

UNDP-Slovakia Partnership: Effective Development Cooperation Solutions for the SDGs

Project Final Progress Report

Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic



**MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN
AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**



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Acronyms

AF	Armed Forces
AI	Artificial Intelligence
CO	UNDP Country Office
MFEA SR	Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic
MFSR	Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic
MoD	Ministry of Defense
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PB	Project Board
PSE	Private Sector Engagement
RBEC	UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
SAIDC	Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation
SCF	Slovak Challenge Fund
SEESAC	The South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context and key developments of the project

In 2025, under the framework of the *UNDP-Slovakia Partnership: Effective Development Cooperation Solutions for the SDGs project* (hereafter referred to as the project), implementation focused solely on finalizing the remaining activities of the Capacity Building component. All other project components had been fully completed in 2024.

The project, which was initially set to finish in December 2024, was rescheduled to June 2025 and later extended to the end of 2025 to ensure the strategic and efficient use of remaining financial resources.

Progress against outputs and outcomes

Output I – Enabling environment for Slovak private companies to contribute to Slovak international development cooperation strengthened

Throughout the project, the objectives of this output were achieved through the implementation of the Slovak Challenge Fund (SCF) and support to Slovak entrepreneurs and key ODA stakeholders, including the Slovak Agency for Development Cooperation (SAIDC), EXIM Bank, and UNDP Country Offices. This support focused on capacity building for active engagement in development cooperation, including SCF-related activities such as workshops, conference presentations, and consultations, as well as identification of relevant project partners for initiatives like Team Europe and Global Gateway projects prepared by UNDP Country Offices.

As of 2025, all projects supported through the SCF were successfully completed in 2024. With the project nearing completion, no additional requests for support were further identified.

Output II – Slovakia’s positioning as a development cooperation provider in the field of security sector reform strengthened

All activities under this component were completed in 2024; therefore, no further activities were implemented in 2025.

Through the wide range of activities implemented during the project, the position of women in the security sector was strengthened, particularly within the Ministries of Defense and Armed Forces across the Western Balkans. The project effectively raised gender awareness and deepened understanding of the importance of preventing and addressing gender-based discrimination, sexual abuse, and harassment. These efforts contributed to fostering more inclusive and gender-responsive institutional cultures and significantly enhanced regional cooperation and knowledge exchange in this area.

The regional project *Strengthening Regional Cooperation on Gender Mainstreaming in Security Sector Reform in the Western Balkans*, implemented by the UNDP SEESAC, in close partnership from 2019 to 2024 with the Ministries of Defense (MoDs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, was financially supported by the Norwegian and the Slovak governments through the *UNDP-Slovakia Partnership: Effective Development Cooperation Solutions for the SDGs project*.

Output III – The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (MFEA SR) equipped with the skills, procedures and programmatic/strategic tools to provide effective and high-quality ODA to its partners

In 2025, a comprehensive set of targeted trainings enhanced the skills of Slovak development professionals, particularly SlovakAid project managers. Key trainings included practical project monitoring, digital tools, advanced communication strategies, and generative AI applications including international peer exchange, notably with the OECD DAC, further strengthened competencies in data management, reporting, and stakeholder engagement.

Furthermore, the project delivered targeted capacity-building initiatives for ODA practitioners engaged in EU Delegated Cooperation projects, enhancing competencies in call analysis, budgeting, partnership formation, and strategic collaboration with both public and private sector stakeholders. By providing comprehensive guidelines and evidence-based recommendations, the initiative ensured that Slovak ODA stakeholders are well-positioned to participate effectively in future EU Delegated Cooperation initiatives.

Additionally, through this project, UNDP supported the **Ambrella Development Forum 2025**, an event unique to Central and Eastern Europe, which provided development practitioners with a platform to address global challenges and establish actionable partnerships. The forum facilitated dialogue, collaboration, and knowledge exchange among 220 participants from 22 countries.

These efforts collectively advanced the professional capacity and effectiveness of Slovak and international ODA practitioners.

Key challenges and risks

In 2025, the project progressed smoothly, with no challenges or new risks. All previously identified risks were effectively mitigated, and the final phase was completed on newly approved schedule, without delays or complications.

Funds utilization update

The Project Board approved a total budget of USD 87,716.65 for 2025 in 2024. In March 2025, the budget was revised to USD 104,650.65 following the re-allocation of USD 16,934.00 leftover from 2024 to the 2025 budget; this revision also included coverage for the non-cost extension through 31 December 2025. Actual utilization of the 2025 budget is USD 99,081.44¹.

