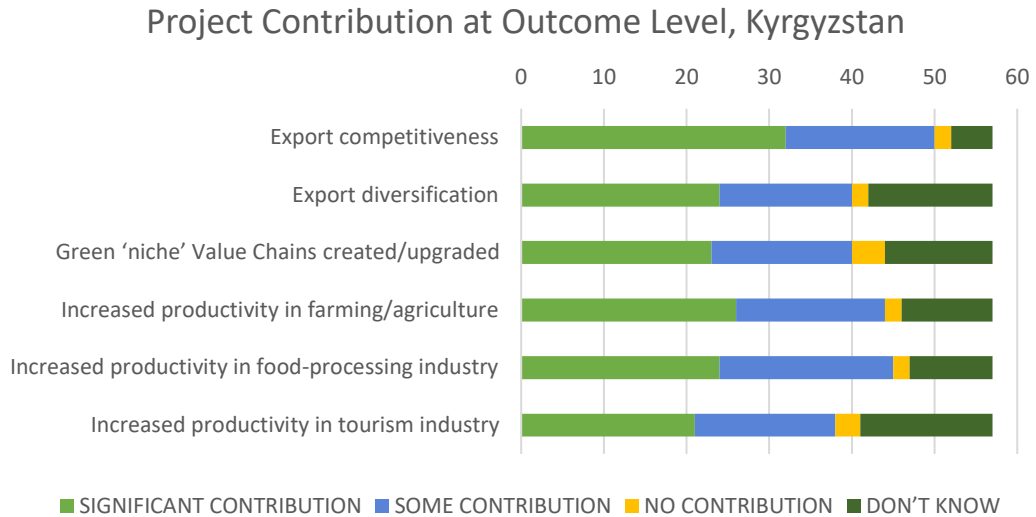


Figure 12. Assessment of project contribution at outcome level in Uzbekistan

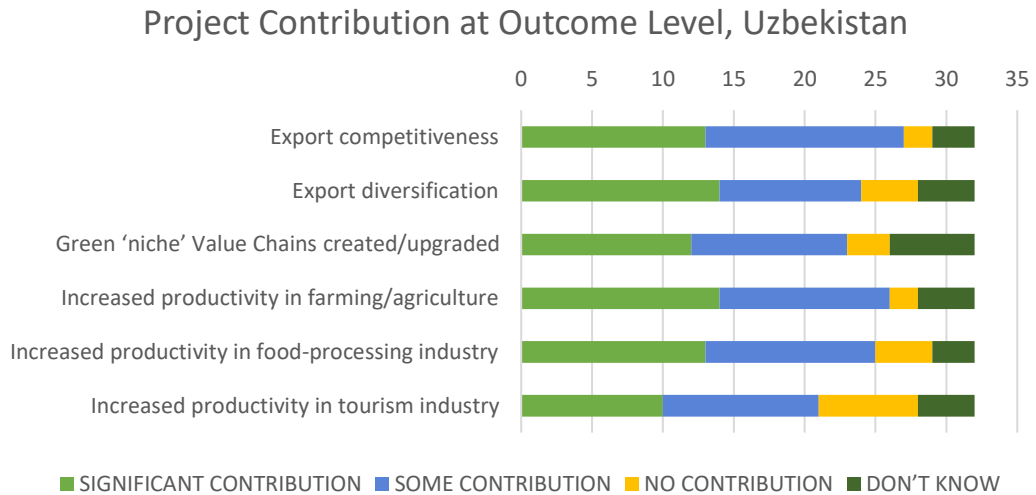
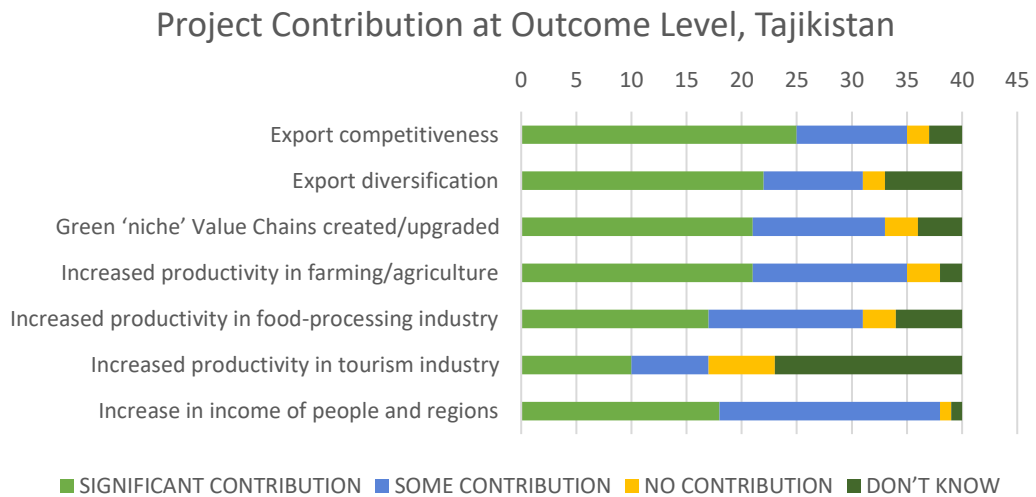
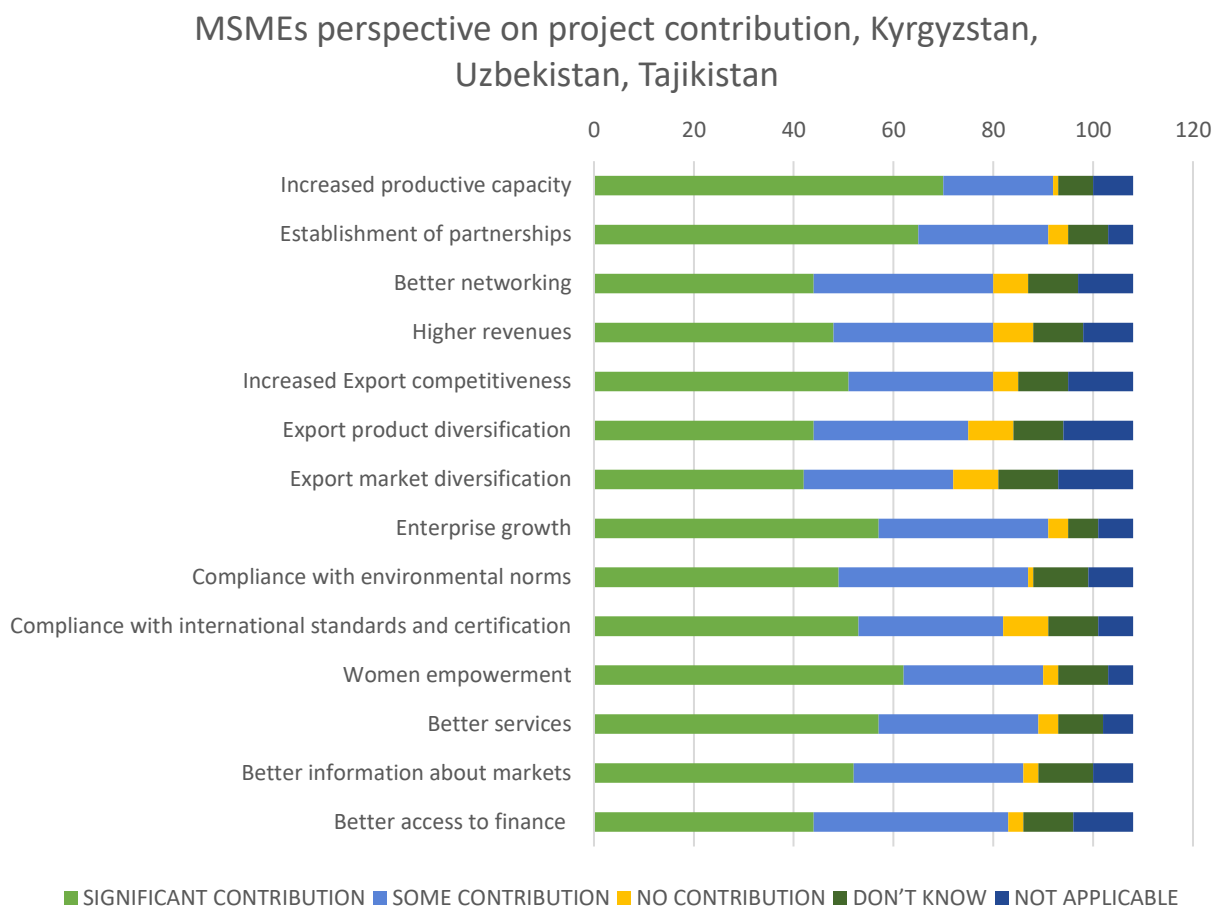


Figure 13. Assessment of project contribution at outcome level in Tajikistan



These findings present a slight contrast to those derived from surveyed enterprises. MSMEs surveyed across all countries have acknowledged and highly appreciated the project's support, primarily recognizing its significant impact on increasing productive capacity, fostering partnerships, and empowering women. However, when it comes to improving access to finance and diversifying export products and markets, the project's contribution is perceived as relatively less significant by these MSMEs (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Assessment of project contribution by MSMEs



Within the dynamic global trade landscape, the project has provided support for export market diversification beyond traditional partners like Russia and Kazakhstan. Special attention has been given to burgeoning markets such as China, Middle Eastern countries, Arab States, and the European Union. However, this ambition comes with its set of complexities. While the European Union emerged as a prime target, stringent entry standards and regulations posed significant challenges. The need for substantial adjustments, particularly in areas of product quality, safety, and compliance, is a noteworthy hurdle to overcome. Concurrently, the Middle East is gaining traction as an alternative trade destination for the participating countries. While considered more accessible compared to the EU, the Middle East still presents its own set of rigorous entry requirements and heightened competition among various countries aiming to secure a share of the market.

It's important to acknowledge that despite their ambitions for international markets, a considerable portion of the surveyed MSMEs, particularly in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, if compared with 2018, still primarily operate within their local markets (Figures 15,16,17). However, noteworthy changes have been observed among the surveyed enterprises in Tajikistan. These changes indicate a reduced dependence on Russian and local markets, and an increase in exports to countries like China, the EU, and other CIS countries beyond Russia.

Figure 15. Top export markets for Kyrgyzstan in 2018 and 2023

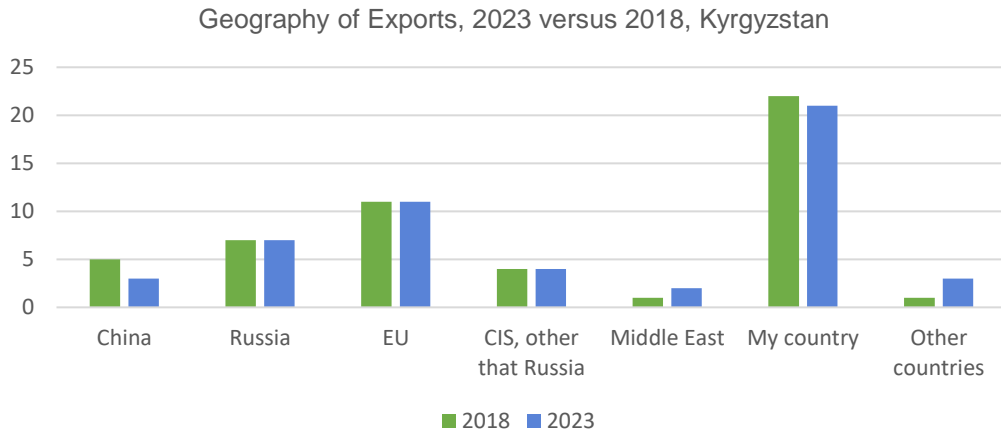


Figure 16. Top export markets for Uzbekistan in 2018 and 2023

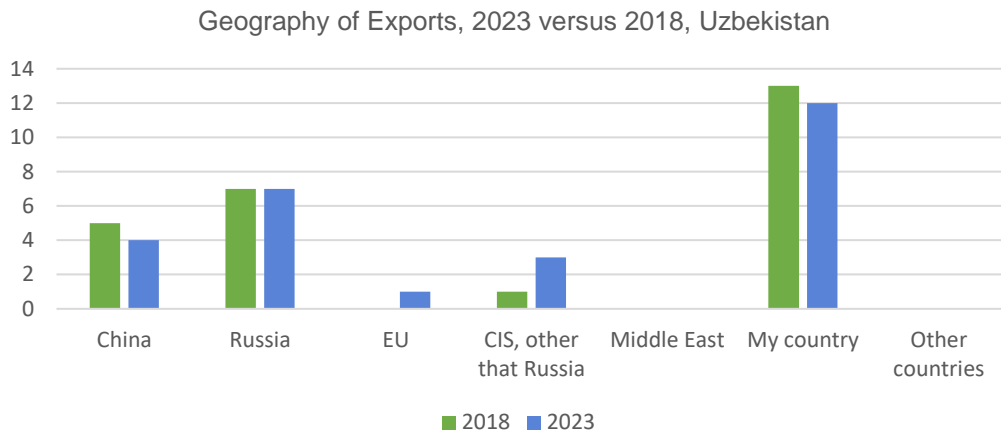
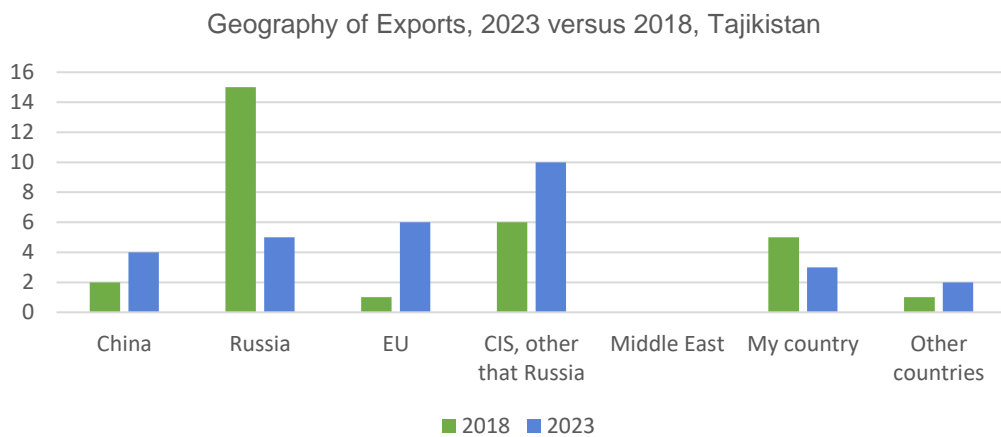


Figure 17. Top export markets for Tajikistan in 2018 and 2023



When examining the Trade Performance Index by ITC, specific attention is given to the indicator concerning market diversification for fresh and processed food in 2018, coinciding with the project's start, and in 2021, which provided the most recent data¹⁵. In Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, market diversification for both types of products decreased over the three-year period, whereas in Tajikistan, it remained unchanged. Furthermore, looking at the Harvard Growth Lab's Country Rankings to assess the current state of a country's productive knowledge via the Economic Complexity Index (ECI), changes can be observed in the participant countries from 2018 to 2021¹⁶. Kyrgyzstan's ranking dropped from 60th to 65th place, Uzbekistan's improved from 84th to 72nd place, and Tajikistan's notably ascended from 120th to 98th place.

At the same time, the economic landscape of Central Asia has witnessed a notable transformation, marked by a substantial 73.4% increase in intra-regional trade between 2018 and 2022, with trade volumes surging from \$5.8 billion to \$10 billion¹⁷. This remarkable shift is primarily driven by Kazakhstan, which accounts for a significant 80% of the region's total mutual trade. Notably, the trade relationship between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan stands out, representing a substantial 45.2% of the region's total external trade volume in 2021 (Eurasian Development Bank, 2022). Furthermore, robust trade connections are observed between Kazakhstan and Tajikistan (13.6%), Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (11.7%), and Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan (11.1%), underscoring the substantial growth in intra-regional trade within Central Asia.

As a side note, in previous project phases, a valuable lesson was derived from an attempt to penetrate the Finnish market, which proved unfeasible due to the inability to meet the required quantities. As a consequence of this experience, the project made a strategic decision to shift its focus towards green niche products that enable trade in smaller quantities. Therefore, while not the primary focus of the project, it is noteworthy to examine the level of exports to the Finnish market. This analysis reveals that Kyrgyzstan has experienced increases since 2018, whereas Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have witnessed decreases. Specifically, in 2022, Kyrgyzstan exported USD 158 thousand, Uzbekistan USD 594 thousand, and Tajikistan a mere USD 3 thousand in 2021 (UN COMTRADE database). At the same time, trade relations between participant countries and Finland have overall displayed dynamism, notably with Finnish exports showing an upward trajectory in the participant countries since 2018. Finnish exports to these nations have witnessed substantial growth, with Kyrgyzstan reaching USD 30 million, Uzbekistan at USD 50 million, and Tajikistan at USD 1.44 million in 2022.

In addition, it is important to emphasize that the project's efforts to enhance productive capacities have played a role in contributing to the achievement of SDG 12, which focuses on responsible consumption and production. This positive impact is particularly evident in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where trends indicate a moderate improvement, as reflected in the SDG Index for 2023. However, it's worth noting that in Uzbekistan, progress towards attaining this goal appears to be stagnant.

6.3. EFFICIENCY

Finding 13: The project's management structure was efficient in achieving expected outcomes in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; however, there were challenges in Uzbekistan, where the same management team was handling a number of projects with a similar scope.

Roles and coordination at both the regional and national levels were effectively structured, contributing to the efficient generation of expected results. The project follows the DIM modality, with UNDP IRH serving as the project's implementing partner responsible for overall project coordination and managing the regional component. Meanwhile, UNDP COs in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are fully responsible for implementation of the country-specific components through a letter for delegation of management authority.

The project's oversight lies with a Project Board, led by the UNDP IRH Manager. The Board includes representatives from the Finnish Government, country offices and other relevant UNDP IRH Units responsible for quality assurance and Inclusive Growth Team. The Project Board makes consensus-based management decisions, upholding international standards for transparency, fairness, and value, with final authority vested in the UNDP IRH Manager. The Project Board's tasks encompass guiding the project,

¹⁵ <https://tradecompetitivenessmap.intracen.org/TPIC.aspx>

¹⁶ <https://atlas.cid.harvard.edu/>

¹⁷ <https://astanatimes.com/2023/06/five-trade-trends-in-central-asian-connectivity/>

making strategic decisions, endorsing plans and revisions, and convening bi-annual reviews. In case of exceeded management tolerances, the project manager consults the Board, which also addresses raised project issues and guides risk management. The establishment of a well-constituted Project Board, featuring an appropriate representation from both women and men, ensured the fulfilment of roles and responsibilities to steer the project towards success.

Importantly, at the country level the project is implemented through UNDP COs, with overall responsibility resting with Resident Representatives. To ensure effective oversight and guidance, National Steering Committees, or Boards, have been established for maintaining strategic alignment and fostering collaboration among key stakeholders. Country management teams have been formed to support project implementation, exhibiting an overall consistent structure across participant countries, encompassing key roles such as national coordinators, component-specific coordinators, administrative and financial personnel, and monitoring and evaluation experts. While the core team operated from the capitals, additional specialized personnel were strategically stationed in specific regions, like a value chain expert in Namangan (Uzbekistan), a value chain specialist in Osh (Kyrgyzstan), and a value chain specialist based in Dushanbe (Tajikistan). Moreover, in Tajikistan, the project has established the working modality and regular communication mechanism with UNDP's Sughd Local Innovation and Implementation Centre (LIIC). This regional support staff effectively engaged with local stakeholders, tailoring support to align with the project's objectives.

However, it's noteworthy that staff stability varied among the countries. A new regional manager, previously managing the project in Uzbekistan, was appointed during project implementation (2021), and there was some turnover in national managers in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan – the current managers appointed in 2021 and 2022 respectively. In Tajikistan, the national team remained stable at the management level during implementation of Phase IV and became inactive after completing their designated outputs in June 2022.

It is important to note that the situation in Uzbekistan stands apart from the other two countries, however, as the project management team was involved in the implementation of another closely aligned project with similar scope and name, executed by UNDP. Thus, the current project operated alongside the 'Aid for Trade in Uzbekistan' project funded through UNDP-Russia Trust Fund that commenced in January 2020. Both projects, overseen largely by the same UNDP team, featured similar implementation structures and project documents. However, it's important to note that the 'Aid for Trade project in Uzbekistan' concentrated on supporting Uzbekistan's WTO accession and value chains in the southern region, in contrast to the evaluated project which had a primary focus on value chains in the Namangan, Andijan, and Fergana regions. Hence similarities are primarily observed within one of the three sub-outputs, namely Sub-output 1.2, which focuses on supporting efficient services provision by TSIs. Due to the similarities between the projects, the evaluation revealed a degree of confusion among stakeholders regarding which project was responsible for specific interventions. This confusion also extended to the reporting of identical achievements in the progress reports of both projects.

The 'Aid for Trade in Uzbekistan' project wrapped up in December 2022, whereas the 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase IV', subject to current evaluation, is slated to run until the close of 2023. Despite this, approximately half of the activities of the latter remain unfinished most likely due, to the challenge of managing double sets of targets (or triple sets, considering the initiation of the concurrent Phase V) by the same project management team.

In this context it is important to bring into discussion the project's Communication Strategy's aimed to strengthen the visibility of the Government of Finland as the project's donor and UNDP as its implementing partner. It sought to effectively communicate the advantages of partnerships with bilateral donors, donor-funded projects, government entities, private sectors, and civil society organizations. However, considering specific circumstances with overlapping projects translated into stakeholders' disorientation, has shown that achieving these objectives seem to be less successful than anticipated.

The project exhibited an overall functional monitoring and reporting framework, enabling progress tracking and reporting on project activities. Project teams, with M&E experts assigned at different moments during project implementation, have monitored tangible indicators like productivity gains, increased sales, income growth, and the successful expansion of supported companies into global markets. Through field visits and surveys the project tracked concrete outcomes resulting from its support measures. The project's M&E approach allowed measuring achievements, fine-tuning approaches, and ensuring a framework for

impactful business support and economic development. Lessons learned, including those related to gender equality and women's empowerment, were documented, and shared with pertinent stakeholders, promoting knowledge dissemination and fostering learning among diverse parties. Regular meetings and consultations held by the Project Board allowed for consistent monitoring of project implementation and timely resolution of bottlenecks. The involvement of UNDP's IRH Manager and representatives from the Government of Finland, along with country offices, ensured a holistic approach to steering and monitoring of the project.

At the same time, the project's comprehensive design, spanning macro, meso, micro, and regional levels with two components and four outputs, although well-intentioned, introduced unwarranted complexity in both execution and assessment as observed through interviews with country teams. This complexity sometimes blurred the lines between intervention levels and components, leading to activities overlapping across sub-outputs and participants exposed to multiple intervention levels simultaneously, creating challenges in project management and evaluation.

Despite all challenges, dedication and expertise of the project teams led to implementation of initiatives and the positive outcomes achieved across participant countries. UNDP's strategic approach to partnerships and versatile implementation methodologies, coupled with its expansive global network, have also contributed to these endeavours. Applied strategies facilitated connections between enterprises and international partners, advanced the economic empowerment of rural women, and ensured alignment with the SDGs. UNDP's commitment to transparency, local presence, and accountability mechanisms upheld financial integrity and enhanced stakeholder engagement.