Key lessons learned and recommendations:

In the final year of the project, we confirmed that strengthening the capacities of specialists remains crucial for improving efficiency and professionalism and thus positively influence delivery of Slovak ODA. The remaining project funding was therefore used to build capacities in areas with potential to scale up ODA resources. We also found out that collaboration with external consultants adds significant value.

Based on this experience, we recommend that future cooperation with the Donor continue to focus on capacity building for the Donor and other relevant national entities, providing professional support across the full spectrum of institutions.

¹ 2025 budget utilization USD 99,081.44 reported as of 20 November 2025. The final amount will be confirmed after the year-end financial closure, which is scheduled for completion by March 2026. The final financial statement will be provided to the donor by June 30, 2026

II. BACKGROUND

The first Memorandum of Understanding between UNDP and the Government of Slovakia was signed in 2003. In the initial phase, UNDP supported Slovak transition from an ODA recipient to an ODA provider. This partnership has since evolved into structured cooperation on the implementation of Slovak ODA projects. Currently, UNDP collaborates on a project basis with two Slovak ministries, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA SR) and the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic (MFSR).

MFEA is the Donor of the Project: ***Effective Development Cooperation Solutions for the SDGs*** (further Project) launched in August 2018. The second phase of the Project covers the period of 1 January 2022 to 30 December 2025², with a total budget of USD 883,986.11. The project contributes to fulfillment of the RPD 2022-2025 priority 1 *Accelerating structural transformations for green, inclusive, and just transitions to sustainability*.

The Project objective is to support partner countries to *benefit from effective and efficient provision of Slovak assistance in advancing their efforts towards sustainable human and economic development, building on Slovakia's know-how and expertise, stimulating the inclusion of a wider range of partners, especially the private sector*. To achieve this objective, this Project is built on three main components:

- I. Creating an enabling environment for Slovak private companies to contribute to Slovakia's international development cooperation and piloting new ODA programming modalities capitalizing on additional financial and non-financial resources from the private sector. This component is implemented through the [Slovak Challenge Fund](#).
- II. Strengthening Slovakia's positioning as development cooperation provider in the field of security sector reform, one of the niche areas of Slovakia's ODA – support to SEESAC.
- III. Equipping staff of the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, SAIDC and other national and international ODA stakeholders with the skills, procedures, and programmatic and strategic tools to provide effective and high-quality ODA to its partners – implemented through the Capacity Development component.

The project was carried out by the UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub (Partnerships Team) in collaboration with UNDP SEESAC for Output 2. The project team comprised of four members, who are also involved in the Public and Private Finance for Development project funded by the Slovak Ministry of Finance. The project team includes a Private Sector Specialist, a Programme Associate, and a Programme Specialist who supervises project activities. A Communication Consultant provided additional support on a part-time basis.

² Owing to the remaining unutilized project resources, the Project Board approved an extension of the project in May 2025, allowing activities to continue until the end of the year.

III. PROGRESS REVIEW: KEY ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

Section 1: Analysis of Theory of Change

The assumptions defined by the Theory of Change³ were achieved by the Project.

The Slovak Challenge Fund, as a programmatic tool for *engaging the private sector in development cooperation*, has **successfully implemented** all projects that introduced a number of innovative solutions in partner countries while some of them also used this opportunity to test their solutions in new conditions.

The second assumption, that *Slovakia's visibility and thematic niche in security sector reform would be strengthened through strategic financial allocations*, was **partially achieved** during the project. With the project support, Slovak visibility in the Western Balkans increased, particularly through its contribution to a broad range of gender equality initiatives implemented within Ministries of Defense and Armed Forces. Moreover, Slovakia's financial support enabled UNDP SEESAC to leverage additional funding from other donors.

However, despite continuous efforts, engagement with the Slovak Ministry of Defense could not be established during the project cycle. On a positive note, Slovak embassies in the region were actively involved in several project activities, further reinforcing Slovakia's profile and presence in the region.

The third assumption, that the *specific capacities of the MFEA SR, SAIDC, and other national and international development cooperation professionals would be strengthened*, was **satisfactorily achieved**. This is evidenced by evaluations from MFEA and SAIDC staff, which confirmed that the knowledge and skills gained during the project have become an integral part of their daily institutional work and practices.

Section 2: Overall progress against outcomes

According to the Project Document, the project contributes to the *RPD 2022–2025 priority: Accelerating structural transformations for green, inclusive, and just transitions to sustainability*. The project directly advances this transformation through a variety of approaches.

Its support for innovations and innovative solutions contributed specifically to the **green transformation**, as most solutions promoted under the project addressed energy efficiency, green energy, digitalization, or sustainable agriculture.

Furthermore, the project supports an **inclusive and just transition** by promoting gender equality within the security sector in the Western Balkans.

Section 3: Monitoring and Evaluation

Project monitoring activities were implemented in line with the Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, as outlined in the project document. In 2025, the **Project Board** (PB) convened twice, both PB meetings were held online. In February 2025, the PB approved the 2024 Annual Progress Report and the Capacity

³ •New programmatic tools for engaging private sector in development cooperation through a shared-value approach are piloted
•Slovakia's visibility and thematic niche in the field of security sector reform is strengthened through strategic financial allocations
•Increased specific capacities of MFEA SR, SAIDC, other national and international development cooperation professional

Building Plan and submitted budget revision. In May 2025, the PB approved the project non-cost extension until December 2025.

The project team continuously monitored both identified and potential new **risks** that could have an impact on project implementation. Since no significant risks emerged during the reporting period, there was no need to implement any exceptional management measures.

Considering the evaluation policy and total project budget, it was determined that a formal project evaluation was not necessary.

Tracking results progress

Since only **Output 3** was implemented in 2025, progress tracking concentrated on assessing **capacity-building achievements** and beneficiary satisfaction.

An **ex-post survey** was conducted nearly one year after the completion of the last project to assess the satisfaction and perceived benefits among SCF-supported innovators. Out of the 16 supported entities, 12 participated, resulting in a high response rate, offering an overview of the ongoing impact. Respondents indicated continued progress in project development, product validation, expansion, and improved access to new partnerships and funding. Several noted that SCF support increased the visibility of their innovations and provided a reference for subsequent initiatives.

Participants emphasized the strengths of the SCF model, particularly its structured, result-oriented approach, efficient collaborative framework, and relatively low administrative burden, which contributed to successful project implementation. Feedback also confirmed that SCF interventions contributed to longer-term outcomes, including enhanced professional networks and participation in larger international initiatives. In one notable case, SCF support enabled engagement in a major EU-funded project, fostering international cooperation, preparation of scientific publications, and dissemination of results at professional conferences.

Section 4: Progress against each output

Output 1: Enabling environment for Slovak private companies to contribute to Slovak international development cooperation strengthened

Output indicators	Targets	Progress against targets
Number of workshops for Slovak companies and other potential applicants to SCF <i>According to the project document: Baseline 2021: 56, Project final target: 63</i> Achieved project final target: 62	Baseline 2025: 62 AWP target 2025: 0	Reporting period (2025): 0 Cumulative total (2018-2025 ⁴): 62
Number of private sector/other partners that benefit from the services/workshops/support. <i>According to the project document: Baseline 2021: 0, Project final target: 23</i> Achieved project final target 24	Baseline 2025 ⁵ : 24 AWP target 2025: 0	Reporting period (2025): 0 Cumulative total (2018-2025): 24
Number of PSE/SCF projects developed and delivered <i>According to the project document: Baseline 2021: 7, Project final target: 17</i> Achieved project final target: 16	Baseline 2025: 16 AWP target 2025: 0	Reporting period (2025): 0 Cumulative total (2018-2025): 16

The implementation of this output was carried out through the **Slovak Challenge Fund (SCF)** and supporting the **private sector engagement in development cooperation**. Activities included various trainings, workshops, conference presentations, as well as partner identification and partnership building aimed at developing joint projects.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS IN 2025

This initiative was fully completed in 2024. No activities were implemented in 2025.

SLOVAK CHALLENGE FUND SUMMARY AND KEY RESULTS 2020-2024

The **SCF** was a flagship initiative under the UNDP-Slovakia Partnership: *Effective Development Cooperation Solutions for the SDGs*. Its goal was to **transfer Slovak know-how and innovative solutions** to address development challenges in selected partner countries, supporting the achievement of the SDGs.

SCF established a platform to **test and scale innovations** in collaboration with local partners in



⁴ Given that the Slovak Challenge Fund (SCF) was a comprehensive initiative implemented continuously throughout both phases of the project, the results and indicators are reported in an aggregated manner, covering the entire duration of project implementation, 2020-2025.

⁵ Base line 2025 represents the cumulative value reported in 2024.

Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia. Slovak innovators had the opportunity to expand their networks, showcase their work internationally, and collaborate across borders. Supported innovations focused on **green and digital technologies, renewable energy, urban innovation, digitalization, agrotourism, health, and ecology.**

Between 2020 and 2024, four calls for proposals were launched, selecting projects with strong **innovation potential and impact** that introduced new methods, ideas, or products. During its entire run, **95**



innovators applied, of whom **16 were supported** with a total funding support of **USD 586,482.40**, mobilizing additional co-funding of **USD 261,745.10**. No activities were implemented in 2025; all were completed in 2024.