Finding 14: The project's financial resource allocation displayed a dynamic and adaptable approach, characterized by delays and resulting in different expenditures than planned, particularly evident in Kyrgyzstan.

The total planned project budget, as indicated in the Project Document, amounted to EUR 6,014,676 (USD 7,217,611.20), with EUR 137,021.79 (equivalent to USD 161,012.68) of unspent funds from Phase III. At the project's outset, funding was planned to support three project outputs: Output 1, facilitating regional cooperation, amounting to 11.64% of the total planned budget, while Outputs 2 and 3, aimed at fostering an enabling environment for job-rich growth in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, respectively, each amounted to 34.08%. Most of the planned budget was allocated to Component II, accounting for 48.36% in Kyrgyzstan, and 43.77% Tajikistan. This distribution was primarily due to the nature of direct support to businesses and the mentorship program, which encompassed provision of equipment, thereby necessitating a higher financial allocation in this component.

As per Project Document an unfunded amount of EUR 1,214,676 (USD 1,457,611.20) was earmarked to support the implementation of Output 4 in Uzbekistan, with expectations of mobilizing this funding. Budget allocation for Uzbekistan was officially approved in December 2020, covering the period from 2021 to 2022. The project in Uzbekistan has started in September 2021 (as per amendment to the third-party Cost-Sharing Agreement from March 2021). In December 2021, the resources allocated to this output were redirected to extend project activities until the end of 2023. Subsequently, in June 2022, the budget underwent further revisions, extending Kyrgyzstan Output (Output 2) until September 2022 and the Regional output until December 2023, aligning with the expected project completion date. Throughout the project's duration, the budget has seen multiple adjustments, primarily driven by the redistribution of unspent funds from previous years or reallocation among various project activities.

The project's initial commitment, as outlined in the project document, aimed to allocate 15% of the programmatic budget to support women-related activities. However, upon detailed analysis of the planned budgets for Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan for activity 2.1.3 Support for women entrepreneurs established, it becomes evident that some countries have allocated less than 15% of their total budgets to initiatives benefiting women entrepreneurs. While the planned budget in Tajikistan aligns closely with this commitment, amounting to 15.71% of the budget per activity, and Kyrgyzstan is in proximity with 13.56%, the planned budget for activities supporting women in Uzbekistan, at 6.75%, falls significantly short of the intended allocation for women-related initiatives. In total, across all countries, only 11.35% of the budget was planned to support women entrepreneurs, underscoring a deviation from the initially proposed allocation.

Despite planned budgets, actual spending on women-related activities varied across countries. In Kyrgyzstan, expenditures significantly exceeded the planned budget, accounting for 21.19% of the total country budget during 2018-2022. In contrast, Tajikistan slightly underspent its planned budget, allocating 14.9% to women-related activities. In Uzbekistan, the actual spending on women-related activities was also lower than the planned budget, amounting to 13.6% of the total budget allocated for these activities during 2021-2023 (as of August 2023).

Upon analysing expenditures for the regional and country outputs, it is evident that there is minimal disparity between the planned and actual budget utilization. Specifically, 11.8% of the total budget was spent on the regional output, while 32.8% and 32.75% were utilized for implementing Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan's outputs respectively.

While evaluating the allocation of resources across project components and activities, a substantial variance between the planned and actual budget allocation is apparent, especially in Kyrgyzstan, with slightly less variance in Tajikistan. A notable observation is that the budget allocated to Component II accounted for a considerable 56.5% of the total spending in Kyrgyzstan, potentially attributed to a significant rise in expenditure for women-related activities. Similarly, in Tajikistan, the allocation for Component II amounted to 42.2% of the total spending.

Kyrgyzstan dedicated over a third of its budget to increasing productivity, primarily involving equipment acquisition. The subsequent largest spending categories were project management at 22.15%. In contrast, Tajikistan allocated 27.23% of its total budget to project management, followed by support for increasing productivity at 25.67% and policy support at 24.66%. Uzbekistan distributed its budget differently, with 38.81% allocated to market assessment, 32.82% to the private sector, and 28.37% to management. Concerning the regional output, the activities detailed in annual work plans and financial reports encompass knowledge management, likely involving research and regional cooperation; results-based management (RBM), which likely covers regional project management and operation costs; and sustainable growth, likely supporting collaboration and cooperation between participating countries on sustainable growth and other related issues, as well as linkages between Finland and participating countries. Over three-quarters of the regional output budget was spent on RBM.

The project implementation encountered notable delays stemming from various factors since its start. There was a delay in selecting an appropriate company for value chain analysis, there were delays in project's procurement activities and recruitment of staff. In Kyrgyzstan efforts to secure external financing for women entrepreneurs and small producers were initiated in 2019. However, delays in achieving productivity goals were notable, primarily attributed to the extended development timeline of value chain analysis and challenges in identifying a suitable research partner with adequate data access. The COVID-19 pandemic hampered implementation, particularly due to border restrictions impacting the fulfilment of high-volume machinery and technological equipment contracts.

During the first implementation years, Tajikistan encountered similar challenges as Kyrgyzstan, particularly in the area of productivity, but made progress with initiatives for women entrepreneurs and mentoring program, with contracts signed in late 2019 expected to be executed in early 2020 to mitigate delivery delays. The project affected by COVID-19 pandemic, has boosted its expenditure as lockdown measures eased and caseloads decreased.

Against this backdrop, delivery rates were beyond planned in the first years of project implementation. However, in 2021 and 2022, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan demonstrated notable improvements in their delivery rates, occasionally surpassing their targets. These achievements compensated for earlier under delivery and paved the way for the project's successful completion in June and September 2022, respectively. In contrast, Uzbekistan, although initially maintaining a satisfactory delivery rate of 88.66% in 2021, experienced a decline to 52.2% in 2022. The regional output also had a sluggish start but exhibited gradual improvements over the years, though it never reached 100%, with a delivery rate of 91.66% in 2022.

As of June 30, 2023, the total expenditures have amounted to USD 6,399,618.75, equivalent to EUR 5,543,989.72, representing 90.12% of the initially planned total budget. As per the mid-year progress report, as of June 2023, the project has demonstrated robust financial management and expenditure progress in Kyrgyzstan, with an expenditure ratio of 99.95%. Similarly, Tajikistan has closely followed suit with a high expenditure ratio of 99.88%, indicating efficient utilization of allocated funds. Conversely, the regional output has achieved a commendable expenditure ratio of 91.44%, reflecting the effective coordination and

execution of activities on a broader scale. In contrast, the expenditure ratio in Uzbekistan presents a distinct picture, indicating a lower absorption capacity. Despite having approximately four months remaining until the project's conclusion, Uzbekistan's expenditure ratio stands at only 56.13%.

Finding 15: The project's cost-effectiveness and the high satisfaction levels among its beneficiaries and stakeholders stand as commendable achievements.

Despite the encountered delays and challenges, the project not only weathered the storm but also demonstrated its ability to generate positive outcomes. A striking testament to its effectiveness is the return on investment it achieved. For every dollar invested in the project, it secured a remarkable return of 25 dollars in export contracts. This substantial return underscores the project's prudent and efficient utilization of resources, reaffirming its cost-effectiveness and highlighting its exceptional value for money.

The project management team, in collaboration with UNDP country offices, demonstrated resilience and adaptability in addressing the various challenges that emerged during the project's implementation. Their proactive approach in managing delays and their willingness to revise strategies, when necessary, ensured that the project remained on a steady course. To mitigate the impact of these delays, the project underwent necessary planning revisions, with the implementation of corrective measures to realign activities and sustain progress. It's noteworthy that the contributions of various stakeholders in terms of inputs and resources were generally adequate to achieve the intended outcomes.

Survey respondents across all participant countries and intervention levels consistently praised the project's efficiency in delivering support. The majority of respondents regarded the project's timely delivery of support, responsiveness to changing needs, effective communication with the government, the provision of sufficient resources, and the presence of qualified project support staff as either good or excellent. These positive assessments further underscore the project's cost-effective approach, as it not only achieved its intended outputs but also garnered strong satisfaction from its beneficiaries and stakeholders (Figures 18,19 and 20). Furthermore, the majority of respondents across all countries and intervention levels expressed satisfaction or high satisfaction with the project, emphasizing its perceived usefulness.

Figure 18. Assessment of delivery efficiency in Kyrgyzstan

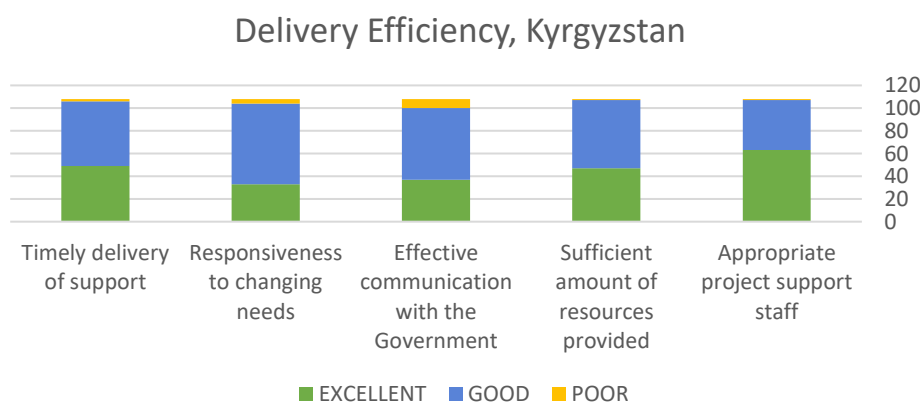


Figure 19. Assessment of delivery efficiency in Uzbekistan

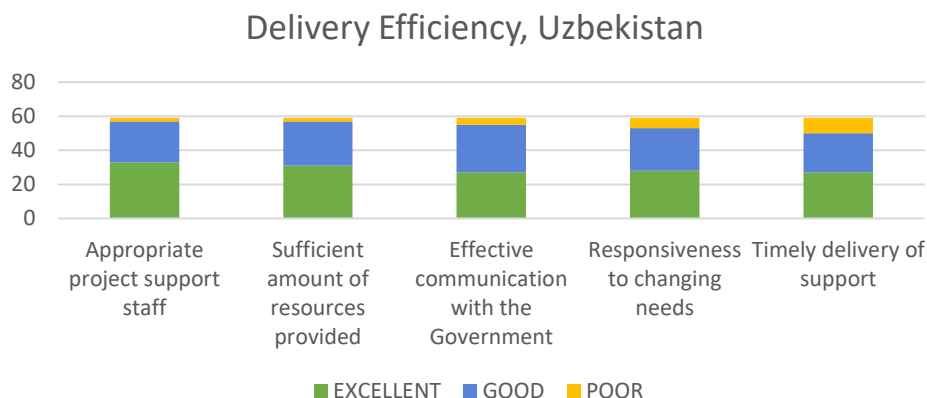
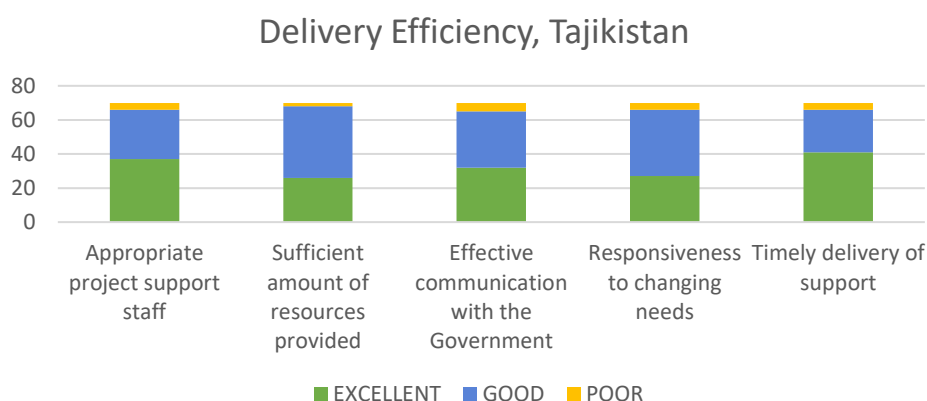


Figure 20. Assessment of delivery efficiency in Tajikistan



6.4. SUSTAINABILITY

Finding 16: The attainment of sustainable outcomes critically depends on the resolution of bottlenecks and the enhancement of capacities at various intervention levels.

Project sustainability requires ongoing consideration. Overall, UNDP's partnership strategy and alignment with regional and national development priorities offer a promising avenue for sustaining the project's outcomes. The extensive network and collaboration with key stakeholders position the project to tap into a range of resources, expertise, and support. This strategic approach further bolsters the potential for lasting positive impacts, as it leverages synergies and collective efforts towards sustainable development. As such, UNDP recognizes that sustainability and scalability are interconnected principles, with the project conducting activities to ensure local initiatives can continue without donor funding.

Examples of specific sustainability efforts are evident in all participant countries. In Kyrgyzstan, notable achievements with sustainability and scalability potential include the revolving mechanism in the honey value chain, empowering local beekeeper associations to provide technical support with repayments from members. Similarly, a grant mechanism for financing women entrepreneurs without collateral was expected to be sustainable, as returned funds were expected to continue to support new cohorts.

In Uzbekistan, the project has facilitated the establishment of the Regional Centre for Export Support in the Fergana Valley, operational and government-funded, with plans for three more regional centres. These achievements underscore the project's commitment to sustainability and scalability, aligning with UNDP's broader poverty reduction goals. To ensure the sustainability of initiatives aimed at developing the capabilities of women entrepreneurs and traders in the Fergana Valley, the project has launched the Mentoring School, offering women and young individuals seeking to embark on entrepreneurial endeavours access to information and specialized guidance from technical experts.

In Tajikistan, the project has fostered local ownership on multiple levels, creating platforms to address country-specific challenges and policy documents that facilitate a supportive environment for the private sector. It has also supported institutions such as the 'Agency on Export' and the 'State Institution on Formation and Development Entrepreneurship of Tajikistan,' both fully funded and programmatically sustainable, the latter with prospects of further extension in the regions.

To properly address sustainability concerns, financial, social, political, and other risks have been identified, and measures have been implemented to mitigate these risks and ensure the continued benefits of the project's interventions. The project has successfully targeted specific beneficiary groups and has incorporated mechanisms to monitor and direct benefits toward the intended beneficiaries, safeguarding the effectiveness of its outcomes. Also, an aspect of sustainability planning involved ensuring that the benefits generated by the project remain accessible and affordable to target groups over the long term. This includes efforts to create an enabling environment that supports the continued engagement and participation of these groups in economic activities and value chains.

To ensure the continuation of positive effects, the project has aligned with various conditions for sustainability at all intervention levels. At the macro level, trade-oriented private sector policies and legislation, government commitment to diversification of exports, and partnerships with key stakeholders have contributed to a conducive environment for sustained impact. A key strength lies in the project's alignment with the development priorities of the countries it operates in. By emphasizing the enhancement of productive capacities and promoting green value chains, the project resonates with the overarching goals of participant countries. This alignment inherently contributes to the potential for lasting benefits, as the project interventions address pressing issues and development gaps identified by the countries themselves. Additionally, government subsidies and support funds have been leveraged to create a sustainable ecosystem for economic growth and job creation. At the meso and micro levels, by strengthening the capacity of TSIs and MSMEs, including women-led, the project has contributed to the long-term sustainability of these institutions, which play an important role in driving economic growth and development.

In addition, the project has put in place mechanisms to ensure that lessons learned, including those related to gender equality and women's empowerment, are well-documented and shared with relevant stakeholders. This contributes to a culture of continuous learning and improvement, which is crucial for sustaining positive outcomes beyond the project's duration.

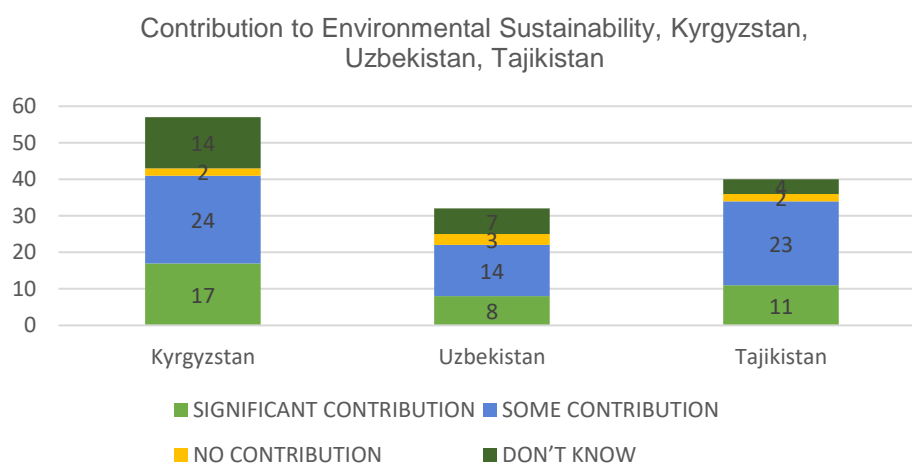
At the same time, interviews indicate that participants, especially at the meso and micro levels, may presently lack the capacity for sustainability without ongoing donor assistance. While the project has effectively established partnerships and collaboration platforms at national, regional, and international levels, the sustainability of many of these platforms remains uncertain, often contingent on continued project funding and mobilization efforts. For instance, the network established by TSIs in Tajikistan, formalized through a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), lacks clear evidence of ongoing activity beyond the project's conclusion in Tajikistan. Interviews also suggest that the sustainability of the Central Asian Women's Group is uncertain without sustained donor support. Furthermore, the enterprises that received project support to acquire international certificates, such as GLOBAL G.A.P., have faced challenges in renewing these certificates once they expire within a year. This difficulty arises from the multitude of stringent requirements that must be met, the need for substantial resources, and the availability of qualified auditors. Moreover, all countries encounter a common set of challenges to varying degrees, which pose obstacles to sustainability, notably a constrained financial sector capacity that impedes the introduction of new financial instruments for export support and inadequate laboratory infrastructure, often necessitating reliance on neighbouring countries like Kazakhstan. The presence of non-tariff barriers poses an additional constraint to achieving sustainability in international trade.

Capacity concerns were also raised by survey respondents. They generally perceived an enhancement in their human, financial, and technical capacities over the past four years, but acknowledged their priorities have changed. According to survey respondents, changing circumstances have led to shifts in priorities over recent years, notably in Kyrgyzstan (Policy - 91.7%, TSI - 80%), Uzbekistan (Policy - 87.5%, TSI - 81.3%), and Tajikistan (Policy - 78.9%, TSI - 90.5%). Evolving priorities of project stakeholders, shaped by ongoing challenges, have underscored the need for adaptive capacities. While approximately two-thirds of respondents expressed satisfaction with their present capacity levels in human and technical resources, nearly half indicated contentment with their financial capabilities. This sentiment was echoed by surveyed MSMEs, which also indicated ongoing improvements at various capacity levels. Notably, all MSMEs from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan displayed optimism about their business prospects for the coming two years, with plans to attract investments, foster employment growth, and diversify their product and service offerings.

One notable aspect where the project's sustainability can be further fortified pertains to the environmental dimension. While the project places emphasis on green practices and value chains, a more robust approach to environmental assessments and setting targets is essential to ensure that these practices remain viable over the long term. This entails integrating comprehensive environmental considerations into the project's design and implementation, enabling a seamless transition toward sustainable and eco-friendly practices beyond the project's lifespan.

While survey participants have indeed indicated that the project has contributed positively to environmental sustainability (Figure 21), it's important to note that the project did not have explicit environmental sustainability as a primary objective, nor did it measure the direct impact of its activities on the environment. Moreover, it's essential to recognize that the countries where the project operates face significant environmental challenges, including the ongoing climate crisis and its associated ecological disasters such as intense air pollution, deforestation, and the ecological catastrophe of the disappearing Aral Sea. These pressing environmental issues highlight the urgent need for dedicated efforts and initiatives focused explicitly on environmental sustainability to address these critical concerns in tandem with broader development goals.

Figure 21. Assessment of contribution to environmental sustainability



Finding 17: The UNDP intervention demonstrates a forward-looking approach by transitioning from the current project phase to the next, ensuring the continuation of intervention while maintaining project momentum.

The project's integration of sustainability factors into its design and implementation further contributes to its exit strategy. By aligning with trade policies and establishing partnerships at the national, regional, and international levels, the project is strategically positioned to extend its impacts beyond its project duration.

This strategic approach maximizes the influence and outreach of the project, reinforcing its potential for lasting benefits.

While not formulated as an independent document, the project's exit strategy demonstrates a proactive approach, exemplified by the smooth transition from Phase IV to Phase V. This transition began in October 2022, even as Phase IV was still in progress. Phase V is designed to extend the project's impact by continuing to foster inclusive and sustainable growth in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. This phase maintains its emphasis on promoting green value chains and enhancing competitiveness while addressing new challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Phase V's overarching goal is to fortify economic structures that are not only resilient but also gender-responsive, capable of adapting to the evolving trends and realities shaped by the pandemic. Building upon the foundations laid in previous phases, Phase V delves deeper into interventions at the macro, meso, and micro levels. The strategy entails a heightened focus on regional collaboration, furthering economic empowerment among women and youth, advancing digitalization, and promoting e-commerce as drivers of sustainable development.

The continuity of the project's efforts into Phase V underscores its commitment to ensuring the longevity of its positive impacts. By capitalizing on the lessons learned and successes achieved in earlier phases, Phase V aspires to amplify its contributions to economic growth, job creation, and gender empowerment. Scheduled to conclude in December 2025, Phase V marks a deliberate and strategic effort to secure a lasting legacy of progress that extends well beyond the immediate project duration.

Survey respondents across all countries generally agree that the next project phase could bring improvements in various areas. While Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan express interest in enhancing digitalization aspects, Uzbekistan places greater emphasis on environmental and human rights considerations. Common themes for improvement include better coordination between regional and country teams, refined communication with stakeholders, and a clearer definition and prioritization of aid-for-trade needs. These insights offer valuable guidance for shaping the next phase of the project to align with stakeholders' expectations and regional nuances (Figures 22, 23 and 24).

Figure 22. Assessment of what next phase could do better in Kyrgyzstan



Figure 23. Assessment of what next phase could do better in Uzbekistan

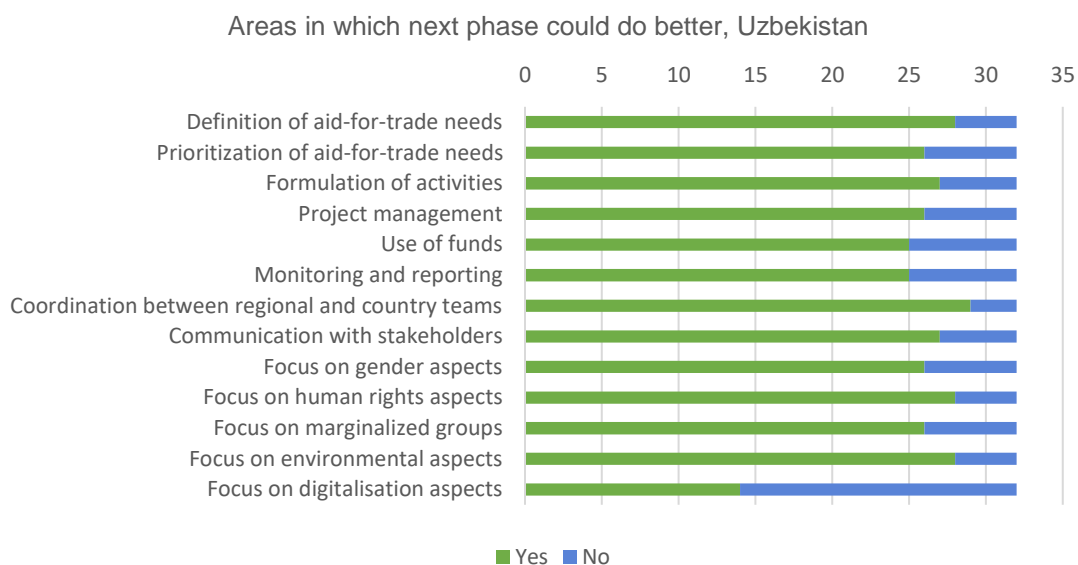


Figure 24. Assessment of what the project could do better in next phase in Tajikistan



6.5. IMPACT

Finding 18: The project has made strides in fostering employment opportunities and improved working conditions, but high levels of informality persist in participant countries, which hinder the quality of economic growth.

The project's impact is closely aligned with SDG 8, which emphasizes the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment generation, and the creation of decent work opportunities for all. Throughout Phase IV, the project has extended support to approximately 6,000 MSMEs, with nearly two-thirds being women-led enterprises, including those led by women farmers. This concerted effort has culminated in the establishment of over 1,000 new quality jobs, of which women hold around three-quarters of these positions.

Despite confronting a range of crises, the economies of the respective countries have demonstrated resilience and developmental potential, as evidenced by their robust economic growth rates. Kyrgyzstan achieved a substantial 7% economic growth in 2022, primarily driven by sectors such as gold production, agriculture, services, and remittances (World Bank, 2003). Uzbekistan's GDP grew by 5.7% in the same year, reflecting impressive progress catalysed by ongoing reforms since 2017, coupled with exports of gold, cotton yarn, copper, and petroleum. Similarly, Tajikistan's economy surged by an impressive 8% in 2022, largely underpinned by remittances and exports of minerals and metals.

While these achievements cannot be directly attributed to the project's interventions, it is evident that the project has contributed at enhancing employment generation and the creation of decent jobs by strengthening the capacity of TSIs and MSMEs. Nevertheless, questions are raised about the inclusivity and sustainability of the observed economic growth, as well as the participating countries' ability to provide equitable employment and decent work opportunities for all. This concern is further underscored by the stagnation in progress toward achieving SDG 8 in all participant countries (UN, 2023).

This situation is compounded by high levels of informality in participant countries and a pressing need for viable livelihoods and decent job prospects, underscoring the exigency for structural reforms. For instance, in Kyrgyzstan, the informal sector accounted for a substantial 71.8% of economic activity in 2019, contributing to 23.5% of value-addition and a remarkable 95.3% of new jobs (ILO, 2021). Similarly, in Uzbekistan, a mere 5.7 million out of the country's total of 13.23 million employed individuals were part of the formal economy in 2020, further underscoring the informality challenge (Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations in Uzbekistan, 2021). While recent data about informality levels in Tajikistan were not located, it's reasonable to assume the presence of a similar issue in that country as well. A significant portion of employment, encompassing both formal and informal sectors, remains concentrated in low-productivity fields, as opposed to more productive sectors, often characterized by capital-intensive extractive industries, that employ a relatively small workforce. These circumstances highlight the pressing need for comprehensive reforms to address informality and create sustainable job opportunities in the region.

The prevalence of informality, characterized by a significant portion of economic activity operating beyond the boundaries of formal regulations and taxation systems, poses a substantial challenge to participant countries. This informality restricts the revenue base available for public investments and essential social programs. Additionally, structural barriers, such as inadequate infrastructure, limited technology access, and underdeveloped financial sectors, further impede their economic progress. Geopolitical factors, including their landlocked geography and historical legacies, have also imposed constraints on their overall economic development. These factors collectively underscore the complexities surrounding economic growth and development in these regions. Consequently, despite witnessing robust GDP growth rates in recent years, these participant countries still grapple with relatively low GDP per capita levels. To illustrate, in 2022, Kyrgyzstan reported a GDP per capita at PPP (current international USD) of USD 6,132, Uzbekistan at USD 9,532, and Tajikistan at USD 4,885, all significantly lagging behind Kazakhstan's GDP per capita of USD 30,809 (World Bank, 2023).

At the same time, it is important to note that survey feedback from diverse countries and intervention levels consistently acknowledges the project's substantial contribution to overarching goals, particularly in fostering inclusive and sustainable growth, poverty reduction, the creation of decent job prospects, and the augmentation of individual and regional income (Figures 25,26 and 27).

Figure 25. Assessment of project contribution at impact level in Kyrgyzstan

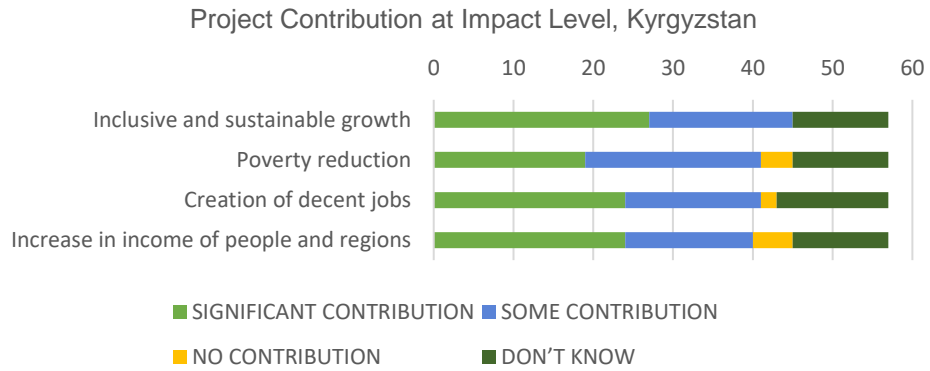


Figure 26. Assessment of project contribution at impact level in Uzbekistan

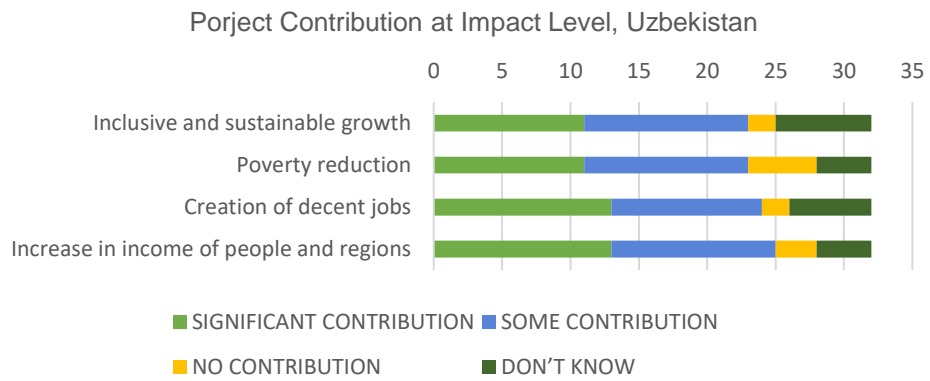
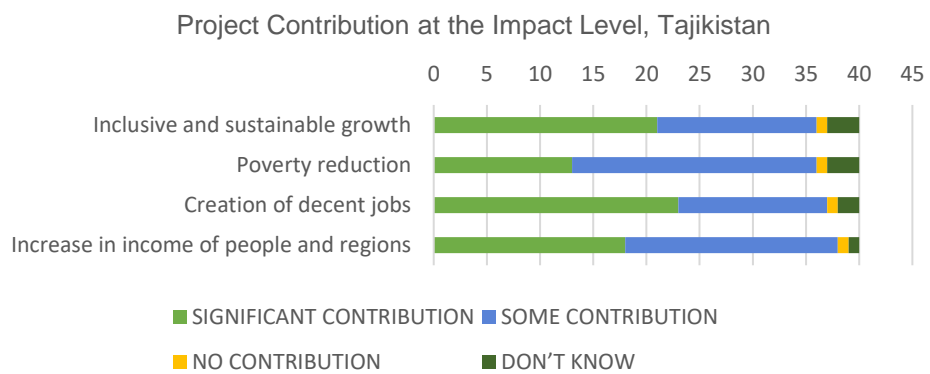


Figure 27. Assessment of project contribution at impact level in Tajikistan



6.6. CONCLUSIONS

The project has demonstrated its high relevance on multiple fronts. It effectively aligns with the objectives of both the participating countries and the UNDP, while also harmonizing with global Aid for Trade initiatives designed to address critical development challenges. Notably, the project capitalizes on the extensive experience gained from three previous phases, providing a valuable advantage for refining strategies.

The project's design has evolved from its preceding phase, with a focus on promising green, niche value chains offering export opportunities and job creation. It operates within a comprehensive intervention framework that encompasses a three-level approach, supporting the formulation of trade-focused private sector policies and regulations, delivering essential services, and enhancing the productive capabilities of entrepreneurs. This framework is organized across four outputs, including a regional component and three country-specific outputs for Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. The project integrates cross-cutting themes dedicated to gender equality and environmental sustainability.

The project's strategic design can be viewed as a set of pilot initiatives tailored to address specific challenges and opportunities in the target regions and value chains. These initiatives served as experimental models, systematically testing new problem-solving approaches, evaluating their real-world impact, and distilling best practices. Through this process, the project aimed to create robust and adaptable templates that can be scaled up and replicated to drive sustainable development and expansion across various sectors. The project's adaptive capacity and its ability to draw insights from past experiences represent clear strengths.

At the same time, navigating the complexities of the multi-tiered approach and maintaining a distinct, focused scope that differentiates it from prior phases was challenging. The project also faced additional complexities arising from concurrent and unforeseen crises, particularly the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. These unprecedented challenges added an extra layer of difficulty to project implementation and necessitated adaptive strategies to mitigate their effects.

As a result, the project encountered multiple delays and underwent several budget revisions to accommodate evolving conditions. Despite these challenges, successful completion was achieved in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. However, in Uzbekistan, where the project began later, a significant portion of activities remains to be executed within the constrained timeframe before the project concludes in December 2023. It is important to note that in Uzbekistan, the situation was unique, with one team concurrently overseeing not only Phase V initiated during the current phase but also another project sharing a similar name and scope. This distinctive circumstance further adds to the complexity of project management in this particular country.

Despite the challenges faced, the project's adept integration of both soft and hard support mechanisms has yielded tangible benefits. These include improvements in public policies and services, enhanced private sector capacity for trade-oriented activities, and notable contributions to women's engagement, surpassing numerical representation by creating and enabling environment that champions economic empowerment, leadership and capacity enhancement despite social norms and biases. These achievements have translated into increased productivity, job creation, higher sales volumes, and improved livelihoods. All factors considered, taking into account the project budget and the outcomes achieved, particularly the increase in sales, the project has proven to be cost-effective.

From a broader perspective, there has been a very favourable intra-regional trade dynamics over the five past years, yet a subtle shift in export product and market dynamics. Participant countries continue to rely heavily on commodities and traditional export destinations. Many project beneficiaries face challenges in accessing international markets due to factors such as intense competition, concerns about product quality, and the complexities of meeting international standards and certifications. Despite project efforts to enhance sustainability through capacity building, institutional and policy strengthening, and promoting government ownership, persistent issues such as high levels of informality, limited access to finance and technology, and weak laboratory infrastructure remain significant obstacles to development and the realization of sustainable, inclusive economic growth, including the creation of decent jobs. Additionally, environmental concerns, which could have received more attention in project design and implementation, cast a looming shadow over these collective efforts.

Simultaneously, UNDP's renowned reputation, global reach, and extensive experience in sustainable development position it well to explore and bolster project sustainability. The project's transition to the next phase underscores a commitment to long-lasting impact while maintaining an adaptable approach that considers the evolving context. This includes addressing contemporary issues like digitalization and building upon lessons learned from the current project phase without overly restricting the sectors and value chains supported. There are promising prospects for Phase V to continue contributing to trade-oriented private sector development through targeted interventions, leveraging the positive contributions from other projects with which UNDP has a well-established track record spanning many years.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

With project's Phase V already designed and launched, the following recommendations are proposed, building on the existing framework, evaluation findings, and conclusions, and offering suggestions on how implementation and reporting could be improved.

Recommendation 1: Given the project's emphasis on replicability and scalability, UNDP may consider preparing a concise and visually appealing information, potentially in the form of a brochure or a similar format, encompassing a curated selection of small-scale initiatives within the project that have demonstrated noteworthy outcomes and exhibit potential for both replication and scalability. The purpose of this summary is threefold: firstly, to furnish prospective donor candidates and country development partners with insights into areas that could be effectively supported in the future; secondly, to showcase successful accomplishments to the project donor and the public, thereby enhancing communication about project results and its visibility; and lastly, to serve as proof that, although a project of this magnitude may not bring about immediate structural shifts in productive capacities, it can effectively pilot and introduce activities that have the potential to eventually achieve this objective. This information could be shared prior to the conclusion of Phase IV, and ideally during the project's final event, which is highly recommended, particularly for Uzbekistan, as it offers an opportunity to differentiate this project from others and distinctly outline the project phases. This communication strategy could also continue into Phase V, and it is advisable to prepare an updated brochure before Phase V concludes. This recommendation entails the following activities:

1. Identify and document a selection of small-scale initiatives within the project that have demonstrated noteworthy outcomes. Compile detailed case studies for each initiative, highlighting their achievements, challenges, and potential for replication.
2. Create a visually appealing brochure that features the compiled case studies, infographics, and key project highlights. Ensure the brochure is concise and easy to understand. Publish the brochure in digital and potentially print format.
3. Develop an approach for disseminating the brochure. Share it with prospective donor candidates, country development partners, project donors, and the public through project events, UNDP's online platforms, social media, and email newsletters. Consider organizing a project final event to officially launch the brochure and showcase successful accomplishments.

Addressed to: UNDP IRH, Country Project Managers

Linked with: Findings 16, 17

Recommendation 2: Notably, Phase V exhibits a commendable emphasis on capturing environmental concerns and impacts, a progression from Phase IV. This is underscored by the introduction of specific indicators such as 3.2.6, measuring the number of solutions enhancing climate-resilient and low-emission development. Additionally, Phase V aims to sustainably support value chains through the integration of

environmentally friendly technologies and a heightened focus on promoting green value chains. This includes initiatives encompassing trade policies and regulations that advocate for environmental sustainability and leveraging trade-related opportunities aligned with the transition to a green economy, while bolstering resource efficiency. To further augment this focus on environmental aspects, it is recommended to bolster reporting efforts. This entails presenting not only success stories derived from the application of environmentally friendly practices within the private sector but also highlighting the positive environmental impacts arising from project interventions, where applicable. By spotlighting both achievements and environmental outcomes, UNDP can effectively showcase the tangible contributions of its interventions toward sustainable and green economic development. Following specific actions are suggested for consideration:

1. Create a simplified template or checklist for project teams to track and document environmental impacts. This tool can be used to record positive environmental outcomes resulting from project interventions, such as reduced energy consumption or waste reduction.
2. Establish a routine of sharing small "green tips" with project stakeholders, especially companies. These can be brief, practical suggestions on how stakeholders can further reduce their environmental footprint, such as optimizing energy-efficient equipment or reducing resource waste.
3. Keep a dedicated section in project progress reports to highlight environmental achievements. Use this section to showcase how the project's activities have contributed to environmentally friendly practices or sustainable solutions.

Addressed to: UNDP IRH, Country Project Managers

Linked with: Findings 3, 4, 12, 16, 17

Recommendation 3: Given that Phase V commenced, the project team may consider to retrospectively establish baseline values for ongoing indicators, where possible, recognizing the progress achieved thus far. This will provide a meaningful starting point for assessing incremental changes and impact moving forward, both during the remainder of Phase V and in post-intervention assessments. Simultaneously, the project may prioritize the development and implementation of an integrated data management system, even if it initially involves a basic solution such as Excel. This system should efficiently collect, store, and analyse project-related data, encompassing indicators, capacity assessments, and baseline values. Ensuring accessibility to project staff, stakeholders, and evaluators will promote transparency and evidence-based decision-making not only within the ongoing phase but also in subsequent post-intervention evaluations. This could be potentially achieved through following activities:

1. Conduct a process of retrospective collection of baseline data for key indicators in ongoing project activities. Engage project staff, stakeholders, and experts to identify data sources and methods for establishing meaningful baseline values.
2. Modify or expand the current data system to ensure it can effectively centralize and organize all project-related data, including indicators and baseline values. Implement necessary improvements to enhance the system's data capture, storage, and retrieval capabilities.
3. Create a user-friendly data portal or dashboard that allows project staff, stakeholders, and evaluators easy access to project-related data. Ensure the dashboard promotes transparency and facilitates evidence-based decision-making for ongoing project phases and future evaluations.

Addressed to: UNDP IRH, Country Project Managers

Linked with: Findings 4, 12

Recommendation 4: To ensure an accurate assessment of knowledge and skills development in providing efficient and gender-responsive trade support services (indicator 2.2.1 in RRF for Phase V), it is advised to develop a concise methodology in this respect. Given that the number of participants alone may not fully reflect increased capacity, incorporating pre-post tests similar to those employed for MSMEs' training or using self-assessment questionnaires at the end of project activities designed to enhance the capabilities of these stakeholders would be beneficial. This methodology should be carefully designed to gauge the actual progress made in terms of knowledge acquisition and skill enhancement, offering a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the impact of capacity-building initiatives. Following activities may be considered under this recommendation:

1. Introduce pre-post tests as part of training sessions designed to enhance the capabilities of stakeholders at macro and meso levels. Administer these tests before and after the training to measure the participants' knowledge and skills development.
2. Develop self-assessment questionnaires specifically tailored to the training content. Administer these questionnaires at the end of project activities and training sessions to allow participants to self-assess their knowledge and skills improvements.
3. Incorporate feedback from participants into future training sessions and capacity-building initiatives based on the results of the assessments. Use the assessment data to tailor training content and methods to address specific areas where participants may require further development.

Addressed to: UNDP IRH, Country Project Managers

Linked with: Findings 4, 12

Recommendation 5: The commitment to further address gender issues and the inclusion of considerations for people with disabilities in Phase V is commendable. To further enhance social inclusivity and ensure equitable distribution of project benefits, it is advisable to explore opportunities for broader inclusiveness. Engaging stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, including returned migrants, refugees, and ethnic minorities, can be particularly valuable. While interviews conducted during the evaluation of Phase IV indicated that representatives from these categories were involved in specific activities, it's important to highlight such engagements in progress reports. This not only acknowledges their participation but also underscores the project's commitment to inclusivity and its efforts to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, ultimately contributing to more equitable development outcomes. This could be performed by implementing the following:

1. Conduct regular assessments to ensure that the participation of women, youth, and, potentially, returned migrants, refugees, and ethnic minorities remains active and meaningful. Use these assessments to identify any barriers or challenges they may face in engaging with project activities.
2. Document the involvement of these diverse groups in project activities. Highlight their participation in progress reports, showcasing specific examples of engagement and contributions.

Addressed to: UNDP IRH, Country Project Managers

Linked with: Findings 3, 11, 16

Recommendation 6: To address the unique challenges posed by the exceptionally high Gender Social Norms Index in the project's target countries, where deeply ingrained social norms and biases against

women persist, the project may consider enhancing the design and implementation of mentorship programs, engaging key stakeholders, including women entrepreneurs, women's organizations, value chain actors, and local communities. This include developing and implementing mentorship programs that are tailored to the diverse needs and constraints faced by women entrepreneurs within the value chains. Seeking their input, feedback, and collaboration to ensure that programs are contextually relevant and meet the specific needs of women entrepreneurs while contributing to overall value chain resilience. These programs should focus on enhancing women's access to finance, technology, markets, information, a qualified labour force, and management skills. While men mentors have played a valuable role in mentorship programs, ensure that mentor pairings are made with the mentees' preferences and comfort in mind. Strategies should be employed to gain acceptance from women's relatives, addressing any concerns they may have. In addition, to ensure the project's commitment to supporting women entrepreneurs is effectively realized, it is recommended that the project conducts a thorough review of budget allocations for women-related activities in participant countries. This review should aim to realign budgets with the initial commitment of allocating a specific percent of the programmatic budget to initiatives benefiting women entrepreneurs. Finally, the project has to consider establishing clear monitoring mechanisms to track and ensure the continued adherence to these revised budget allocations throughout the project's implementation. This approach aligns with the project's commitment to promoting gender equality, economic empowerment, and sustainable development, contributing to the achievement of SDG 5. Gender Equality. Following activities could be considered in this respect:

1. Organize stakeholder focus groups with women entrepreneurs, women's organizations, and value chain actors in target areas. Gather their input on mentorship program design or any other program supporting women empowerment, ensuring it addresses their specific needs and constraints. This participatory approach ensures program relevance and is relatively low-cost.
2. Host community engagement sessions in project areas to engage with women's relatives and community leaders. Address their concerns, explain the benefits of mentorship for women entrepreneurs, and seek their support for program participation. These sessions can be conducted in partnership with local community organizations to minimize costs.
3. Conduct a thorough review of budget allocations for women-related activities in participant countries to realign budgets with the initially committed percentage. Implement clear monitoring mechanisms to track adherence throughout the project, using existing project resources.

Addressed to: UNDP IRH, Country Project Managers

Linked with: Findings 3, 11, 16

Recommendation 7: In Phase V, continue successful activities for women's empowerment, ideally without restricting participants to a limited number of sectors but maintaining integrity criteria. In this context it is also recommended to identify individuals from the pool of active mentees in Phase IV and empower them as local ambassadors from beneficiary communities who can act as advocates for the project and recognising their contributions. They can play an important role in sharing the project's impact and objectives with their peers, thereby amplifying its reach and influence within the community. This practice could persist into Phase V, taking into account the fact that without any technical support, the second option to venture beyond their communities across the country for learning exchanges serves as a potential incentive to participate in project activities. Specifically, the following could be considered under this recommendation:

1. In Phase V, maintain and expand successful empowerment activities for women across various sectors, while keeping the integrity criteria in place. Ensure that these activities are inclusive and accessible to a broad range of participants.

2. Identify high-performing and committed mentees from Phase IV who have demonstrated a strong dedication to the project's objectives. These individuals can serve as local ambassadors for beneficiary communities.
3. Empower the selected individuals to become local project ambassadors. Provide them with training and resources to effectively communicate the project's impact and objectives within their communities.
4. Organize peer advocacy workshops facilitated by the local ambassadors. These workshops can target women within their communities, highlighting the benefits of project participation and sharing success stories.
5. Recognize the contributions of local ambassadors by offering opportunities for learning exchanges beyond their communities. This incentive can motivate their continued involvement and dedication to the project.