By leveraging Slovak expertise and fostering **cross-sectoral partnerships**, SCF has contributed to **sustainable development, inclusive growth, and**

strengthened local capacities, delivering tangible benefits to communities and advancing progress toward the SDGs.

A detailed summary of the entire SCF project, including a showcase of the most successful projects, can be found in:

- *Annex V: Slovak Challenge Fund Summary*
- document [Slovak Challenge Fund in Glance](#)
- [Slovak Challenge Fund web site](#).

OUTPUT 2**Slovakia's positioning as development cooperation provider in the field of security sector reform strengthened**

Output indicators	Targets	Progress against targets
Number of regional meetings on gender in the Military held <i>According to the project document: Baseline 2021: 11, Project final target: 14</i> Achieved project final target: 15	Baseline 2025 ⁶ : 15 AWP target 2025: 0	Reporting period (2025): 0 Cumulative total (2021-2025): 15
Number of partners benefited from the initiatives held within the gender in military events <i>According to the project document: Baseline 2021: 0, Project final target: 15</i> Achieved project final target: 24	Baseline 2025: 24 AWP target 2025: 0	Reporting period (2025): 0 Cumulative total (2021-2025): 24
Number of practical solutions for gender equality implemented through the support of small-scale projects <i>According to the project document: Baseline 2021: 14, Project final target: 18</i> Achieved project final target: 17	Baseline 2025: 17 AWP target 2025: 0	Reporting period (2025): 0 Cumulative total (2021-2025): 17

Output 2 was implemented by the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) under the project Strengthening Regional Cooperation on Gender Mainstreaming in Security Sector Reform in the Western Balkans.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS IN 2025

This initiative was fully completed in 2024. No activities were implemented in 2025.

⁶ Base line 2025 represents the cumulative value reported in 2024.

OUTPUT SUMMARY AND KEY RESULTS 2022 - 2024

The regional project *Strengthening Regional Cooperation on Gender Mainstreaming in Security Sector Reform in the Western Balkans*, implemented by UNDP SEESAC, in close partnership from 2019 to 2024 with the Ministries of Defense (MoDs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, was financially supported by the Norwegian and the Slovak governments.



Since its inception in 2012, the regional project has been supporting the practical solutions in implementing UNSCR 1325⁷ on Women, Peace, and Security. The project has played a significant role in fostering regional cooperation among Ministries of Defense (MoD) and Armed Forces in the Western Balkans to **advance gender equality within the military and serves as a role model for regional cooperation**. The Slovak funding specifically covered the support to increase the capacities of the MoDs in the Western Balkans through tailor-made small-scale projects in line with the needs and at the request of the MoDs.

Key achievements of Ministries of Defense include:

- ✓ **Strengthened regional cooperation on gender mainstreaming in the security sector reform in the WBs.** Thirty-four regional meetings and workshops were organized through two regional platforms for knowledge exchange and information sharing among representatives of gender equality mechanisms, high-level military officials, decision-makers, gender advisers, and gender military trainers.
- ✓ **Increased participation of women in the military.** Comparative data from 2012 to 2021 show an increase in the share of women among uniformed personnel in the MoDs and AFs in BiH, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.
- ✓ **Raised gender awareness** in MoD and Armed Forces (AFs) through trainings delivered by a network of regional gender military trainers in the Western Balkans, recognized globally, and through the development of knowledge tools tailor-made to the military context. The regional network is an internal mechanism comprising representatives of MoDs and members of AFs who are NATO Certified Gender Trainers that enable continuous and contextual peer-to-peer learning. Gender military trainers developed several publications that are useful for their continued work, such as the Handbook on standardization of gender training in the MoD and AF of Montenegro, the Gender training manual for the MoD and SAF, and an online course for military personnel.
- ✓ **Increased understanding of the importance of combating gender-based discrimination, sexual abuse, and harassment.** The MoDs in the WBs jointly developed the tailor-made Regional Handbook on Preventing and Responding to Gender-Based Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Abuse, and continuously work on the eradication of gender-based discrimination to contribute to a discrimination-free working environment.
- ✓ The leadership of Ministries of Defense was strengthened through SEESAC's Gender Coaching Programme (GCP), which completed its ninth cycle with high-level military officers. This innovative initiative enhanced the gender responsiveness of security institutions by developing

⁷ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (S/RES/1325), on women, peace, and security

leadership skills, fostering commitment, and empowering senior officers to drive institutional change in integrating gender perspectives into their operations.