Addressed to: UNDP IRH, Country Project Managers

Linked with: Findings 3,11, 16

Recommendation 8: UNDP IRH to consider development of the final project report for Phase IV that explicitly addresses the overlapping projects in Uzbekistan and provides clear explanations for their coexistence. Where activities have been exclusively completed under the current project, these should be highlighted in the report. Conversely, activities that were undertaken jointly should be explicitly mentioned, emphasizing their collaborative nature and the fact that they are the result of combined efforts from multiple projects. This approach will promote transparency and facilitate a better understanding of project contributions and outcomes and could be implemented considering the following:

1. Conduct a thorough review of all project activities carried out in Uzbekistan during Phase IV. Identify activities that were exclusively completed under the current project and those that were undertaken jointly with 'Aid for Trade in Uzbekistan' project.
2. In the final project report, prominently highlight the activities that were exclusively completed under the current project. Provide detailed explanations and outcomes for these activities.
3. Explicitly mention activities that were undertaken jointly with the other project. Emphasize the collaborative nature of these activities and acknowledge the combined efforts of multiple projects.
4. Ensure that the final project report includes clear explanations for the coexistence of overlapping projects in Uzbekistan. Clarify the rationale behind these overlaps and how they contribute to achieving project objectives.

Addressed to: UNDP IRH, Uzbekistan Project Manager

Linked with: Findings 12, 13

Recommendation 9: In Phase V, maintaining a flexible and adaptable approach is important for meeting established targets while accommodating unforeseen circumstances. However, this adaptability should not come at the expense of output quality. It's vital to recognize that potential delays due to objective reasons might lead project teams to prioritize swift completion of activities and target achievements within a compressed timeframe, which could potentially compromise output quality. Given Phase V's shorter timeline and relatively equally ambitious targets, challenges could arise in achieving both quantitative and,

more importantly, qualitative targets. In light of this, it is advisable to address this concern proactively. If progress indicates that targets might not be met within the designated timeframe, considering a downward revision of targets while emphasizing output quality is recommended. Moreover, it's essential to factor in the possibility that the project may not be extended, underlining the need to prioritize sustainability and exist-strategy establishing comprehensive post-project sustainability plans ensuring that the positive impact endures beyond the project's lifespan. By striking a balance between flexibility, quality, and long-term impact, the project can navigate challenges effectively and align with its overarching development goals. To translate this recommendation into concrete actions, the project may consider the following:

1. Develop and implement robust quality assurance protocols at every stage of project implementation. These protocols should include regular reviews, assessments, and feedback mechanisms to ensure that output quality remains a priority even in the face of potential time constraints.
2. Develop comprehensive risk mitigation plans that anticipate potential challenges and delays. These plans should outline specific strategies for addressing unforeseen circumstances, such as supply chain disruptions, political instability, or external shocks, to minimize their impact on project timelines and quality.
3. Establish a mechanism for periodic review of project outputs. If progress indicates that targets might not be met within the designated timeframe, consider a downward revision of quantitative targets while emphasizing the maintenance or enhancement of output quality. This approach allows for a more realistic assessment of what can be achieved within the given constraints.
4. Prioritize sustainability planning by developing comprehensive post-project sustainability plans. These plans should outline strategies for ensuring that the positive impact of the project endures beyond its lifespan. This may include capacity building for local stakeholders, institutionalization of project initiatives, and engagement with relevant partners to continue supporting the project's objectives.
5. Develop a clear exit strategy that outlines the steps and considerations for project closure. This should include a detailed plan for handing over project responsibilities to local stakeholders, ensuring that the project's legacy is maintained.

Addressed to: UNDP IRH, Country Project Managers, UNDP COs

Linked with: Findings 12, 14, 18

Recommendation 10: To enhance the continuity and accuracy of project assessment, consider leveraging the pertinent data acquired through surveys conducted during the Phase IV evaluation, as outlined in this report, as a foundational baseline for the subsequent evaluation of Phase V. Utilizing a similar set of metrics in evaluating the next project phase will streamline progress tracking and enable a more comprehensive assessment of project performance. Specific activities may include the following;

1. Review the ToR for the next evaluation of Phase V. Ensure that the ToR explicitly includes a requirement for the evaluation team to follow a similar approach and use comparable evaluation questions as those employed in the Phase IV evaluation.
2. Provide the Phase IV evaluation data, methodologies, and key findings to the evaluators responsible for Phase V. Clearly communicate the importance of using the Phase IV data as a foundational baseline for their assessments in Phase V.

Addressed to: UNDP IRH

Linked with: Finding 2

8. LESSONS LEARNED

Drawing from evaluation findings and conclusions, several lessons can be derived, specifically:

1. **Customized Support for Varied Enterprise Types:** Despite conventional delineation of types of enterprises in micro, small and medium enterprises, the interview findings underscored that the companies participating in value chains supported by the project can be categorized into three distinct groups, each with their unique needs:
 - Anchor firms: These established companies primarily seeking support for participation in international exhibitions, fairs, B2B missions, trade house setup, and future factoring opportunities.
 - Mid-size businesses: These enterprises aimed for assistance in accessing new markets and obtaining certifications to bolster their competitiveness.
 - Incipient enterprises: These enterprises requiring comprehensive support, encompassing both knowledge and financial aid.

Tailoring support to cater to the specific requirements of each company type has proven to be a more effective strategy than providing generalized assistance. While the project initially engaged with all enterprises and offered pertinent intervention packages to ensure the accomplishment of various project objectives, a more focused approach, concentrating on anchor firms with a track record of establishing industry trends, could potentially yield more substantial results in terms of enhancing export competitiveness. By shifting emphasis towards these influential trendsetters, the project could harness their existing expertise and market influence to drive greater success in achieving its overarching goals regarding product and export diversification. This targeted approach may optimize resource allocation and produce more significant outcomes in the long run.

2. **Prioritizing Depth Over Breadth for Effective Value Chain Strengthening:** Experience derived from other projects implemented in the region and beyond, such as those by GIZ, USAID, and similar organizations, illustrate that concentrating efforts on a single value chain, rather than spreading resources across multiple chains, could yield greater effectiveness and efficiency. This approach allows for a more comprehensive and in-depth engagement within that particular value chain. Rather than assisting specific actors within various chains, the project can significantly contribute to the overall strengthening of one selected value chain, benefiting all its participants, regardless of their level or role.
3. **Empowering Local Economies Alongside Global Trade:** Amid increasing economic disparities and environmental challenges, it is necessary to reconsider the conventional belief that engaging in global trade is the primary driver of economic growth and poverty reduction. While historical evidence has shown that global trade can foster economic development by expanding market access and creating specialization opportunities, the current landscape demands a closer examination of its potential negative consequences, such as exacerbating inequality and environmental strains.

Many small enterprises in developing countries face limitations due to resource constraints and compliance barriers. Consequently, an alternative strategy emerges, which focuses on strengthening local economies. This approach does not neglect the benefits of global trade but emphasizes the importance of enhancing a country's competitiveness on a global scale. This can be achieved by improving production quality, aligning with international standards, and increasing productivity. By doing so, countries can better access global markets, potentially leading to higher incomes, sustainable growth, and poverty reduction.

4. **Integrating Gender Equality for Inclusive Development:** The project's experience underscores the paramount importance of seamlessly integrating gender equality considerations into every facet of project planning, implementation, and evaluation, aligning with the objectives of SDG 5. Gender

Equality. Recognizing that women entrepreneurs encompass a spectrum of needs, the project must go beyond numerical representation and offer tailored interventions. These interventions should address the unique requirements of women entrepreneurs at various stages of business development, thereby contributing to SDG 5's objective of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. In addition, achieving gender equality requires not only women's participation in project activities but also their active involvement in decision-making processes at all levels. By ensuring women's voices are heard and valued, the project can foster more inclusive and sustainable outcomes, directly contributing to SDG 5.

This highlights that gender equality isn't merely a checkbox; it's an integral aspect of successful and sustainable development projects. By prioritizing gender equality and recognizing its synergy with SDG 5, the project aligns itself with international development goals, adheres to best practices in gender-responsive project management, and paves the way for more inclusive and equitable value chains that benefit all stakeholders, irrespective of gender.

- 5. Exploring Portfolio Management for Enhanced Efficiency:** In the quest for improved management practices, a potential shift from a project-centric to a portfolio management approach is worth considering. It's important to note that UNDP Country Offices may already be exploring this concept. In this context, UNDP has provided valuable guidance through the "Guidebook for Adopting Portfolio Approaches" (2022), outlining a three-phase transition process. Additionally, the introduction of the Quantum Project & Portfolio Management (PPM) module presents promising opportunities.

Quantum enhances efficiency by reducing data entry points, providing real-time access to project information, and enabling more informed decision-making and results-focused donor reporting. This portfolio approach can effectively align with the UNDP Strategic Plan and Regional Program Document, guided by the Integrated Results and Resource Framework. It establishes clear criteria for project selection and prioritization, consistent with Country Programmes and the SDGs.

Effective portfolio management involves governance, including entities such as the Executive Board and Oversight Committees. Their role is to oversee resource allocation, ensuring alignment with Country Programmes' objectives, and conducting regular Project Implementation Reviews to monitor progress. Leveraging the existing Results-Based Management framework within UNDP can establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for assessing overall portfolio performance.

Furthermore, fostering knowledge sharing and capacity building, supported by UNDP's training initiatives, encourages collaboration among projects. Embracing this potential shift empowers UNDP to adopt a more strategic, harmonized, and efficient approach to project management, enhancing synergy between projects and the organization's development goals. It's important to acknowledge that while this transition holds promise, it should be explored alongside other potential solutions, recognizing that UNDP Country Offices may already be considering similar approaches.



TERMS OF REFERENCE

International consultant for Project Evaluation

TYPE OF CONTRACT:	<i>Individual Contract</i>
AGENCY/PROJECT NAME:	<i>UNDP 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase IV' project</i>
COUNTRY OF ASSIGNMENT:	<i>Home-based with travel to Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (4 days per country)</i>
DURATION	<i>Approximately 30 working days, Estimated 25 May 2023 – 5 September 2023</i>
LANGUAGES REQUIRED	<i>English and Russian (mandatory)</i>

1. Background and context

UNDP works in more than 170 countries and territories, helping to achieve the eradication of poverty, and the reduction of inequalities and exclusion. UNDP supports countries to develop policies, leadership skills, partnering abilities, institutional capabilities and build resilience in order to sustain development results.

UNDP's 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia (phase IV)' is a regional project that aims to promote inclusive growth and jobs creation in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan through promotion of green productive capacities and increasing competitiveness to support the countries efforts to diversify their economies and export baskets and promote trade.

The main logic of the project is to support producers in Central Asia and government partners to build productive capacities that are forward-looking (future-proof) and that address rapidly changing global market demands or climate change.

Based on the lessons learned from the previous phases of the UNDP-implemented Aid for Trade project, the phase-IV concentrated on the identification of niche products, rather than encouraging local producers to compete internationally in terms of quantity and quality in traditional exports (mainly unprocessed fruits and vegetables). In order to do so, the project works on three different levels that are mutually reinforcing: the policy level (macro level), business support institutions (meso level) which are covered under component I, and direct support to businesses (micro level) which are under component II.

The strategy is to provide support to building forward-looking productive and export capacities for niche products, identified in the agricultural, agro-industrial, but also in other employment-rich and potentially green sectors, to contribute to more economically, socially and environmentally sustainable growth patterns.

Brief regional context

The main development challenge for the target countries is to ensure that the potential of trade is harnessed in ways which contribute to more inclusive and sustainable development pathways in the countries. The current structure of growth and exports in the countries of Central Asia has contributed to poverty reduction over the last decade, but falls short of being fully economically, socially or environmentally sustainable.

This situation makes it imperative that economies in the sub-region diversify, production capacities of the private sector are expanded, and new markets are accessed. Better integration into international trade can play an important role in the countries' efforts to achieve diversification and more sustainable growth. Economic growth, fueled by trade, can be a pathway to ensure more inclusive and sustainable

development provided that the appropriate trade framework is established. The agricultural and agro-industrial sectors in Central Asia generate most of the jobs in rural areas and can be a driving motor in ensuring distribution of the gains from trade and can also facilitate greater export diversification and improved quality of employment. Greater support for trade in labor- (as opposed to natural capital) intensive activities, such as non-irrigated agricultural production, food processing, textiles, tourism, and wholesale and retail trade, can reduce the environmental footprint of production for export, while also broadening export baskets.

The project's approach is to address the development challenge in an integrated manner through two sub-components:

1. Supporting an enabling environment for job-rich growth through

1.1 Enabling policies and regulations for inclusive and trade oriented private sector development (macro level).

1.2 Trade support institutions that provide efficient services to the private sector (meso level).

2. Supporting market opportunities for all through more efficient and competitive producers and processors

2.1 More efficient and competitive producers and processors contributing to sustainable human development (micro level).

The project also promotes better cooperation between the different countries in the implementation and coordination of different thematic areas.

Cross cutting themes throughout all three levels are job creation, gender equality and environmental sustainability.

Regional level

On the regional level, the project focuses on ensuring collaboration and cooperation between participating countries, as well as other regional and national projects working on sustainable growth and other related issues. The regional level also facilitates knowledge generation and sharing of experience and expertise between participating countries.

At the regional level, the project also works together with international partners such as UNECE, GIZ and Hilfswerk International - to establish and facilitate regional partnership and cooperation in the field of collaborative and cohesive introduction of international quality and food safety standards, and sustainable agricultural practices to foster linkages of VC actors to regional and global value chains, as well as with the International Trade Center (ITC) – to facilitate access of Trade Support Institutions of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as SMEs/target value chain actors to cutting-edge trade and market intelligence and enhanced their capacities to use available big data tools to foresight markets and VCs development to be able to capture new opportunities and diversify production beyond traditional export baskets.

Country level (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan)

On a policy level, the project works with the Ministries of Economy and Trade and other relevant state agencies to develop and implement trade oriented private sector development and export promotion policies. At the meso level, the project works with Trade Support Institutions (TSIs) to improve available services to the private sector. Services include trade intelligence, business processes, market access, as well as access to information on the latest technologies. On a micro level, the project works directly with producers supporting high value niche products that are sustainable.

The project has dedicated activities to support women entrepreneurship development through mentorship programs, programmes on affordable finance or other forms of support.

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 disrupted some of the planned activities throughout 2020-2021. Limitations have been in place in terms of possibilities to organize exchange visits, study tours, B2B

meetings, participation at various exhibitions, forums etc. Travel restrictions locally and internationally made it difficult to implement certain activities and these had to be reprogrammed for the later periods (international consultants whose engagement required travel to the countries, study tour/exchange visits for TSIs to neighboring countries, etc.). The project conducted where possible online meetings, however, faced constraints in rural areas and with farmers where connectivity is limited and/or costly.

Basic Project information:

PROJECT/OUTCOME INFORMATION		
Project/outcome title	Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase IV	
Atlas ID	00105653	
Corporate outcome and output	<p>Outcome: Growth and development are inclusive and sustainable, incorporating productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for the poor and excluded</p> <p>Output: National and subnational systems and institutions enabled to achieve structural transformation of productive capacities that are sustainable and employment - and livelihoods intensive</p>	
Country	Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	
Region	Central Asia	
Date project document signed	3 May 2018	
Project dates	Start	Planned end
	1 July 2018	31 December 2023
Project budget	EUR 6,014,676	
Project expenditure at the time of evaluation		
Funding source	Government of Finland	
Implementing party	UNDP IRH	

2. Evaluation purpose, scope and objectives

Evaluation scope: This evaluation is expected to evaluate the *Aid for Trade project in Central Asia (phase IV)*. The evaluation will cover the full implementation period (1 July 2018 – 31 December 2023) of the project, all the countries covered, and the clients involved in the project.

The geographical area of the project

Kyrgyzstan: Bishkek (capital), Naryn, Issyk-Kul, Osh and Jalal-Abad regions

Tajikistan: Dushanbe (capital), Sughd, Khatlon regions and DRS (Districts of Republican Subordination)

Uzbekistan: Tashkent (capital), Andijan, Namangan and Fergana regions.

Target clientele

The project focuses on improving productive capacities of the private sector, employment and income generation using sustainable production methods (green niche products) and improve trade-related policy and services to enhance the private sector’s resilience. The project, therefore, works with:

- National authorized executive branch institutions, ministries/agencies, and local authorities

- MSMEs, producers, processors, cooperatives, business associations, and value chains actors located in rural areas. Jobs and income generated should primarily benefit rural populations that have limited access to income or employment opportunities
- Special focus is given on women entrepreneurs, as well as women working at target value chains

The evaluation is scheduled between April 2023 and July 2023.

The evaluation includes a data collection, with a field mission to all three countries that have been involved in project implementation.

Evaluation purpose: The main purpose of the evaluation is to assess whether the project has achieved its outputs as well as the intended impact and the overall quality of the implementation. In addition, the project would like to derive lessons learned that will be essential for Phase 5 of the project. The results of this evaluation will be shared with the Project Board, relevant UNDP country offices and national stakeholders. Information specifically targeting the successes and failures of the project is especially sought after.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES: Assess the extent, to which the project achieved its overall objectives and outputs as identified in the project document and annual working plans. More specifically, the evaluation will aim to:

- Review effectiveness of the overall project interventions, their main achievements, compliance with expanding countries' needs
- Review and evaluate the extent to which project outputs have reached the intended clients, including to what extent the outputs have achieved its targets from a macro, meso and micro level as per objectives stated above
- Assess the likelihood of continuation and sustainability of project outputs and benefits after completion of the project - analyze how far the system of exit policy in the project ensures the sustainability of the project benefits
- Identify gaps/weaknesses in the project design and provide recommendations as to their improvement
- Identify lessons learnt from projects interventions, as well as best practices from project implementation as well a project management perspective.

3. Evaluation criteria and key guiding questions

The evaluation should determine the project's relevance, performance, results, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and substantiality, including lessons learned and recommendations.

Relevance

- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards the intended results
- Review how the project addressed countries' priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country?
- To what extent was the project in line with the Regional programme's outputs and outcomes, UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs?
- To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant projects considered in the project's design?
- To what extent were perspectives of the target groups and those who could contribute information or other resources to the attainment of stated results, considered during the project design processes?
- To what extent have gender and human rights considerations been integrated into the project design and implementation?

Effectiveness: measures the manner in which the intended output targets were achieved. Measuring effectiveness involves an assessment of cause and effect in that how far can observable changes be attributed to project outputs. This includes the following steps:

- Measuring change in the observed output and outcome.
 - To what extent have the expected results of the project been achieved on both outcome and output levels?
 - What factors have contributed to achieving or not achieving intended outputs and outcomes?
- Attributing observed changes or progress towards the project.
- Assessing the value of the change (positive and/or negative)
 - What are the positive or negative, intended or unintended, changes brought about by the Project's interventions? This may, inter alia, include an overview of benefits the Project brought to beneficiary institutions and SMEs.
- To what extent has the UNDP partnership strategy been appropriate and effective?
- How effective have the selected project strategies and approaches been in achieving project results?
- What, if any, alternative strategies would have been more effective in achieving the project's objectives?
- In which areas did the project have the greatest achievements? Why and what have been the supporting factors? How can future initiatives build on or expand these achievements?
- In which areas has the project not been successful? What have been the constraining factors and why? How can or could they be overcome?
- To what extent has the project been appropriately responsive to the needs of the national constituents and changing partner priorities?
- How has the activities of the project contributed to gender equality and the empowerment of women?

Efficiency

- To what extent was the project management structure as outlined in the project document efficient in generating the expected results?
- To what extent have the UNDP project implementation strategy and execution been efficient and cost-effective?
- To what extent have resources been used efficiently? Have activities supporting the strategy been cost-effective?
- To what extent have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner?

Sustainability: to measure to what extent the benefits of the outputs will continue after the project has ended. Assessing sustainability involves evaluating to what extent the capacity can be maintained.

- Are /have there (been) any financial risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outputs?
- Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outputs?
- What is the likelihood that the benefits from the project will be maintained for a reasonably long period of time after the project phase out?
- Will the level of stakeholders' ownership (cost-sharing) and strengthened capacities be sufficient to allow for the project benefits to be sustained?
- To what extent do stakeholders support the project's long-term objectives?
- To what extent are lessons learned being documented by the project team on a continual basis and shared with appropriate parties who could learn from the project?
- To what extent this UNDP intervention has a well-designed and well-planned exit strategies?
- What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability?

Gender Equality

- Is gender marker data assigned to this project representative of reality?
- To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project?

Impact, especially from UNDP's perspective, measures the changes on human development that are caused by the project outputs, specifically for job creation, livelihoods improvements, improving productive capacities of target value chain actors, sales/export increase and facilitating ease of business including capacity development, and access to more efficient and transparent business processes.

4. Methodology

Based on the [UNDP Evaluation Guidelines](#), [UNEG Norms and Stand for Evaluations](#) and in consultations with UNDP IRH the evaluation will be participatory, involving relevant stakeholders.

The evaluator will propose an evaluation methodology and agree on a detailed plan for the assignment as a part of the evaluation Inception Report. The proposed methodology may employ any relevant and appropriate quantitative, qualitative or combined methods to conduct the Final Project Evaluation, exploring specific gender sensitive data collecting and analytical methods and tools applicable in the concrete case. The Consultant is expected to creatively combine the standard and other evaluation tools and technics to ensure maximum reliability of data and validity of the evaluation findings.

Standard UNDP evaluation methodology would suggest the following data collecting methods:

- The evaluation should employ a combination of both qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods and instruments.
- **Desk review:** The Consultant will conduct a detailed review of the programmatic materials and deliverables including the Project Document, theory of change and results framework, monitoring and project quality assurance reports, annual workplans, progress and annual reports etc. An indicative list of documents for desk review is provided in Annex 2.
- **Key informant interviews:** The Consultant will interview representatives of main institutional partners, UNDP, other relevant stakeholders (Annex 8). For the interviews, the Consultant is expected to design evaluation questions around relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability criteria, according to different stakeholders to be interviewed.
- **Surveys and questionnaires** involving stakeholders at macro, meso and micro level
- Other methodologies, as appropriate, such as field visits and on-site validation of key tangible outputs and interventions, case studies, statistical analysis, social network analysis, etc.

The final methodological approach including interview schedule, field visits and data to be used in the evaluation must be clearly outlined in the Inception Report and be fully discussed and agreed between UNDP and the consultant.

As an integral part of the evaluation report and specifically under the impact criteria, the Consultant will review the project effects and impact on its target groups. In this context, the consultancy is expected to gain insights from the key national and international players in knowledge and experience sharing.

Stakeholders involvement: During the evaluation process, to assess project performance, approach and modalities, the Consultant is expected to meet UNDP COs' representatives, key partners, project beneficiaries and other stakeholders. During these meetings, it would be important to record and accumulate inputs necessary not only for the project evaluation, but also to highlight recommendations and advise on potential project follow-up phase.

If a data collection/field mission is not possible then remote interviews may be undertaken through telephone or online (skype, zoom etc.).

All relevant project documentation will be made available by the UNDP.

The consultant must use gender-responsive methodologies and tools and ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as other cross-cutting issues are incorporated into the evaluation report.

5. Duties and responsibilities

The evaluation process is divided in six phases:

Activity 1: Preparation, mainly devoted to structuring the evaluation approach, compiling project documentation, desk review of relevant programmatic materials and project reports, evaluation design, methodology and detailed work plan.

Estimated work input: 3 days

Location: Home-based

Responsible Party: International Consultant

Activity 2: Inception, which will involve consultations between the evaluator and the UNDP, project review, finalization of stakeholder mapping, review of the result logics, analysis of information relevant to the initiative, finalization of evaluation methodology and preparation of inception report (around 15 pages). The Inception report should include survey questionnaires for project partners and stakeholders. The final methodological approach including interview schedule, field visits and data to be used in the evaluation must be clearly outlined in the Inception Report and be fully discussed and agreed between UNDP and the consultant.

Estimated work input: 5 days

Location: Home-based

Responsible Party: UNDP IRH, International consultant.

Activity 3: Data collection and analysis, including in-depth desk research, in-depth review of the project documents and monitoring frameworks, interviews and/or online interviews as necessary, staff and partner survey/s, and field visits. Nonetheless, field trips will only take place should the health safety conditions permit. In case of imposed travel restrictions due to escalation of COVID-19 infection rates, the consultant will propose alternative evaluation plan and in agreement with UNDP, will be developed.

Estimated work input: 14 days (Four days per country, 2 days for IRH (online))

Location: Home-based and the three countries/territories (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) defined in the inception report. The geographical selection will be made according to the Project's areas of intervention where designated project activities took place. A non-exclusive list of all stakeholders interacted within the scope of the said project will be provided for the Consultant's reference to be used while s/he prepares the interviewee list.

Responsible Party: UNDP, International consultant

Activity 4: Preparation of a draft evaluation report and recommendations (*refer to report template in the annex 5*). Focusing on data analysed, interpretation of findings and drafting an evaluation report (50-60 pages maximum excluding annexes). UNDP shall review the draft report and provide a set of comments to the evaluator within an agreed period of time, addressing the content required (as agreed in the TOR and inception report) and quality criteria as outlined in the evaluation guidelines.

Estimated work input: 5 days

Location: Home based

Responsible Party: International consultant, UNDP.

Activity 5. Evaluation report audit trail. Comments and changes by the evaluator in response to the draft report should be retained by the evaluator to show how he/she has addressed comments.

Activity 6: Finalization of evaluation report (including the executive summary and annexes) and recommendations incorporating additions and comments provided by the project staff, IRH and UNDP COs and submission of the final evaluation report. Focusing on data analysed, interpretation of findings and

drafting an evaluation report. At the end of the final report, the evaluator is expected to present concrete recommendations which are addressed to specific stakeholders including the donor and UNDP. The final evaluation report will be reviewed and approved against a set of criteria which seeks to ensure premium quality for the evaluation deliverables (Annex 3).

Estimated work input: 3 days

Location: Home based

Responsible Party: International consultant, UNDP.

Standard templates that need to be followed are provided in the Annexes section. It is expected that the evaluator will follow the UNDP evaluation guidelines and UNEG quality check list and ensure all the quality criteria are met in the evaluation report.

6. Deliverables

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities	Reviews and approvals required
1	Evaluation inception report	Methodology, information collection roadmap, list of institutions/persons to be contacted/interviewed, modalities for data collection (prior to start of in-country evaluation), survey questionnaires. The outline of the inception report should be based on the guidance provided in Annex 4	By 15 June 2023	Evaluator submits Inception Report to project management	Review and approval required from UNDP
2	A) Evaluation debriefing with UNDP management B) Evaluation brief/presentation that maybe shared with the project board and other knowledge sharing events	Presentation of key findings	End of stakeholder meetings, interviews, etc., by 30 July 2023	Evaluator presents to UNDP management	Review and approval required from UNDP
3	Draft evaluation report	Full draft report with annexes. The outline of the report should be based on the guidelines provided in Annex 5	Within 3 weeks of end of stakeholder meetings, interviews, etc., by 20 August 2023	Evaluator submits to project management	Review and approval required from UNDP
4	Final evaluation report + Evaluation report audit trail	Final evaluation report (including the executive summary and annexes) incorporating additions and comments provided by UNDP. Evaluation report audit trail, detailing how all received comments have (and have not)	Within 1 week of receiving comments on draft report, by 05 September 2023	Evaluator submits both documents to project management	Review and approval required from UNDP

		been addressed in the final evaluation report (see template in ToR annex 7). This Audit Trail should be listed as an annex in the final report but not attached to the report file.			
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Payment schedule:

- Payment 1: 20% upon confirmation by the Certifying Officer of satisfactory delivery of Deliverable 1
- Payment 2: 20% upon confirmation by the Certifying Officer of satisfactory delivery of Deliverable 2
- Payment 3: 30% upon confirmation by the Certifying Officer of satisfactory delivery of Deliverable 3
- Payment 4: 30% upon confirmation by the Certifying Officer of satisfactory delivery of Deliverable 4

7. Competencies and Qualifications

a) Corporate competencies:

- Demonstrates integrity by modelling the UN’s values and ethical standards
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability
- Treats all people fairly without favoritism
- Fulfils all obligations to gender sensitivity and zero tolerance for sexual harassment

Functional competencies:

- Strong interpersonal skills, communication and diplomatic skills, ability to work in a team
- Openness to change and ability to receive/integrate feedback
- Ability to work under pressure and stressful situations
- Strong analytical, reporting and writing abilities

b) Qualification Required:

Education:

Minimum Master’s Degree in a subject related to socio-economic development

Experience

- Minimum 10 years of professional expertise in international development co-operation in programme/project management and impact assessment/evaluation
- Minimum 6 years of experience in conducting evaluations including around UNDP thematic areas of local development and productive capacities
- Demonstrated field experience in data collection in qualitative research
- Proven track record in preparing and using interview guides, interview reports, synthesizing reports based on fieldwork
- Excellent professional knowledge of the CIS region, especially Central Asia, related to economic development, private sector development.

Language skills:

- Excellent writing, editing, and oral communication skills in English and Russian

8. Evaluation Ethics

This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG ‘Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation’. The consultant must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other

relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The consultant must also ensure security of collected information before and after the evaluation and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information knowledge and data gathered in the evaluation process must also be solely used for the evaluation and not for other uses with the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

9. Evaluation of Applicants

Individual consultants will be evaluated based on a cumulative analysis taking into consideration the combination of the applicants' qualifications and financial proposal.

The award of the contract should be made to the individual consultant whose offer has been evaluated and determined as:

- a) responsive/compliant/acceptable, and
- b) having received the highest score out of a pre-determined set of weighted technical and financial criteria specific to the solicitation.

Technical Criteria - 70% of total evaluation

Financial Criteria - 30% of total evaluation

Technical Criteria - 70% of total evaluation – max. 70 points:

Criteria A (Education) – max points: 5

Criteria B (Experience with international development co-operation in programme/project management and impact assessment/evaluation) - max points: 10

Criteria C (Experience in evaluation around the project thematic areas of local development and productive capacities) – max points: 10

Criteria D (Experience in the region) – max points: 5

Criteria E (Proposed methodology) - max points: 10

Criteria F (Knowledge of English and Russian) – max points: 10

Criteria G (Interview- Capacities in conducting evaluations, communication skills)- max points: 20

Financial Criteria - 30% of total evaluation – max. 30 points

Only candidates who will receive min. 70% of points in desk review (criteria A-F) will be invited to interview.

Only candidates who will get min. 70% of points in technical evaluation (criteria A-G) will be considered for financial evaluation.

10. Application procedures

Qualified candidates are requested to apply online via this website. The application should contain:

- **Cover letter** explaining why you are the most suitable candidate for the advertised position. Please paste the letter into the "Resume and Motivation" section of the electronic application

- A **brief methodology** on how you will approach and conduct the work

- Filled P11 form or CV including past experience in similar projects and contact details of referees (blank form can be downloaded from:

http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/dam/rbec/docs/P11_modified_for_SCs_and_ICs.doc)

- Offeror's Letter (blank template can be downloaded from <https://bit.ly/2KO1okS>).

- **Financial Proposal*** in USD - specifying a) total lump sum amount for the professional fee for tasks specified in this announcement. The travel costs for the missions to Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and living allowances for 4 days in each country, territory should be presented separately. In general, UNDP does not accept travel costs exceeding those of an economy class ticket. Per diems cannot exceed maximum UN daily allowance rates (<http://icsc.un.org/rootindex.asp>). In country travel will be provided by UNDP Country Offices.

- **Incomplete applications will not be considered. Please make sure you have provided all requested materials**

Please note that the **financial proposal is all-inclusive and shall take into account various expenses incurred by the consultant/contractor during the contract period (e.g. fee, health insurance, vaccination, personal security needs and any other relevant expenses related to the performance of services...).*

Payments will be made only upon confirmation of UNDP on delivering on the contract obligations in a satisfactory manner.

*Individual Consultants are responsible for ensuring they have **vaccinations/inoculations** when travelling to certain countries, as designated by the UN Medical Director. Consultants are also required to comply with the UN **security directives** set forth under dss.un.org*

General Terms and conditions as well as other related documents can be found under: <http://on.undp.org/t7fJs>.

Qualified women and members of minorities are encouraged to apply.

11. ToR Annexes.

Annex 1. Project results framework

Annex 2. List of documents to be considered for the evaluation desk review

Annex 3. Quality criteria for report

Annex 4. Outline of inception report

Annex 5. Outline of evaluation report

Annex 6. AfT one-pager

Annex 7. Evaluation Audit Trail Template

Annex 8. List of stakeholders and main partners

Annex 9. Code of conduct

Annex 10. Evaluation matrix (suggested as a deliverable to be included in the inception report). The evaluation matrix is a tool that evaluators create as map and reference in planning and conducting an evaluation. It also serves as a useful tool for summarizing and visually presenting the evaluation design and methodology for discussions with stakeholders. It details evaluation questions that the evaluation will answer, data sources, data collection, analysis tools or methods appropriate for each data source, and the standard or measure by which each question will be evaluated.

Table. Sample evaluation matrix

Relevant evaluation criteria	Key questions	Specific sub questions	Data sources	Data-collection methods/tools	Indicators/success standard	Methods for data analysis

ANNEX 2: Evaluation Matrix and Data Collection Instruments

Evaluation Matrix

Key Questions	Specific Sub-Questions	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods/Tools	Indicators/Success Factors	Methods for Data Analysis
RELEVANCE					
EQ 1. To what extent was the project concept adapted to priorities and strategies of the country and implementing partner?	<p>Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country?</p> <p>Was the project concept in line with the UN Regional Programme's outputs and outcomes, UNDP Strategic Plan, UNDP Gender Equality Strategy, and the SDGs?</p>	<p>Project Document</p> <p>National sector development strategies and legislation (links in Annual Progress Reports)</p> <p>UN Regional Programme document for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (2018-2021)</p> <p>UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021</p> <p>SDGs Dashboards and Country Profiles</p> <p>UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021</p> <p>Interviews, survey</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with UNDP COs, Government (on-site)</p> <p>Interviews with UNDP Project Manager, IRH, Government of Finland (online)</p> <p>Survey of Government officials (online)</p>	<p>Project Theory of Change and intervention logic are consistent with national sector development priorities and plans</p> <p>Project Theory of Change and intervention logic are consistent with UN Regional Programme's outputs and outcomes, UNDP Strategic Plan, UNDP Gender Equality Strategy, and the SDGs</p>	<p>Theory of Change Analysis</p> <p>Content Analysis</p> <p>Comparative Analysis</p>
EQ 2. To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant projects considered in the project's design?	<p>Have lessons learned from previous project phases considered in designing the current project phase and reflected in the Project Document?</p> <p>Have there been lessons learned from other projects addressing the sector, ongoing or closed, in the</p>	<p>Project Document</p> <p>Project Evaluation Reports (Phases I-III)</p> <p>Wider Europe Final Evaluation Report (2016)</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with UNDP COs, other international organisations (on-site)</p>	<p>Project documents incorporate lessons learned from previous project phases</p> <p>Project documents incorporate lessons learned from previous and comparable interventions</p>	<p>Theory of Change Analysis</p> <p>Content Analysis</p> <p>Comparative Analysis</p>

	country and elsewhere identified and reflected in the Project Document?	Design & Appraisal Stage Quality Assurance Report MFA Finland's evaluation of Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation, 2021 Available reports and assessments conducted by other comparable interventions in the three countries/at regional level Interviews	Interviews with UNDP IRH project management, Government of Finland, international organisations, and agencies (online)		
EQ 3. To what extent were perspectives of the project target groups and key stakeholders considered during the project design processes?	Was there a validated need analysis/other source of information on stakeholders needs at design stage? Which are the target groups consulted during project design? Were women's organizations and other groups led by women consulted at the design stage? What are the needs which the intervention sought to fulfil? Was the project intervention adapted to institutional, human, financial and technical capacities of the key project stakeholders with a role in implementation? Did all key stakeholders demonstrate effective commitment to the objectives of the project	Project Document Project Evaluation Reports (Phases I-III) Project Board Minutes Design & Appraisal Stage Quality Assurance Report Wider Europe Initiative Evaluation (2016) MFA Finland's evaluation of Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation, 2021 Stakeholder's Consultation Minutes Interviews, surveys	Document review Semi-structured interviews with UNDP COs, Government, TSIs, MSMEs (on-site) Interviews with UNDP Project Manager, IRH, Government of Finland, international organisations, and agencies (online) Surveys of Government, TSIs, MSMEs (online)	Intervention proposed in the Project Document reflects interests, needs and capacity of target groups, in particular women, and key stakeholders	Theory of Change Analysis Content Analysis Comparative Analysis

	during design phase (i.e., ownership)?		Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) review		
EQ 4. To what extent have cross-cutting issues been adequately considered in project design?	<p>To what extent have gender and human rights considerations been integrated into the project design? Has the project design proposed an intervention framework mainstreaming gender issues throughout implementation?</p> <p>Was gender analysis carried out at the beginning - before or early in project implementation?</p> <p>Was the Gender Marker assigned to the project justified by project characteristics?</p> <p>Has an environmental assessment been carried out at the beginning – before or early in project implementation?</p> <p>Where the Rio markers addressing conventions on biodiversity conservation and climate change applicable to intervention and assigned in Project Document?</p>	<p>Project Document</p> <p>Stakeholder's Consultation Minutes</p> <p>Design & Appraisal Stage Quality Assurance Report Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP)</p> <p>Human Development Report, 2016</p> <p>Micronarrative Study on 'Barriers to Female Entrepreneurship in Tajikistan, UNDP, 2016</p> <p>OECD Eurasia Week, 2018</p> <p>Climate Change Adaptation in Europe and Central Asia, UNDP, 2018</p> <p>Climate Change and Security in Central Asia – Regional Assessment Report, OSCE, 2017</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with UNDP COs (including gender specialists and gender focal points), Government, TSIs, MSMEs (on-site)</p> <p>Interviews with UNDP Project Manager, IRH, Government of Finland, international organisations, and agencies (online)</p> <p>Small group discussions with women entrepreneurs</p> <p>Surveys of Government, TSIs, MSMEs (online)</p>	<p>Intervention proposed in the Project Documents reflects gender equality and women's empowerment principles, human rights and environmental considerations</p>	<p>Theory of Change Analysis</p> <p>Content Analysis</p> <p>Comparative Analysis</p>

		Analyses of Green Products Value Chain and Export Opportunities (2019)			
		Interviews, small group discussions, surveys			
EQ 5. What is the overall quality of the project Theory of Change and results framework?	<p>Are project's planned outputs and outcomes coherent and feasible, and have key assumptions and risks been clearly identified?</p> <p>Is there a logical link between inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impact and are these clearly formulated?</p> <p>Is the horizontal logic of the RRF Matrix adequate (i.e., choice of indicators, data availability, baseline data, target values and relevant disaggregation)?</p> <p>Are sources of verification providing gender-disaggregated data and/or reflecting upon women specific conditions and needs?</p>	<p>Project Document</p> <p>Results and Resource Framework (RRF) Matrix</p> <p>Annual Work Plans</p>	Document review	Project Theory of Change and RRF Matrix has an adequate vertical and horizontal logic and contain all mandatory elements	<p>Theory of Change Analysis</p> <p>Content Analysis</p> <p>Comparative Analysis</p>
EFFECTIVENESS					
EQ 6. To what extent have the expected results of the project been achieved on both outcome and output levels?	<p>Have the planned project outputs been achieved and with the expected quality?</p> <p>Have the planned project outcomes been achieved?</p> <p>In which areas did the project have the greatest achievements?</p>	<p>Annual Progress Reports</p> <p>Capacity needs assessments, pre- and post-test results, training self-assessments, capacity building evaluation reports, any other stakeholders' feedback/assessments resulting from project activities</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured Interviews with the UNDP COs, Government, TSIs, MSMEs (on-site)</p> <p>Interviews with UNDP Project</p>	<p>Achievement rate of project outputs</p> <p>Number recommendations submitted and endorsed by the government</p> <p>Number of policies reflecting proposed recommendations, including on youth and women entrepreneurship</p>	<p>Causal Analysis (process tracing, contribution analysis)</p> <p>Outcome Mapping</p> <p>Content Analysis</p>

	<p>In which areas has the project not been successful?</p> <p>To what extent are results inclusive (i.e., ensuring the fair distribution of effects across different groups of the population)?</p> <p>Has the project provided effective access of women to the benefits generated by the intervention?</p> <p>To what extent the results of the project contributed to gender responsive or transformative outcomes?</p> <p>What are the positive or negative, intended, or unintended, changes brought about by the project's interventions?</p>	<p>Data from countries' national statistical offices</p> <p>Minutes of Regional Project Board Meetings</p> <p>Minutes of National Stakeholders Meetings</p> <p>Proceeds of events organised by the project</p> <p>Global Gender Gap Reports (2017-2022)</p> <p>Interviews, small group discussions, surveys</p>	<p>Manager, IRH, Government of Finland, international organisations, and agencies (online)</p> <p>Surveys of the Government, TSIs, MSMEs (online)</p> <p>Small group discussions with women entrepreneurs and women's NGOs</p> <p>On-site observations</p>	<p>Number of clients benefitting from improved and new services provided by TSIs, including disaggregated by sex</p> <p>Volume in USD of export contracts supported</p> <p>Number of MSMEs supported, women/men led</p> <p>Number of new enterprises in non-traditional sectors supported, women/men led</p> <p>Number of participants in value chain networks/communication supported disaggregated by sex</p> <p>Number of women entrepreneurs supported</p> <p>Pre-and post-intervention capacity level (human, financial, technical) of surveyed enterprises based on self-assessment</p> <p>Observable on-the-field changes in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours as a result of the project</p>	<p>Comparative Analysis</p> <p>Descriptive Analysis</p> <p>Narrative Analysis</p> <p>Gender Assessment via use of Gender Results Effectiveness Framework scale</p> <p>Environmental Assessment via use of Social and Environmental Standards checklist</p> <p>Attribution Analysis (tentatively)</p>
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<p>EQ 7. What factors have contributed to achieving or not achieving intended outputs and outcomes?</p>	<p>What were the enabling and constraining factors affecting project implementation?</p> <p>Were some of these factors addressed in the assumptions underlying project intervention?</p> <p>Were some of these factors addressed in the project risk analysis?</p> <p>How well the project capitalized on the enabling factors?</p> <p>How well the project addressed constraining factors?</p> <p>Did the project benefit from any complementarities/synergies with other projects/programmes in the area of trade funded by other entities (donors, public and private)?</p>	<p>Annual Progress Reports</p> <p>Combined Delivery Reports</p> <p>Annual Work Plans</p> <p>Minutes of Regional Project Board Meetings</p> <p>Minutes of National Stakeholders Meetings</p> <p>Online studies, assessments, research available</p> <p>Interviews, surveys</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with the UNDP COs, Government, TSIs, MSMEs, donors (on-site and online)</p> <p>Interviews with UNDP Project Manager, IRH, Government of Finland, international organisations, and agencies (online)</p> <p>Surveys of the Government, TSIs, MSMEs (online)</p>	<p>Evidence of enabling and constraining factors affecting project implementation</p> <p>Evidence of project management capitalizing on enabling factors and addressing constraining factors</p> <p>Evidence of complementarities/synergies with other projects conducive to achievements</p>	<p>Causal Analysis (process tracing, contribution analysis)</p> <p>Outcome Mapping</p> <p>Content Analysis</p> <p>Comparative Analysis</p> <p>Narrative Analysis</p>
<p>EQ 8. To what extent has the project been appropriately responsive to the needs of the national constituents and changing partner priorities?</p>	<p>Have the priorities of key stakeholders with a role in project implementation changed since the design of the project?</p> <p>Are there any indications of relevant amendments to the project intervention logic, activity plans or cost-sharing agreements as a response to changing needs and priorities of key stakeholders with a role in project implementation?</p>	<p>Annual Progress Reports</p> <p>Combined Delivery Reports</p> <p>Annual Work Plans</p> <p>Minutes of Regional Project Board Meetings</p> <p>Minutes of National Stakeholders Meetings</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with the UNDP COs, Government (on-site)</p> <p>Interviews with UNDP Project Manager, IRH, Government of Finland,</p>	<p>Relevant adjustments to the project intervention logic, activity plans or cost-sharing agreements responding to needs of national constituents and changing partner priorities</p>	<p>Causal Analysis (process tracing, contribution analysis)</p> <p>Outcome Mapping</p> <p>Content Analysis</p> <p>Comparative Analysis</p>

		Stakeholders' needs assessments Stakeholder's Consultation Minutes Interviews, surveys	international organisations, and agencies (online) Surveys of the Government, TSIs, MSMEs (online)		Narrative Analysis Gender Assessment via use of Gender Results Effectiveness Framework scale
EQ 9. How appropriate and effective were selected strategies and approaches in project intervention?	To what extent has the UNDP partnership strategy been appropriate and effective? Was project's holistic approach (i.e., addressing regional/national levels and macro/meso/micro levels) appropriate and effective? Was the paradigm shift proposed by the project (i.e., focus on green niche rather than traditional exports) appropriate and effective? Are there any alternative strategies that could have been more appropriate and effective?	Project Document Annual Progress Reports Interviews, surveys	Document, literature review Semi-structured interviews with UNDP COs, Government, TSI, MSMEs, donors (on-site) Interviews with UNDP Project Manager, IRH, Government of Finland (online) Surveys of the Government, TSIs, MSMEs (online)	Project strategies and approaches were effective in achieving project results	Theory of Change Analysis Causal Analysis (process tracing, contribution analysis) Outcome Mapping Content Analysis Comparative Analysis
EFFICIENCY					
EQ 10. To what extent was the project management structure as outlined in the project document efficient in	Were roles assigned and coordination at the regional and national levels, including management, quality assurance, monitoring, and assistance efficient in generating the expected results?	Project Document Annual Progress Reports Minutes of Regional Project Board Meetings	Document review Semi-structured interviews with UNDP COs, Government, TSI, MSMEs (on-site)	Evidence of effective project planning, monitoring, review, communication by UNDP Level of clarity of distribution of project areas at the regional and national levels	Theory of Change Analysis Causal Analysis (process tracing, contribution analysis)

<p>generating the expected results?</p>	<p>Was the Project Board established (with an appropriate gender balance, ensuring representation from both women and men), and were they effectively fulfilling their roles and responsibilities?</p> <p>Was a project monitoring and reporting framework in place and functional?</p> <p>Was the project transparent with project stakeholders, so that they can understand the main issues and direction of the project?</p> <p>Did the project have accountability mechanisms so that the beneficiaries can claim for their rights or demand responsibilities if needed?</p> <p>To what extent lessons learned, including on gender equality and women's empowerment, are being documented and shared with appropriate parties who could learn from the project?</p>	<p>Minutes of National Stakeholders Meetings</p> <p>Project Communication Plan</p> <p>Recorded stakeholders' feedback/assessments resulting from project activities</p> <p>Interviews, surveys</p>	<p>Interviews with UNDP Project Manager, IRH, Government of Finland, international organisations, agencies) (online)</p> <p>Surveys of the Government, TSIs, MSMEs (online)</p>	<p>Evidence of experienced monitoring and evaluation personnel at all levels to monitor the project</p> <p>Evidence of action (corrective or otherwise) being taken based on monitoring reports</p> <p>Evidence of effective communication with national constituents</p> <p>Evidence of documented lessons being learned and put into practice in-country or elsewhere</p>	<p>Content Analysis</p> <p>Comparative Analysis</p>
<p>EQ 11. To what extent have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner?</p>	<p>Were there any delays in delivery of project activities and funds?</p> <p>What are the reasons for these delays?</p> <p>How important are the delays and what were their consequences on project delivery?</p>	<p>Combined Delivery Reports</p> <p>Annual Progress Reports</p> <p>Annual Work Plans</p> <p>Minutes from Regional Project Board Meetings</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with UNDP COs, Government, TSI, MSMEs (on-site)</p> <p>Interviews with UNDP Project</p>	<p>Evidence of timely delivery of project funds and activities</p> <p>Evidence of revisions and corrective measures due to delays</p>	<p>Content Analysis</p> <p>Comparative Analysis</p> <p>Follow the Money Analysis</p>

	To what extent has the planning been revised accordingly and appropriate corrective measures have been defined and implemented?	Minutes from National Stakeholders' Meetings Interviews, surveys	Manager, IRH, Government of Finland, international organisations, and agencies (online) Surveys of the Government, TSIs, MSMEs (online)		
EQ 12. To what extent have the UNDP project implementation strategy and execution been efficient and cost-effective?	Were the inputs/resources provided by various stakeholders adequate for achieving the planned results? What is the actual (or most recent) level of spending compared to the total budget (in %)? Was spending in line with the budget? Was at least 15% of programmatic budget spent on gender issues and focused exclusively on support activities for women entrepreneurs? To what extent have project resources been used efficiently? Have activities supporting the strategy been cost-effective?	Combined Delivery Reports Annual Progress Reports Annual Work Plans Minutes from Regional Project Board Meetings Minutes from National Stakeholders' Meetings Interviews, surveys	Document review Semi-structured interviews with UNDP COs, Government, TSI, MSMEs (on-site) Interviews with UNDP Project Manager, IRH, Government of Finland, international organisations, and agencies (online) Surveys of the Government, TSIs, MSMEs (online)	Evidence of spending according to plans Evidence of appropriate changes to design, delivery or budget to improve cost efficiency and effectiveness Evidence of reviews and evaluations focussing on value for money Evidence of funds being managed holistically	Theory of Change Analysis Follow the Money Analysis Cost Variance Analysis
SUSTAINABILITY					
EQ 13. Are/have there been any risks that may jeopardize the	Are /have there been any financial, social, political, and other risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outputs?	Combined Delivery Reports Annual Progress Reports	Document review Semi-structured interviews with UNDP COs,	Evidence of risks that may jeopardise sustainability of project outputs and mitigation measures	Outcome Mapping Content Analysis

<p>sustainability of project outputs?</p>	<p>Is there any risk that unintended groups may capture the project benefits instead of the targeted beneficiaries?</p> <p>Has the project taken specific measures to mitigate any identified risks?</p>	<p>Minutes from Regional Project Board Meetings</p> <p>Minutes from National Stakeholders' Meetings</p> <p>Risks Matrix</p> <p>Interviews, surveys</p>	<p>Government, TSI, MSMEs (on-site)</p> <p>Interviews with UNDP Project Manager, IRH, Government of Finland, international organisations, and agencies (online)</p> <p>Surveys of the Government, TSIs, MSMEs (online)</p>		<p>Comparative Analysis</p>
<p>EQ 14. What is the likelihood that the benefits from the project will be maintained for a reasonably long period of time after the project phase out?</p>	<p>Is access to the benefits generated by the intervention affordable to target groups over the long term?</p> <p>Does the proposed intervention increase resilience to shocks and pressure (by addressing specific dimensions of fragility and their root causes)?</p> <p>What are the conditions for the continuation of existing and expected positive effects of the project, including its economic, environmental, and social sustainability and gender equality?</p> <p>What are the assumptions and risks related to such conditions, including, but not limited to stakeholder ownership and engagement, absorptive capacity,</p>	<p>Third-Party Cost-Sharing Agreement between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and UNDP</p> <p>Memorandums of Understanding/Cooperation Agreements with/between key project stakeholders</p> <p>Project Document – Phase V</p> <p>Annual Progress Reports</p> <p>Interviews, small group discussions, survey</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with UNDP COs, Government, TSI, MSMEs (on-site)</p> <p>Interviews with UNDP Project Manager, IRH, Government of Finland (online)</p> <p>Surveys of the Government, TSIs, MSMEs (online)</p> <p>Small group discussions with</p>	<p>Evidence of indications of long-term, sustainable benefits for intended beneficiaries</p> <p>Evidence of clear plans and commitment by key stakeholders to ensure sustainability of benefits</p> <p>Level of capacity of key stakeholders to ensure sustainability of benefits</p>	<p>Outcome Mapping</p> <p>Content Analysis</p> <p>Comparative Analysis</p> <p>Gender Assessment via use of Gender Results Effectiveness Framework scale</p> <p>Environmental Assessment via use of Social and Environmental Standards checklist</p>

	<p>political will, and national resource availability?</p> <p>Has the intervention a potential to be scaled up under the above conditions?</p>		women entrepreneurs		
EQ 15. To what extent this UNDP intervention has a well-designed and well-planned exit strategies?	<p>Has a phasing out plan (basis for exit strategy) been developed?</p> <p>What mechanisms are in place to assure sustainable local ownership and sustainability after the project ends?</p> <p>Has the transition from Phase IV into Phase V aligns with the exit strategy of the project and support sustainability of the project?</p>	<p>Project Document</p> <p>Exit strategy/phasing out plan</p> <p>Memorandums of Understanding/Cooperation Agreements with/between key project stakeholders</p> <p>Project Document– Phase V</p> <p>Interviews, surveys</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with UNDP COs, Government, TSI, MSMEs (on-site)</p> <p>Interviews with UNDP Project Manager, IRH, Government of Finland, international organisations, and agencies (online)</p> <p>Surveys of the Government, TSIs, MSMEs (online)</p>	<p>Evidence that a documented phasing out plan/exit strategy is in place that is practical and appropriate</p> <p>Evidence that the phasing out plan/exit strategy has been agreed between UNDP, Government of Finland and national counterparts</p> <p>Evidence of clear delineation between Phase IV and Phase V project activities</p>	<p>Content Analysis</p> <p>Comparative Analysis</p>
IMPACT					
EQ 16. To what extent has the project made positive changes on impact level (i.e., inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, employment, and	<p>Is there any evidence of reasonable assumptions being made about attribution of benefits to the project?</p> <p>Is there any evidence of tracking of attribution of project to changes at impact level?</p>	<p>Project Document</p> <p>Annual Progress Reports</p> <p>Data from statistical offices/administrative data on relevant impact indicators</p> <p>Interviews, surveys</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with UNDP COs, Government, TSI, MSMEs (on-site)</p> <p>Interviews with UNDP Project</p>	<p>Evidence of definition, measurement, tracking of attribution of project intervention to positive changes</p> <p>Growth rate in participant countries/target regions</p>	<p>Theory of Change Analysis</p> <p>Causal Analysis (process tracing, contribution analysis)</p> <p>Content Analysis</p>

decent work for all)?	What was countries' performance in terms of economic growth, employment, and creation of decent jobs?		<p>Manager, IRH, Government of Finland, international organisations, and agencies (online)</p> <p>Surveys of the Government, TSIs, MSMEs (online)</p>	<p>Employment level in participant countries/target regions, disaggregated by sex</p> <p>Number of new decent jobs created, disaggregated by sex</p>	<p>Comparative Analysis</p> <p>Descriptive Analysis</p> <p>Attribution Analysis (tentatively)</p>
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Data Collection Instruments

1. Guide for semi-structured interviews with key project stakeholders

Interviewee/s	
Function	
Date of meeting	
Place of meeting	
Interviewer	Onorica Banciu
In confidence/shareable	In confidence

Presentation: project's title, dates, framework, self-presentation by expert (name, function, specify the expert is independent), and purpose of the interview.

Purpose of the interview: It aims to gather insights into what aspects of the project were useful, what worked well, what did not work as expected, and how things could be improved in the future. This interview is not intended for evaluating individual performance, controlling, or auditing, but rather as a learning exercise. The focus is on the interviewees' personal experiences and opinions, encouraging them to speak in their personal capacity rather than as representatives of their institutions/enterprises. The goal is to gain valuable insights and perspectives to inform future initiatives.

Anonymity: the process ensures anonymity - interview notes will not be shared, and interview results will be synthesized into the evaluation report, without attributable statement.

Indicative questions (for reference only – to be used in conjunction with the Evaluation Matrix and adapted to specific group)

1. What was your involvement in the project?
2. How long have you been involved?
3. What specific support did the project provide to you and your institution/company?
4. How relevant do you think the project is to your institution's/company's needs and priorities?
5. How do you appreciate the project's overall performance in terms of quality and timeliness of delivery?
6. What were the most significant changes that this project brought for your institution/company?
7. What are the most significant achievements of the project on regional/country/community/sector levels?
8. What worked less well during the project implementation and why?
9. In your opinion, what are the key factors that have contributed to the project's overall success or hindered its effectiveness?
10. Were there any unexpected external factors or events that impacted the project? If so, how were they managed and what lessons were learned?
11. Have the project management bodies and partners been sufficiently active in guiding and responding to issues?

12. How has the project leveraged partnerships and collaborations to achieve results?
13. Are there any notable success stories or best practices that have emerged from the project?
Can you provide specific examples?
14. In your opinion, how did the project impact the following (will select relevant topics based on stakeholder type)?
 - Trade and private sector policies and legislation
 - Business development services
 - Private sector development
 - Country's export competitiveness
 - Diversification of exports
 - Diversification of export markets
 - Efficiency and sustainability of created value chains
 - Improvement of productive capacities
 - Level of incomes in target companies/regions
 - Level of employment in target companies/regions
 - Economic growth
 - Environmental protection
 - Women empowerment
 - Marginalized groups
15. What activities initiated under the project will be continued within the country/institution?
16. Do you have sufficient human, financial, and technical capacity to carry on activities?
17. Are there any collaboration agreements (memorandums) signed between your institution/you and the project or project stakeholders?
18. If you could change something about the topic, scope, or content of the project, what would it be?
19. Is there any additional information or insights you would like to share about the project?

2. Guide for semi-structured interviews with country development partners

Interviewee/s	
Function	
Date of meeting	
Place of meeting	
Interviewer	Onorica Banciu
In confidence/shareable	In confidence

Presentation: project's title, dates, framework, self-presentation by expert (name, function, specify the expert is independent), and purpose of the interview.

Purpose of the interview: It aims to gather insights into what aspects of the project were useful, what worked well, what did not work as expected, and how things could be improved in the future. This interview is not intended for evaluating individual performance, controlling, or auditing, but rather as a learning exercise. The goal is to gain valuable insights and perspectives to inform future initiatives.

Anonymity: the process ensures anonymity - interview notes will not be shared, and interview results will be synthesized into the evaluation report, without attributable statement.

Indicative questions (for reference only – to be used in conjunction with the Evaluation Matrix and adapted to specific group):

1. Could you provide an overview of your organization's interventions that complements the AfT Phase IV project?
2. How does your organisation's interventions align with and contribute to the objectives of the project?
3. What specific activities or interventions does your organisation focus on, and how do they complement the activities of the AfT Phase IV project?
4. How do you ensure coordination and collaboration with the project to avoid duplication of efforts and maximize synergies?
5. Have you encountered any challenges or obstacles in coordinating and collaborating with the project? If yes, how have you addressed them?
6. Have you identified any areas of potential overlap or gaps between your organisation's interventions and the AfT Phase IV project? If yes, how have you addressed them?
7. Can you share any examples of successful collaboration or joint initiatives between your organisation and AfT Phase IV project?
8. How do you ensure the sustainability of your projects' outcomes beyond the project duration and its integration into broader development strategies or policies?
9. How did the collaboration between your organisation and the AfT Phase IV project impact the following?
 - Trade and private sector policies and legislation
 - Business development services
 - Private sector development
 - Country's export competitiveness
 - Diversification of exports
 - Diversification of export markets
 - Efficiency and sustainability of created value chains
 - Improvement of productive capacities

- Level of incomes in target companies/regions
- Level of employment in target companies/regions
- Economic growth
- Environmental protection
- Women empowerment
- Marginalized groups

10. What are the key lessons learned or best practices that have emerged from your projects' collaboration with the AfT Phase IV project?
11. From your perspective, what recommendations or suggestions do you have for improving the coordination and collaboration between similar interventions in the future?

3. Guide for semi-structured interviews with UNDP project management

Interviewee/s	
Function/s	
Date of meeting	
Place of meeting	
Interviewer	Onorica Banciu
In confidence/shareable	In confidence

Presentation: self-presentation by expert (name, function, specify the expert is independent), and purpose of the interview.

Purpose of the interview: It aims to gather insights into what aspects of the project were useful, what worked well, what did not work as expected, and how things could be improved in the future. This interview is not intended for evaluating individual performance, controlling, or auditing, but rather as a learning exercise. The goal is to gain valuable insights and perspectives to inform future initiatives.

Anonymity: the process ensures anonymity - interview notes will not be shared, and interview results will be synthesized into the evaluation report, without attributable statement.

Indicative questions (for reference only – to be used in conjunction with the Evaluation Matrix)

1. What was your involvement in the project?
2. How long have you been involved?
3. Can you provide an overview of the project's objectives and the rationale behind its design?
4. How was the project planned and what were the key strategies and activities identified to achieve the desired outcomes?
5. What were the major challenges or obstacles faced during the project implementation, and how were they addressed?
6. How would you evaluate the effectiveness of the project's coordination and communication mechanisms among project management and stakeholders?
7. Can you share any examples of successful collaborations or partnerships established during the project and how they contributed to its outcomes?
8. How effective and efficient was the project design in facilitating project coordination, communication, and implementation at local, national, and regional levels? Would you have changed anything in hindsight?
9. How was the process of annual planning conducted, and how effective has it been in achieving its objectives?
10. What mechanisms were in place to monitor the progress of the project and ensure its alignment with the intended outcomes? How was data collected and analysed during the project? Were there any specific tools or methodologies used for monitoring and evaluation purposes?
11. What were the key decisions made during the project implementation, and how were they informed by monitoring and evaluation findings or feedback from stakeholders?

12. How were financial resources allocated and managed throughout the project? Have actual disbursements been in line with annual budgets, work plans and schedules? Were there any delays in administrative processes?
13. Can you discuss the project's key achievements and how they align with the expected outcomes and impacts?
14. Were there any unexpected or unintended results or impacts of the project? If yes, how were they identified and addressed?
15. How have the lessons learned from the project been documented and shared within the organization or with relevant stakeholders?
16. In retrospect, what aspects of the project's design or implementation would you change or improve?
17. What are your recommendations for future projects or initiatives in this area based on the experiences and lessons learned from this project?
18. Is there any additional information or insights you would like to share about the project?

4. Guide for semi-structured interview with the Government of Finland

Interviewee/s	
Function/s	
Date of meeting	
Place of meeting	
Interviewer	Onorica Banciu
In confidence/shareable	In confidence

Presentation: self-presentation by expert (name, function, specify the expert is independent), and purpose of the interview.

Purpose of the interview: It aims to gather insights into what aspects of the project were useful, what worked well, what did not work as expected, and how things could be improved in the future. This interview is not intended for evaluating individual performance, controlling, or auditing, but rather as a learning exercise. The goal is to gain valuable insights and perspectives to inform future initiatives.

Anonymity: the process ensures anonymity - interview notes will not be shared, and interview results will be synthesized into the evaluation report, without attributable statement.

Indicative questions (for reference only – to be used in conjunction with the Evaluation Matrix)

1. Can you provide an overview of the project's objectives and its alignment with GoF funding priorities?
2. What motivated GoF to support this particular project?
3. How did GoF assess the project's feasibility and potential for success before providing funding?
4. Can you discuss the process of monitoring the project's progress and outcomes from GoF's perspective?
5. Were there any specific milestones or deliverables outlined in the funding agreement? How were they monitored and evaluated?
6. How did the GoF communicate and collaborate with the project implementers throughout the project cycle?
7. In your opinion, what were the key strengths of the project and its implementation?
8. Were there any challenges or obstacles encountered during the project, and how were they addressed?
9. How did the GoF support the project's capacity-building initiatives or knowledge transfer activities?
10. Did the GoF conduct any site visits or evaluations during the project's implementation? If so, what were your observations?
11. How did the GoF measure the project's impact and assess its effectiveness in achieving the desired outcomes?
12. What lessons or insights has the GoF gained from supporting this project that could be applied to future initiatives?

13. Did the GoF provide any technical or advisory support to the project implementers? If yes, how was it facilitated?
14. How did the GoF ensure transparency and accountability in the utilization of the project funds?
15. Were there any modifications or adjustments made to the project plan or budget during the implementation phase? If so, what triggered those changes?
16. Can you discuss any synergies or collaborations established with other stakeholders or donors for this project?
17. How did the GoF promote sustainability and long-term impact in the project's design and implementation?
18. What feedback or recommendations does the MoF have for improving the effectiveness of future projects in a similar domain?
19. Can you share any success stories or examples of notable achievements resulting from the project's implementation?
20. Is there any additional information or insights you would like to share about the MoF's involvement in this project?

5. Guide for semi-structured interviews with international organisations and agencies

Interviewee/s	
Function	
Date of meeting	
Place of meeting	
Interviewer	Onorica Banciu
In confidence/shareable	In confidence

Presentation: project's title, dates, framework, self-presentation by expert (name, function, specify the expert is independent), and purpose of the interview.

Purpose of the interview: It aims to gather insights into what aspects of the project were useful, what worked well, what did not work as expected, and how things could be improved in the future. This interview is not intended for evaluating individual performance, controlling, or auditing, but rather as a learning exercise. The goal is to gain valuable insights and perspectives to inform future initiatives.

Anonymity: the process ensures anonymity - interview notes will not be shared, and interview results will be synthesized into the evaluation report, without attributable statement.

Indicative questions (for reference only – to be used in conjunction with the Evaluation Matrix and adapted to specific group):

1. How would you describe the nature and extent of your organization's/agency/s collaboration with the project being evaluated?
2. What specific role did your organization/agency play in the collaborative efforts? Can you provide examples of the activities or contributions made?
3. What were the key benefits or advantages that your organization/agency derived from the collaboration?
4. Were there any challenges or obstacles encountered during the collaboration process? If so, how were they addressed?
5. How did your organization/agency ensure coordination and communication with UNDP and country stakeholders throughout the project?
6. Did the collaboration lead to any synergies or innovative approaches that enhanced the effectiveness or impact of the project? Can you provide specific examples?
7. How did the collaboration contribute to the achievement of shared project goals or outcomes?
8. Were there any notable lessons learned or best practices that emerged from the collaborative efforts?
9. How was the performance or progress of the collaborative activities monitored and reported?
10. How did the collaboration contribute to sustainability planning or the long-term impacts of the project?
11. Were there any mechanisms in place to foster knowledge exchange, learning, or cross-sharing of experiences with and between project stakeholders?
12. Based on your experience, what recommendations or insights do you have for improving future collaborations on similar projects?

6. Online Survey of Government officials

Dear Madam/Sir,

The UNDP is currently conducting the final evaluation of the 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase IV' project implemented during 2018-2023. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess whether the project has achieved intended outputs and outcomes and the extent to which it had an impact on inclusive and sustainable growth and employment in your country. In addition, the UNDP would like to derive lessons learned in project implementation that will be essential for Phase V of the project.

As such, this survey, we kindly ask you to complete, is intended to gather the views and perceptions of key government officials who are familiar with or have been involved in 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase IV' project implementation on the overall relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of the project. Your participation in this evaluation through the completion of this survey will be greatly appreciated.

The survey should take **15 minutes** to complete. For most questions you would be kindly asked to tick the answer which is relevant to you. Wherever there is an opportunity for a write-in response, we would appreciate it if you could kindly provide details on the specific matter. We kindly request that you complete this survey by 14 July 2023. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Responses will be combined through our analysis and reporting so that individual responses are not identifiable to any individual.

Thank you very much for your valuable support in project evaluation!

1. Please, indicate the name of the institution you work for.
 - Ministry of Trade/Commerce/Economy
 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 - Ministry of Agriculture
 - Ministry of Finance
 - Ministry of Justice
 - Export Promotion Agency
 - State Investment Agency
 - Women's Committee
 - Agency for Standardization
 - Research Institution
 - Local Government
 - Other, please specify _____

2. Do you work for a national-level, sub-national or local level institution? Please select one answer.
 - National level
 - Sub-national level
 - Local level
 - Other, please specify _____

3. Please, indicate your position in the institution.
 - Senior Management
 - Head of Department/Unit
 - Chief Specialist
 - Specialist
 - Advisor
 - Other, please specify _____

4. What is your gender? Please select one answer.
 - Female
 - Male
 - Prefer not to say

5. To what extent have you been involved in the 'Aid for Trade – Phase IV' project implementation during 2018-2023? Please select one answer.
 - Constantly, throughout entire implementation
 - Often, since start
 - Occasionally
 - Involved only recently

6. Please, indicate the main activities in which you were involved during project implementation. Select all activities that are relevant.
 - Capacity building activities (trainings, workshops)
 - Conferences/Economic Forums
 - Study tours
 - Trade fairs/B2B missions
 - Policy dialogue discussions
 - Consultancy/Advisory services
 - Other, please specify _____

7. Please select one answer for each statement that best reflects your perception of the following statements regarding the relevance of the 'Aid for Trade – Phase IV' project:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
The project has adequately reflected my country's needs and sector development priorities					
The project is relevant to the work of my organization					

The project delivery method (i.e., implementation at regional/local and macro/meso/micro levels) was appropriate to contribute to inclusive and sustainable growth, employment, and poverty reduction					
The project has adequately addressed the needs of MSMEs in my country					
The project has adequately addressed the needs of women, youth, and the most vulnerable groups in my country					
The project has adequately addressed the environmental concerns in my country					
The project has adequately considered internal and external risks which could hinder implementation					
The project has adequately considered implementation capacity in my government					
The project was complementary/synergetic with other trade and private sector development related projects implemented in my country by development partners					

8. How satisfied are you with project implementation? Please select one answer.

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Slightly satisfied
- Not satisfied

9. How useful was the project to you and/or your institution?

- Very useful
- Useful
- Slightly useful
- Not useful

10. How successful was the project in contributing to the following results? Please select one answer for each result.

	SUCCESSFUL	RELATIVELY SUCCESSFUL	NOT SUCCESSFUL	DON'T KNOW
Improving cooperation between trade policy makers and implementers, as well as private sector entities and national export promotion agencies and organizations				
Enabling policies and regulations for inclusive and trade oriented private sector development				
Strengthening trade support institutions that provide efficient services to the private sector				
Supporting efficient and competitive producers and processors contributing to sustainable human development				

11. How do you appreciate the support of the project in delivering results in terms of the following aspects? Please check one answer per each aspect.

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	POOR
Adequate project design			
Effectiveness of delivery methods			
Appropriate project support staff			
Sufficient amount of resources provided			
Effective communication with the Government			
Complementarity/synergies with other projects			
Responsiveness to changing needs			
Timely delivery of support			

12. Which of the following external and internal factors, in your opinion, affected the achievement of project results most? Please select one answer for each factor.

	SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED	SLIGHTLY AFFECTED	NOT AFFECTED
COVID-19 pandemic			
War in Ukraine			
Recent crisis in Afghanistan			
Exchange rate fluctuations			
Weather conditions/natural disasters in your country			
Political instability in your country			
Staff turnover within your government			
Issues related to capacity of key stakeholders			
Issues related with quality and timeliness of project support			

13. How successful was the project in implementing the following activities? Please select one answer for each activity.

	SUCCESSFUL	RELATIVELY SUCCESSFUL	NOT SUCCESSFUL	NOT RELEVANT
Study tours				
B2B missions				
Regional cooperation initiatives (CAWG – Central Asian Working Group on Export Promotion of Agricultural Produce, Regional Trade Facilitation Platform)				
Participation in exhibitions and fairs				
Mentorship Programme for women and young entrepreneurs				
Design and delivery of trainings and workshops				
Support in improving trade and private sector policies and legislation				
Research and assessments conducted				
Support provided in access to finance				

Creation of online trade-related platforms				
Support in implementation of international standards and certification				
Events and /or Campaigns dedicated to promotion and development of exports as well as trade information to MSME exporters, including in the regions (such as Export Caravans, etc.)				
Facilitation of online export-related service provision				
Facilitation of offline export-related service provision				
Facilitation of exporters' market access				
Creation of green value chains				
Support in development and improvement of financial products and services				
Support to establishment of institutions/centres servicing entrepreneurs				
Promotion materials and activities				
Provision of alternative financing mechanisms				
Organization of demo fields				

14. What, in your opinion, was the project contribution on following outcomes and impacts? Please select one answer for each outcome and impact.

	SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION	SOME CONTRIBUTION	NO CONTRIBUTION	DON'T KNOW
Inclusive and sustainable growth				
Export competitiveness				
Export diversification				
Green 'niche' Value Chains created/upgraded				
Increased productivity in farming/agriculture				
Increased productivity in food-processing industry				
Increased productivity in tourism industry				
Environment sustainability				
Poverty reduction				
Creation of decent jobs				
Increase in income of people and regions				
Women empowerment				
Gender equality				
Facilitation of regional trade				

15. To what extent, in your opinion, have vulnerable groups been involved in project implementation? Please select one answer per group.

	SUFFICIENTLY	INSUFFICIENTLY	NOT RELEVANT	DON'T KNOW
Women				
Young people				
People with disabilities				
People with low incomes				
Returned migrants				
Refugees/asylum seekers				
Ethnic minorities				

16. What is your perception about the level of fitness of your country's trade and private sector policies and regulations to support inclusive growth, decent job creation and poverty reduction in your country. Please select one answer.

- 100% fit
- 50% fit
- More than 50% fit
- Less than 50% fit
- Not fit
- Don't know

17. To what extent do existing trade and private sector development policies in your country properly accommodate the needs of the following vulnerable groups? Please select one answer for each group.

	TO A GREAT EXTENT	TO SOME EXTENT	TO NO EXTENT	DON'T KNOW
Women				
Young people				
People with disabilities				
People with low incomes				
Returned migrants				
Refugees/asylum seekers				
Ethnic minorities				

18. What is your perception about the fitness level of trade support institutions in your country to provide efficient services to the private sector? Please select one answer.

- 100% fit
- 50% fit
- More than 50% fit
- Less than 50% fit
- Not fit
- Don't know

19. How would you assess the overall performance and current situation of MSMEs in terms of their growth, profitability, market presence, and operational efficiency compared to the year 2018? Please select one option that best reflects your evaluation.

- Considerable better
- Better
- Slightly better
- Worse
- Don't know

20. What are the most important constraints which MSMEs are facing now? Please select one answer for each type of constraint.

	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT
Access to finance				

Access to markets				
Access to information				
Access to adequate workforce				
High costs/access to business development services				
Access to technologies				
Lack of business management skills				
Limited digital literacy				
Burdensome regulations/bureaucratic procedures				
Taxation and burdensome tax administration				
Competition between formal and informal businesses				
Non-compliance with technical, sanitary, and phytosanitary standards				
Inadequate infrastructure (transport, energy, ICT, etc.)				

21. What are the most important constraints which women entrepreneurs are facing now? Please select one answer for each type of constraint.

	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT
Access to finance				
Access to markets				
Access to information				
Access to adequate workforce				
High costs/access to business development services				
Access to technologies				
Lack of business management skills				
Limited digital literacy				
Burdensome regulations/bureaucratic procedures				
Taxation and burdensome tax administration				
Competition between formal and informal businesses				
Non-compliance with technical, sanitary, and phytosanitary standards				
Inadequate infrastructure (transport, energy, ICT, etc.)				
Gender-based barriers and discrimination				
Access to affordable childcare				

22. Have your country's trade and private sector development objectives and priorities changed in the last four years? Please select one answer.

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

23. Please assess the changes related to following aspects by selecting one answer for each aspect.

	IMPROVED	WORSENER	DON'T KNOW
Business environment			

Rule of law, property rights and enhancing institutional capacity of government organizations			
Access to finance through provision of affordable local currency lending for SMEs and broadening the range of financing options			
Transport and energy infrastructure			
Compliance with technical, sanitary, and phytosanitary standards required for exports			
Skills, and qualifications of the workforce and the quality of higher education as well as vocational education and training			
Business development services provision and creating relevant ecosystem			

24. Has, in your opinion, the capacity of your institution (human, financial, technical) to develop and/or implement trade and private sector development policies and legislation changed in the last four years and how? Please select one answer per each type of capacity.

	IMPROVED	DECREASED	DID NOT CHANGE	DON'T KNOW
Human capacity (number of staff)				
Financial capacity (amount of money)				
Technical capacity (level of knowledge, skills, abilities and equipment)				

25. How do you appreciate the current level of capacity of your institution to develop and/or implement trade and private sectors development policies and legislation? Please select one answer per each type of capacity.

	SUFFICIENT	INSUFFICIENT	DON'T KNOW
Human capacity (number staff)			
Financial capacity (amount of money)			
Technical capacity (level of knowledge, skills, abilities and equipment)			

26. Please select the areas in which the next phase of the Aid for Trade project could provide support to increase the capacity of your institution.

	NEED SUPPORT	DON'T NEED SUPPORT	DON'T KNOW
Analysis of regional economic development perspectives			
Negotiation and implementation of regional trade agreements			
Upstream policy advice on creating a more favourable environment for the development of the trade-oriented private sector			
Developing policies aimed at diversification of the economy and exports			
Formulation of policies enabling digital and green trade			
Implementation of trade facilitation measures that support more efficient cross border trade and improve trade connectivity			

Developing policies that address labour issues, including informality, labour market inequalities			
Developing policies targeting better skillset matching and knowledge that meets the current and future needs of target value chains in green sector			

27. In which areas the Phase V of the Aid for Trade project could do better, as compared to the current Phase IV? Please answer YES, if improvements are strongly needed and NO, if no major improvements are needed.

	YES	NO
Definition of aid-for-trade needs		
Prioritization of aid-for-trade needs		
Formulation of activities		
Project management		
Use of funds		
Monitoring and reporting		
Coordination between regional and country teams		
Communication with stakeholders		
Focus on gender aspects		
Focus on human rights aspects		
Focus on marginalized groups		
Focus on environmental aspects		
Focus on digitalisation aspects		

Thank you very much for your answers!

7. Online Survey of Trade Support Institutions

Dear Madam/Sir,

The UNDP is currently conducting final evaluation of the 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase IV' project implemented during 2018-2023. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess whether the project has achieved intended outputs and outcomes and the extent to which it had an impact on inclusive and sustainable growth and employment in your country. In addition, the UNDP would like to derive lessons learned that will be essential for Phase V of the project.

As such, this survey, we kindly ask you to complete, is intended to gather the views and perceptions of trade support institutions who are familiar with or have been involved in 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase IV' project implementation on the overall relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of the project. Your participation in this evaluation through the completion of this survey will be greatly appreciated.

The survey should take **15 minutes** to complete. For most questions you would be kindly asked to tick the answer which is relevant to you. Wherever there is an opportunity for a write-in response, we would appreciate it if you could kindly provide details on the specific matter. We kindly request that you complete this survey by 14 July 2023. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Responses will be combined through our analysis and reporting so that individual responses are not identifiable to any individual.

Thank you very much for your valuable support in project evaluation!

1. Please, indicate the name of the institution you work for.
 - Export/Investment Promotion Agency
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Entrepreneurs Association
 - Women Business/Entrepreneurs Association
 - Consulting company
 - NGO
 - Research institution
 - Other, please specify _____

2. Do you work for a national-level, sub-national or local level institution? Please select one answer.
 - National level
 - Sub-national level
 - Local level
 - Other, please specify _____

3. Please, indicate your position in the institution.
 - Senior management
 - Mid-level management
 - Expert/specialist
 - Advisor
 - Other, please specify _____

4. What is your gender? Please select one answer.
 - Female
 - Male
 - Prefer not to say

5. To what extent have you been involved in the 'Aid for Trade – Phase IV' project implementation during 2018-2023? Please select one answer.
 - Constantly, throughout entire implementation
 - Often, since start
 - Occasionally
 - Involved only recently

6. Please, list the main activities in which you were involved during project implementation.
 - Capacity building activities (trainings, workshops)
 - Mentorship programme
 - Trade information dissemination events/campaigns (such as Export Caravans, etc)
 - Study tours
 - Trade fairs/exhibitions
 - B2B forums/missions
 - Policy dialogue discussions
 - Consultancy/Advisory services
 - Other, please specify _____

7. Please select one answer for each statement that best reflects your perception of the following statements regarding the relevance of the 'Aid for Trade – Phase IV' project:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
The project has adequately reflected my country's needs and sector development priorities					
The project is relevant to the work of my institution					
The project delivery method (i.e., implementation at regional/local and macro/meso/micro levels) was appropriate to contribute to inclusive					

and sustainable growth, employment, and poverty reduction					
The project has adequately addressed the needs of MSMEs and Trade Support Institutions in my country					
The project has adequately addressed the needs of women, youth, and the most vulnerable groups in my country					
The project has adequately addressed the environmental concerns in my country					
The project was complementary/synergetic with other trade and private sector development related projects implemented in my country by development partners					

8. How satisfied are you with project implementation? Please select one answer.

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Slightly satisfied
- Not satisfied

9. How useful was the project to you and/or your institution?

- Very useful
- Useful
- Slightly useful
- Not useful

10. How successful was the project in contributing to the following results? Please select one answer for each result.

	SUCCESSFUL	RELATIVELY SUCCESSFUL	NOT SUCCESSFUL	DON'T KNOW
Improving cooperation between trade policy makers and implementers, as well as private sector entities and national export promotion agencies				
Enabling policies and regulations for inclusive and trade oriented private sector development				
Strengthening trade support institutions to provide efficient services to the private sector				
Supporting efficient and competitive producers and processors contributing to sustainable human development				

11. How do you appreciate the support of the project in delivering results in terms of the following aspects? Please check one answer per each aspect.

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	POOR
Adequate project design			
Effectiveness of delivery methods			
Appropriate project support staff			
Sufficient amount of resources provided			

Effective communication			
Complementarity/synergies with other projects			
Responsiveness to changing needs			
Timely delivery of support			

12. Which of the following external and internal factors, in your opinion, affected the achievement of project results most? Please select one answer for each factor.

	SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED	SLIGHTLY AFFECTED	NOT AFFECTED
COVID-19 pandemic			
War in Ukraine			
Recent crisis in Afghanistan			
Exchange rate fluctuations			
Weather conditions/natural disasters in your country			
Political instability in your country			
Staff turnover within your government			
Issues related to capacity of key stakeholders			
Issues related with quality and timeliness of project support			

13. How successful was the project in implementing the following activities? Please select one answer for each activity.

	SUCCESSFUL	RELATIVELY SUCCESSFUL	NOT SUCCESSFUL	NOT RELEVANT
Study tours				
B2B missions				
Regional cooperation initiatives (CAWG - Central Asian Working Group on Export Promotion of Agricultural Produce, Regional Trade Facilitation Platform)				
Participation in exhibitions and fairs				
Mentorship Programme for women and young entrepreneurs				
Design and delivery of trainings and workshops				
Support in improving trade and private sector policies and legislation				
Research and assessments conducted				
Support provided in access to finance				
Creation of online trade-related platforms				
Support in implementation of international standards and certification				
Events and /or Campaigns dedicated to promotion and development of exports as well as trade information to MSME				

exporters, including in the regions (such as Export Caravans, etc.)				
Facilitation of online export-related service provision				
Facilitation of offline export-related service provision				
Facilitation of exporters' market access				
Creation/upgrade of green value chains				
Support in development and improvement of financial products and services				
Support to establishment of institutions/centres servicing entrepreneurs and/or traders				
Promotion materials and activities				
Provision of alternative financing mechanisms				
Organization of demo fields				

14. What was, in your opinion, the project contribution on following outcomes and impacts? Please select one answer for each outcome and impact.

	SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION	SOME CONTRIBUTION	NO CONTRIBUTION	DON'T KNOW
Inclusive and sustainable growth				
Export competitiveness				
Export diversification				
Green 'niche' Value Chains created/upgraded				
Increased productivity in farming/agriculture				
Increased productivity in food-processing industry				
Increased productivity in tourism industry				
Environment sustainability				
Poverty reduction				
Creation of decent jobs				
Increase in income of people and regions				
Women empowerment				
Gender equality				
Facilitation of regional trade				

15. To what extent, in your opinion, have vulnerable groups been involved in project implementation? Please select one answer per group.

	SUFFICIENTLY	INSUFFICIENTLY	NOT RELEVANT	DON'T KNOW
Women				
Young people				
People with disabilities				
People with low incomes				
Returned migrants				
Refugees/asylum seekers				

Ethnic minorities				
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16. What is your perception about the fitness level of trade support institutions in your country to provide efficient services to the private sector? Please select one answer.
- 100% fit
 - 50% fit
 - More than 50% fit
 - Less than 50% fit
 - Not fit
 - Don't know
17. To what extent has the level of services provided by trade support institutions increased since 2018? Please select one answer.
- Significantly increased
 - Slightly increased
 - Has not changed
 - Decreased
 - Don't know
18. To what extent has the level of access to services provided by trade support institutions has increased for women and young people since 2018?
- Significantly increased
 - Slightly increased
 - Has not changed
 - Decreased
 - Don't know
19. What are the most important constraints which MSMEs are facing now? Please select one answer for each type of constraint.

	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT
Access to finance				
Access to markets				
Access to information				
Access to adequate workforce				
High costs/access to business development services				
Access to technologies				
Lack of business management skills				
Limited digital literacy				
Burdensome regulations/bureaucratic procedures				
Taxation and burdensome tax administration				
Competition between formal and informal businesses				
Non-compliance with technical, sanitary, and phytosanitary standards				
Inadequate infrastructure (transport, energy, ICT, etc.)				

20. What are the three most important constraints which women entrepreneurs are facing now? Please select one answer for each type of constraint.

	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT
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Access to finance				
Access to markets				
Access to information				
Access to adequate workforce				
High costs/access to business development services				
Access to technologies				
Lack of business management skills				
Limited digital literacy				
Burdensome regulations/bureaucratic procedures				
Taxation and burdensome tax administration				
Competition between formal and informal businesses				
Non-compliance with technical, sanitary, and phytosanitary standards				
Inadequate infrastructure (transport, energy, ICT, etc.)				
Gender-based barriers and discrimination				
Access to affordable childcare				

21. What is your perception about the level of fitness of your country's trade and private sector policies and regulations to support inclusive growth, decent job creation and poverty reduction in your country. Please select one answer.

- 100% fit
- 50% fit
- More than 50% fit
- Less than 50% fit
- Not fit
- Don't know

22. Have your institution's priorities and plans changed in the last three years? Please select one answer.

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

23. Please assess the changes related to following aspects by selecting one answer for each aspect.

	IMPROVED	WORSENERD	DON'T KNOW
Digital services and online presence			
Support for quality and food safety standards			
Brand for country export products			
Support for private sector access to digital and e-commerce platforms			
Support for green exports			
Support to private sector to access and use trade intelligence			

24. Has, in your opinion, the capacity of your institution (human, financial, technical) to provide efficient services to the private sector changed in the last four years and how? Please select one answer per each type of capacity.

	IMPROVED	DECREASED	DID NOT CHANGE	DON'T KNOW
Human capacity (number of staff)				
Financial capacity (amount of money)				

Technical capacity (level of knowledge, skills, abilities and equipment)				
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25. How do you appreciate the current level of capacity of your institution to provide efficient services to the private sector? Please select one answer per each type of capacity.

	SUFFICIENT	INSUFFICIENT	DON'T KNOW
Human capacity (number staff)			
Financial capacity (amount of money)			
Technical capacity (level of knowledge, skills, abilities and equipment)			

26. Please select the areas in which the next phase of the Aid for Trade project could provide support to increase the capacity of your institution.

	NEED SUPPORT	DON'T NEED SUPPORT	DON'T KNOW
Moving operations of institution/organization online			
Expanding services for MSMEs (including management training and skills development)			
Enabling access to finance and investment			
Providing guidance in implementing environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors			
Increasing digital literacy and e-commerce capabilities			
Developing services for market data/trade intelligence provision			
Facilitating public-private dialogue			

27. In which areas the next Phase V of the Aid for Trade project could do better, as compared to the current Phase IV of the project? Please answer YES, if improvements are strongly needed and NO, if no major improvements are needed.

	YES	NO
Definition of aid-for-trade needs		
Prioritization of aid-for-trade needs		
Formulation of activities		
Project management		
Use of funds		
Monitoring and reporting		
Coordination between regional and country teams		
Communication with stakeholders		
Focus on gender aspects		
Focus on human rights aspects		
Focus on marginalized groups		
Focus on environmental aspects		
Focus on digitalisation aspects		

Thank you very much for your answers!

8. Online Survey of MSMEs

Dear Madam/Sir,

The UNDP is currently conducting the final evaluation of the 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase IV' project implemented during 2018-2023. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess whether the project has achieved intended outputs and outcomes and the extent to which it had an impact on inclusive and sustainable growth and employment in your country. In addition, the UNDP would like to derive lessons learned that will be essential for Phase V of the project.

As such, this survey, we kindly ask you to complete, is intended to gather the views and perceptions of the micro, medium and small enterprises (MSMEs) who are familiar with or have been involved in 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase IV' project implementation on the overall relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of the project. It is also intended to assess your needs in terms of productive, and export capacities. Your participation in this evaluation through the completion of this survey will be greatly appreciated.

The survey should take **20 minutes** to complete. For most questions you would be kindly asked to tick the answer which is relevant to you. Wherever there is an opportunity for a write-in response, we would appreciate it if you could kindly provide details on the specific matter. We kindly request that you complete this survey by 14 July 2023. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Responses will be combined through our analysis and reporting so that individual responses are not identifiable to any individual.

Thank you very much for your valuable support in project evaluation!

PART I. QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ENTERPRISE

1. Where is your enterprise located?
 - Capital city
 - Town
 - Village

2. Please, indicate your position in the enterprise.
 - Owner
 - Director
 - Manager
 - Expert/Specialist
 - Employee
 - Other_____

3. What is your gender? Please select one answer.
 - Female
 - Male
 - Prefer not to say

4. In which year your enterprise was created?
 Answer _____

5. What is the size of your enterprise in terms of number of employees? Please select one of the following answers:
 - Micro 1-9
 - Small 10-99
 - Medium 100-199

6. Is your enterprise led by:
 - Female
 - Male

7. What is the percent of women from total staff working in your enterprise?
 Answer _____

8. In which sector does your enterprise operate? Please select one of the following answers:
 - Agriculture
 - Food-processing
 - Apiculture/beekeeping
 - Textile
 - Tourism
 - Other_____

9. What were the main destination countries/regions for your products/services in 2018? Please arrange the following countries/regions from 1 to 6, where 1 is the top destination.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
China						
Russia						
EU						
CIS countries, other than Russia						
Middle East						
My country						
Other countries						

10. What are the main destination countries/regions for your products/services in 2023? Please arrange the following countries/regions from 1 to 6, where 1 is the top destination.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
China						
Russia						
EU						
CIS countries, other than Russia						
Middle East						
My country						
Other countries						

11. How would you rate the performance of your business over the last five years? Please select one answer.

- Very poor
- Poor
- OK, was getting by
- Good enough, despite crises
- Very good, despite crises

12. How many new jobs have you created in your enterprise since 2018?

- More than 100
- Between 50 and 100
- Between 10 and 50
- Less than 10
- None

13. Have your enterprise's sales increased since 2018? Please select one answer.

- Yes
- No

14. If yes, by how much the sales have increased? Please choose one answer.

- Over 100%
- Between 50-100%
- Between 25-50%
- Between 5-25%
- Less than 5%

15. If not, by how much the sales have dropped? Please choose one answer.

- Over 100%
- Between 50-100%
- Between 25-50%
- Between 5-25%
- Less than 5%

16. What are the main constraints to your business? Please select one answer for each type of constraint.

	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT
Access to finance				
Access to markets				
Access to information				
Access to adequate workforce				
High costs/access to business development services				
Access to technologies				
Lack of business management skills				
Limited digital literacy				

Burdensome regulations/bureaucratic procedures				
Taxation and burdensome tax administration				
Competition between formal and informal businesses				
Non-compliance with technical, sanitary, and phytosanitary standards				
Inadequate infrastructure (transport, energy, ICT, etc.)				

17. How do you assess the following aspects pertaining to your business? Please check the level of satisfaction with each of the following aspects.

	EXCELLENT	ACCEPTABLE	UNACCEPTABLE
Compliance with international standards			
Production capacities			
Environment-friendly processes/technologies			
Compliance with occupational safety and health standards			
Equal opportunity employment			
Decent payment of workers			

18. Has, in your opinion, the capacity of your enterprise (human, financial, technical) to do business changed in the last four years and how? Please select one answer per each type of capacity.

	IMPROVED	DECREASED	DID NOT CHANGE	DON'T KNOW
Human capacity (number of staff)				
Financial capacity (amount of money)				
Technical capacity (level of knowledge, skills, abilities, and equipment)				

19. How do you appreciate the current level of capacity of your enterprise to do business? Please select one answer per each type of capacity.

	SUFFICIENT	INSUFFICIENT	DON'T KNOW
Human capacity (number staff)			
Financial capacity (amount of money)			
Technical capacity (level of knowledge, skills, abilities, and equipment)			

20. Have you accessed any services provided by the trade support institutions in the last five years? Please select one answer.

- Yes
- No

21. If yes, how satisfied are you with the services provided to you by trade support institutions? Please select one answer.

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Slightly satisfied
- Not satisfied

22. Are the services provided by the trade support institutions affordable? Please select one answer.

- Yes

- No
23. Does your enterprise participate in a value chain network? Please select one answer.
- Yes
 - No
24. If yes, since when?
- Before 2018
 - After 2018
25. In which sector does the value chain network operate?
- Agriculture
 - Food-processing
 - Apiculture/beekeeping
 - Textile
 - Tourism
 - Other_____
26. What is your enterprise role in the value chain network? Please select one or more answers.
- Input supplier
 - Producer
 - Processor
 - Wholesaler
 - Retailer
 - Exporter
 - Other_____
27. How satisfied are you with the operation of the value chain network? Please select one answer.
- Very satisfied
 - Satisfied
 - Slightly satisfied
 - Not satisfied
28. Do you see your enterprise still operating in two years? Please select one answer.
- Yes
 - No
29. If yes, please explain how you expect to continue your business over the next two years. Please select one or more relevant boxes:
- No changes planned
 - Make new investments in the business
 - Expand business operations
 - Hire a professional manager to run it for me
 - Increase the number of workers
 - Decrease the number of workers
 - Improve employment/working conditions of staff
 - Expand the range of new products/services
 - Reduce the range of new products/services
 - Produce/provide services for traditional markets
 - Produce/provide services for non traditional markets
 - Don't know
 - Other_____

PART II. QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROJECT

30. To what extent have you been involved in the 'Aid for Trade – Phase IV' project implementation during 2018-2023? Please select one answer.
- Constantly, throughout entire implementation

- Often, since start
- Occasionally
- Involved only recently

31. Please, list the main activities in which you were involved during project implementation.

- Capacity-building activities (trainings, workshops)
- Mentorship programme
- Technological upgrading support
- Participation in exhibitions/Trade fairs
- Participation in study tours
- Participation in B2B missions/forums
- Introduction of corporate governance systems
- Support with access to finance
- Support with business development
- Support with introduction of international standards
- Participation in policy dialogue discussions
- Other_____

32. Please select one answer for each statement that best reflects your perception of the following statements regarding the relevance of the 'Aid for Trade – Phase IV' project:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
The project has adequately reflected the needs of my enterprise					
The project has been relevant to the work of my enterprise					
The project has adequately addressed the needs of MSMEs in my country					
The project has adequately addressed the needs of women, youth, and the most vulnerable groups in my country					
The project has adequately addressed the environmental concerns in my country					
The project has adequately considered implementation capacity in my enterprise					

33. How satisfied are you with project implementation? Please select one answer.

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Slightly satisfied
- Not satisfied

34. How useful was the project to you and/or your company?

- Very useful
- Useful
- Slightly useful
- Not useful

35. How do you appreciate the support of the project in delivering results in terms of the following aspects? Please check one answer per each aspect.

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	POOR
Adequate project design			
Effectiveness of delivery methods			
Appropriate project support staff			

Sufficient amount of resources provided			
Effective communication			
Complementarity/synergies with other projects			
Responsiveness to changing needs			
Timely delivery of support			

36. Which of the following external and internal factors, in your opinion, affected the achievement of project results most? Please select one answer for each factor.

	SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED	SLIGHTLY AFFECTED	NOT AFFECTED
COVID-19 pandemic			
War in Ukraine			
Recent crisis in Afghanistan			
Exchange rate fluctuations			
Weather conditions/natural disasters in your country			
Political instability in your country			
Staff turnover within your government			
Issues related to capacity of key stakeholders			
Issues related with quality and timeliness of project support			

37. How successful was the project in implementing the following activities? Please select one answer for activity.

	SUCCESSFUL	RELATIVELY SUCCESSFUL	NOT SUCCESSFUL	NOT RELEVANT
Study tours				
B2B missions				
Regional cooperation initiatives (CAWG, Regional Trade Facilitation Platform)				
Participation in exhibitions and fairs				
Mentorship Programme for women and young entrepreneurs				
Design and delivery of trainings and workshops				
Support in improving trade and private sector policies and legislation				
Research and assessments conducted				
Support provided in access to finance				
Creation of online trade-related platforms				
Support in implementation of international standards and certification				
Events and /or Campaigns dedicated to promotion and development of exports as well as trade information to MSME exporters, including in the regions (such as Export Caravans, etc.)				

Facilitation of online export-related service provision				
Facilitation of offline export-related service provision				
Facilitation of exporters' market access				
Creation/Upgrade of green value chains				
Support in development and improvement of financial products and services				
Support to establishment of institutions/centres servicing entrepreneurs and/or traders				
Promotion materials and activities				
Provision of alternative financing mechanisms				
Organization of demo fields				

38. What was the project contribution for your enterprise regarding the following outcomes? Please select one answer for each outcome.

	SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION	SOME CONTRIBUTION	NO CONTRIBUTION	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE
Increased productive capacity					
Establishment of partnerships					
Better networking					
Higher revenues					
Increased Export competitiveness					
Export product diversification					
Export market diversification					
Increased productivity					
Enterprise growth					
Compliance with environmental norms					
Compliance with international standards and certification					
Women empowerment					
Better services					
Better information about markets					
Better access to finance					

39. To what extent, in your opinion, have vulnerable groups been involved in project implementation? Please select one answer per group.

	SUFFICIENTLY	INSUFFICIENTLY	NOT RELEVANT	DON'T KNOW
Women				
Young people				
People with disabilities				
People with low incomes				
Returned migrants				
Refugees/asylum seekers				
Ethnic minorities				

40. What are the most important constraints which women entrepreneurs are facing now? Please select one answer for each type of constraint.

	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT
Access to finance				
Access to markets				
Access to information				
Access to adequate workforce				
High costs/access to business development services				
Access to technologies				
Lack of business management skills				
Limited digital literacy				
Burdensome regulations/bureaucratic procedures				
Taxation and burdensome tax administration				
Competition between formal and informal businesses				
Non-compliance with technical, sanitary, and phytosanitary standards				
Inadequate infrastructure (transport, energy, ICT, etc.)				
Gender-based barriers and discrimination				
Access to affordable childcare				

41. Please select the areas in which the next phase of the Aid for Trade project could provide support to increase the capacity of your institution.

	NEED SUPPORT	DON'T NEED SUPPORT	DON'T KNOW
Business management and planning			
Access to finance			
Market research and marketing			
Technology adoption and digitalisation			
Product development and quality improvement			
Training and capacity building			
Access to networks and business linkages			
Regulatory compliance			

Thank you very much for your answers!

9. Observation Focus Areas

1. **Effective Communication and Collaboration:** How effectively do team members communicate with each other? Are there clear channels of communication and coordination? Do team members demonstrate effective collaboration and coordination of their efforts? Are there any challenges or issues in communication that hinder project progress or outcomes?
2. **Quality Standards and Accuracy:** Do the outputs, deliverables, or outcomes meet the desired quality standards? Are there any errors, defects, or inaccuracies in the work being observed? Are there any measures in place to ensure quality control and quality assurance?
3. **Stakeholder Engagement:** How are stakeholders involved and engaged in the process or activity? Are stakeholders provided with opportunities for input or feedback? Are there any concerns or issues raised by stakeholders during the observation? Is there effective engagement with local communities, civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders?
4. **Innovation and Problem-solving:** Are there any instances of innovative or creative approaches being employed? Do individuals or teams demonstrate problem-solving skills? Are there any novel ideas or solutions being generated? How does the project encourage and support innovation?
5. **Marketing and Supply Chain Management:** How do private sector entities identify and target potential customers or clients? What marketing strategies and tactics are being employed to promote products or services? Are there any innovative or effective marketing campaigns observed? How are supply chains managed, and are there efficient logistics processes in place for procurement, transportation, and delivery?
6. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Are there instances of successful collaboration with other businesses, government entities, or non-profit organizations? How do private sector entities leverage partnerships to enhance their competitiveness? Are there any notable examples of joint initiatives or partnerships that contribute to project success?
7. **Compliance and Legal Requirements:** Are private sector entities adhering to relevant trade-oriented private sector regulations and legal requirements? How are compliance mechanisms implemented within the private sector organizations? Are there any instances of non-compliance or legal issues observed?
8. **Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality:** Are there efforts to engage and empower women at various stages in value chains? Are there measures in place to address barriers or challenges faced by women in accessing resources, markets, or networks? How does the project promote gender equality and inclusivity?
9. **Green Practices and Sustainability:** Are there any innovative approaches or technologies employed in green product development? Are there practices in place to reduce resource consumption, waste generation, or emissions? Are there instances of using renewable energy, such as solar, wind, or hydropower? How do private sector organizations communicate their adherence to green practices to customers or stakeholders? Are there any examples of sustainable business models that promote both economic and environmental benefits?
10. **Community and People Well-being:** How does the project or activity impact the well-being of the community and individuals? Are there any observable changes in livelihoods, access to resources, or overall quality of life? Are vulnerable groups, such as women, being empowered and included in decision-making processes? Are there any efforts to address social issues or promote social inclusion?

Annex 3: List of interviewed stakeholders

KYRGYZSTAN 4-8 July 2023

Stakeholder	Function	Institution/Place of Meeting
Mr. Azamat Usubaliev	Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth Cluster, Team Leader	UNDP CO, Bishkek
Ms. Aisuluu Mambetkaziyeva	National coordinator, AfT project	UNDP CO, Bishkek
Ms. Gulmira Mamatova	program specialist, AfT project	UNDP CO, Bishkek
Ms. Tuimakan Subankulova	M&E IC, AfT project	UNDP CO, Bishkek
Mr. Emil Iusupov	project specialist, AfT project	UNDP CO, Bishkek
Ms. Rimma Kiseleva,	Head of Trade Policy Department	Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek
Mr. Zhyldyzbek Zhumakov	Head of the Trade Policy and Export Development Department	Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek
Ms. Elmira Uderbaeva	Head of the Division for Coordinating Work on Technical Regulations and Standards	Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek
Ms. Dinara Aitmurzaeva	Head of the Standardization Department of Kyrgyzstandart	Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek
Mr. Tilek Zhumaliev	Head of Export Development and Promotion Department	National Investment Agency under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek
Ms. Aiperi Jailoobaeva	Expert, Export Development and Promotion Department	National Investment Agency under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek
Ms. Elmira Bataeva	Vice President	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek
Ms. Cholpon Beishenalieva	Head of the Center for Business Education	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek
Mr. Samat Shatmanov	Deputy Minister/Director	Department of Tourism under the Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek
Ms. Kyial Kenzhematova	Deputy Director	Department of Tourism under the Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek
Mr. Nurgazy Toichuev	Chief Specialist	Department of Tourism under the Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek
Mr. Malik-Aidar Abakirov	Director	Open Joint Stock Company "Guarantee Fund", Bishkek
Ms. Nurzhan Azimova	Executive Director	Public Foundation "Women's Forum" KURAK, Bishkek
Ms. Naziya Isaeva	Director	Public Foundation "996 Impact Circle", Bishkek
Ms. Saltanat Temirova	President	Kyrgyz Association of Tour Operators (KATO), Bishkek
Mr. Nurbek Saparov	Executive Director	Kyrgyz Association of Tour Operators (KATO), Bishkek
Mr. Azzambek Jeenbay	Executive director	Business Association "Jash Ishker Association" (JIA), Bishkek

Mr. Aibek Marazhapov	Director	Erkin Consult LLC, Bishkek
Ms. Aisha Mambetalieva	Director	LLC "Kyrgyz Tourism", Bishkek
Ms. Nuraim Almazbekova	Specialist	Public Foundation "Tes-Center", Bishkek
Ms. Gulburak (Asyla) Umarbekova	CEO	Aman GreenFood LLC, Bishkek
Ms. Nazgul Ishenbaeva	Head of the Laboratory	Aman GreenFood LLC, Bishkek
Ms. Dinara Abdykadyrova	Quality Manager	Aman GreenFood LLC, Bishkek
Mr. Azamat Arnabek	Mayor of Balykchy city	City Hall of Balykchy
Ms. Aigul Imankanova	Head of the Department of Foreign Relations and Economic Development	City Hall of Balykchy
Mr. Nurlan Isaev	Farm Manager/Owner	Uluk Agro, Sary-Kamysh village
Ms Mahabat Sultanalieva	head of IE	IE Sultanalieva, Ananyevo village
Mr. Ishen Kojaliev	Sales Manager	IE Sultanalieva, Ananyevo village
Ms. Abaildaeva Anarkhan	Group member	Farmers' group Ananyevo
Ms. Mambetov Sultan	Group member	Farmers' group Ananyevo
Ms. Nazira Mambetova	Group member	Farmers' group Ananyevo
Ms. Aida Adylova	Group member	Farmers' group Ananyevo
Ms. Ainagul Masykkanova	Group member	Farmers' group Ananyevo
Ms. Aytgul Esengulova	Group member	Farmers' group Ananyevo
Ms. Gulzhan Kozhomkulova	Owner	Guest House "Riverside", Karakol
Mr. Daniyar Alymbekov	Head	LLC Kara-Kyz, Karakol
Mr. Askhat Galiev	Founder	IE Galiev, Karakol
Mr. Marat Galiev	Head of the honey processing workshop	IE Galiev, Karakol
Mr. Salmoorbek Asanaliev	Advisor on green certification, standards and trade, Green Economy and Sustainable Private Sector Development in Kyrgyzstan	GIZ, Bishkek

UZBEKISTAN
10-13 July 2023

Stakeholder	Function	Institution/Place of Meeting
Mr Bekzod Oripov	Head of Division	Ministry of Investments Industry and Trade, Tashkent
Mr. Avaz Makhmudov	Deputy Head of Department on tariff and non-tariff regulation measures	Ministry of Investments Industry and Trade, Tashkent
Ms Dildora Irgasheva	Head of Department	Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Tashkent
Mr Azimjon Akhmadjonov	Head of Department	Export Promotion Agency, Tashkent
Mr Ravshan Yunusov	Inclusive Growth Cluster Leader	UNDP CO, Tashkent
Mr Bahtiyor Rajabov	Programme analyst IGC	UNDP CO, Tashkent
Mr. Jakhongir Juraev	SPIU associate	UNDP CO, Tashkent,
Mr Askarali Askarov	Head of Department	Agency on Technical Regulation Tashkent
Mr Abdulloh Orifboev	Head of Department	Agency on Technical Regulation, Tashkent
Mr. Akmal Azimov	Project specialist	R4TCA project, Tashkent
Mr. Adkham Akbarov	Project specialist	Facilitation of Uzbekistan's accession to the WTO project, Tashkent
Ms. Gulnora Makhmudova	Chair	Business Women Association, Tashkent
Ms. Shakhnoza Yusupova	Project manager	Business Women Association, Tashkent
Ms Guzal Kahharova	Country coordinator	GIZ regional Programme "Trade Facilitation in Central Asia", Tashkent
Mr. Farrukh Zakirov	Project manager	Aft Project team, Tashkent
Mr. Nurmuhammad Akmalov	Task manager	Aft Project team, Tashkent
Mr Nosirkhon Gozikhonov	Task manager	Aft Project team, Tashkent
Mr. Muzaffar Mirzarakhimov	Task Manger	Aft Project team, Tashkent
Ms. Ruzigul Anorkulova	Head	"Gulroz-DI" Farming Enterprise, Namangan, Chust
Ms. Lola Abdukhalimova	Head	Business Women Association, Namangan
Ms. Oydina Ahmadaliyeva	Head	"Chortoq temir yul logistika markazi" LLC, Namangan, Chortoq
Mr. Yunusbek Kosimov	Specialist	Export Support Centre of Fergana region, Fergana
Mr. Sunnatilla Norov	Director	"Garden house" LLC, Fergana
Mr. Otabek Ziyaev	Director	"Cibus natural" LLC, Andijan
Ms. Shaira Abidova	Chair	Business Women Association, Andijan
Ms. Dildora Nurmatova	Mentee	Business Women Association, Andijan
Ms. Sitora Hamidova	Mentee	Business Women Association, Andijan
Ms. Mukaddas Sodikova	Mentee	Business Women Association, Andijan

TAJKISTAN
17-20 July 2023

Stakeholder	Function	Institution/Place of Meeting
Ms. Zebo Jalilova	Team Leader, SED cluster\ Focal point on AFT project	UNDP CO, Dushanbe
Mr. Lenni Montiel	Resident Representative	UNDP CO, Dushanbe
Mr. Kholikzoda Sarvar	Head of Department	Ministry of Justice, Dushanbe
Mr. Ahlidin Nuridinzoza	Deputy Minister	Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Dushanbe
Mr. Abdullo Dagiev	Head of Department	Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Dushanbe
Ms. Khursheda Qodir	Deputy Chairperson	State Committee on Investment and State Property Management, Dushanbe
Mr. Zabirzoda Nekrui	Head of Department	State Committee on Investment and State Property Management, Dushanbe
Mr. Bahodur Rahimzoda	Deputy Director	Agency for Export under the Government of Tajikistan, Dushanbe
Mr. Behruz Firuzzoda	Head of Department of Foreign Trade	Agency for Export under the Government of Tajikistan, Dushanbe
Mr. Umed Komilov	Head of International Department	State Business Incubator, Dushanbe
Mr. Hojiakbar Haidarov	Regional Manager	State Business Incubator, Dushanbe
Ms. Zarina Nigmatova	National Coordinator\Adviser Programme	GIZ in Tajikistan, Dushanbe
Ms. Bogdagul Urunova	Head	Dekhkan Farm "Bogdagul" Shahritus district, Khatlon region
Ms. Nilufar Rakhmonova	Head	Dekhkan Farm "Shohin 2014", Shahritus district, Khatlon region
Ms. Sanovbar Imomnazarova	Director	PO "Chashma", Shahritus district, Khatlon region
Mr. Anvar Mamadshoev	Deputy Director	PO "Chashma", Shahritus district, Khatlon region
Ms. Shahlo Vatanova	Director	LLC "Shahkoi Vatan", Dushanbe
Mr. Anvar Yakubi	Deputy Chairman	Executive State Authority of Sughd region
Mr. Azizkhoja Khojaev	Programme Coordinator	PO "MIR", Khudjand
Mr. Husein Toshmatov	Programme Coordinator	ICPO "Jovid", Buston village
Mr. Mirzoravshan Qobilov	Director	PO "Quality Management Center", Khudjand
Mr. Parviz Akramov	Former Project Manager	AFT Project team, Khudjand
Mr. Khairullo Rizoiev	General Director	LLC Mevai Tilloi, Isfara
Mr. Jamshed Buzurukov	General Director	LLC IsfaraFood, Isfara
Mr. Daler Dustmatov	Director	LLC IsfaraFood, Isfara
Mr. Abdumubin Fayziev	Executive Director	International Association of producers and exporters of dry fruits of Tajikistan (MAPEST), Isfara

ONLINE MEETINGS

Institution	Person	Function	Date of Zoom meeting
The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland	Mr Matti Vaananen	Team Leader/Senior adviser, Unit for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia	8 August
UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub	Ms Ekaterina Paniklova	Regional Programme Coordinator	24 July
UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub	Ms Vesna Djuteska-Bisheva	Regional Team Leader, Inclusive Growth	27 July
UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub	Mr Dilshod Akbarov	Project manager, UNDP's Aid for Trade in Central Asia project	26 June

Annex 4: List of supporting documents

1. Project Document for 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase IV' project, 2018
2. Pre-Local Project Appraisal Committee Meeting, 2018
3. Local Project Appraisal Committee Meeting, 2018
4. Cost Sharing Agreement, 2018
5. Amendment to Cost Sharing Agreement, 2021
6. Combined Delivery Report, 2018
7. Combined Delivery Report, 2019
8. Combined Delivery Report, 2020
9. Combined Delivery Report, 2021
10. Combined Delivery Report, 2022
11. AWPs and Budget Revisions, 2018
12. AWPs and Budget Revisions, 2019
13. AWPs and Budget Revisions, 2020
14. AWPS and Budget Revisions, 2021
15. AWPS and Budget Revisions, 2022
16. Annual Progress Report, 2018
17. Annual Progress Report, 2019
18. Annual Progress Report, 2020
19. Annual Progress Report, 2021
20. Annual Progress Report, 2022
21. Mid-Year Progress Report, 2023
22. Annual Financial Report, 2018
23. Annual Financial Report, 2019
24. Annual Financial Report, 2020
25. Annual Financial Report, 2021
26. Annual Financial Report, 2022
27. Project Board Meetings Minutes, 2019
28. Project Board Meetings Minutes, 2020
29. Project Board Meetings Minutes, 2021
30. Project Board Meetings Minutes, 2022
31. Project Board Meetings Minutes, 2023
32. Stakeholder Meeting Tajikistan, 2019
33. Stakeholder Meeting Kyrgyzstan, 2019
34. Stakeholder Meeting Tajikistan, 2020
35. Stakeholder Meetings in Kyrgyzstan, 2021
36. Stakeholder Meetings in Uzbekistan, 2022
37. Final Stakeholder Meeting in Kyrgyzstan, 2022

38. Final Stakeholder Meeting in Tajikistan, 2022
39. Uzbekistan part of Project Document (revised dates of implementation due to additional funding), 2020
40. Baseline assessment of value chains in Kyrgyzstan, 2020
41. Report: Analysis of Green Products Value Chain and Export Opportunities in Kyrgyzstan with a focus Jalal-Abad, Issyk-Kul, Naryn and Osh regions, 2019
42. Report: Analysis of Green Products Value Chain and Export Opportunities in Tajikistan with a focus on Khatlon and Sughd regions, 2019
43. Report: Evaluation on Development Cooperation carried out by the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, including the Wider Europe Initiative (WEI), 2019-2021
44. Value Chain Analysis in Uzbekistan, 2021
45. Analysis of capacity building needs of Export Promotion Agency in Uzbekistan, 2022
46. Communication and Visibility Strategy, 2018
47. AfT Service Offer on Green VCs, 2022
48. AfT Service Offer on Trade Intelligence, 2022
49. AfT Service Offer on Mentorship Programmes for Women Entrepreneurship, 2022
50. Case Study Tajikistan Mentorship Programme, 2022
51. Final Evaluation Report 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase I'
52. Final Evaluation Report 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase II'
53. Evaluation Report 'Aid for Trade in Central Asia – Phase III'
54. Final Evaluation Report for 'Aid for Trade in Uzbekistan' project, 2023
55. Annual Progress Report for 'Aid for Trade in Uzbekistan' 2018
56. Annual Progress Report for 'Aid for Trade in Uzbekistan' 2019
57. Annual Progress Report for 'Aid for Trade in Uzbekistan' 2020
58. Annual Progress Report for 'Aid for Trade in Uzbekistan' 2021
59. Annual Progress Report for 'Aid for Trade in Uzbekistan' 2022
60. UN Regional Programme document for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (2018-2021)
61. UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021
62. UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021
63. Gender and Social Norms Index Report, 2023