- ✓ ***Improved integration of the gender perspective into military education*** through the implementation of The Regional Baseline Study – [Integrating a Gender Perspective in Military Education and Training in the Defense Systems in the Western Balkans](#) policy recommendations. MoDs integrated teaching on gender in their annual training plans, thus making the learning on gender sustainable.

More information and results can be found on [project web site](#).

OUTPUT 3

MFEA SR, SAIDC, other national and international ODA stakeholders equipped with skills, procedures and programmatic/ strategic tools to provide effective and high-quality ODA

Output indicators	Targets	Progress against targets
Number of partners benefited from capacity building workshops for Slovak ODA stakeholders <i>According to the project document: Baseline 2021: 22, Project final target: 37</i> Achieved project final target: 76	Baseline 2025: 40 ⁸ AWP target 2025: 0	Reporting period (2025): 36 Cumulative total (2018-2025): 76

Output 3 aimed to strengthen the capacities of professionals from the MFEA SR and the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAIDC) through training tailored to their specific development needs and internal priorities, as well as to support other capacity-building activities for the defined beneficiaries.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS IN 2025***EU Delegated Cooperation and Slovak Involvement***

Since 2022, SAIDC has implemented several EU Delegated Cooperation projects. While project preparation was successful, the experience highlighted the need for general guidance and deeper engagement of Slovak ODA actors in future initiatives.

To address this, a targeted capacity-building programme was delivered in 2025 through the UNDP–MFEA partnership. The initiative strengthened institutional capacity in call analysis, budgeting, partnership development, and strategic engagement with public and private actors. As a result, promising thematic areas and partner countries were identified, and practical guidelines, [EU DELEGATED COOPERATION AND SLOVAK INVOLVEMENT - practical recommendations and brief guidelines](#) were developed to support the preparation and implementation of future EU Delegated Cooperation projects, ensuring Slovak ODA stakeholders are well-prepared to engage effectively.

Ambrele Development Forum 2025 - A World in Transition: Reclaiming Global Partnerships through Dialogue

The [Ambrele Development Forum](#) (ADF) is the only event of its kind in Central and Eastern Europe, attracting 220 participants from 22 countries. The fourth edition of the forum was held in Bratislava, Slovakia on 16–17 October 2025, and focused on fostering actionable connections, trust, and collaboration among key stakeholders, including EU institutions, member state governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, and international partners.

⁸ This number represents cumulative value reported in 2024.

2025 edition addressed pressing global challenges, from the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza to the escalating climate crisis and shrinking space for civil society, highlighting the pressures on global partnerships.

UNDP was represented by Ms. Steliana Nedera, IRH Manager, who participated as a [panelist](#) in the first session, *New Realities in Development Cooperation: The EU and UN Role, Resource (R)evolution and Principles*.



UNDP was the official partner of the ADF 2025 through this project.



Targeted trainings

- During 2025, a range of **targeted training sessions** were organized to advance the skills and competencies of Slovak development professionals, with a primary focus on SlovakAid project managers. These initiatives prioritized practical application and peer learning to ensure relevance and effectiveness. Notably, the ***Projects'/Programs' Monitoring with Focus on Field Work*** training, which provided participants with in-depth instruction on monitoring methodologies, principles of effective monitoring, data collection techniques, and the utilization of digital tools for project monitoring. Feedback from participants indicated that the training was closely aligned with real-world requirements, thereby enhancing its practical value.
- In addition to monitoring-focused training, information technology competencies were strengthened through ***Microsoft Excel II*** course for intermediate users.
- ***Communication skills*** were further developed via specialized training focused mainly on managing complex communication scenarios, conflict resolution, and stakeholder engagement. The content was tailored to the specific challenges faced by professionals in grant management and client relations, with interactive elements and practical case studies.



- A notable addition to the capacity building activities was the **Generative AI Training** delivered by the UNDP Innovation team for the Slovak professionals from partner ministries and SAIDC. This training was designed to build participants' confidence in applying generative artificial intelligence to everyday tasks, data analysis, and creative collaboration.
- Additionally, participation in international peer learning through the **OECD DAC Working Party on Development Finance Statistics**, enhanced the understanding of OECD DAC regulations, fostered knowledge exchange on statistical data management, reporting standards, and innovative tools for development finance.
- Overall, the capacity building component in 2025 blended hands-on training, tailored content, and international collaboration, directly supporting the professional growth and effectiveness of Slovak development practitioners.
- For more details on Capacity Building events in 2025 see Annex VI: Capacity Building list of events

OUTPUT SUMMARY AND KEY RESULTS THROUGH 2022 - 2025

During the project, various capacity development activities were carried out to support the professional growth of ODA personnel at the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation. Over 70 ODA practitioners participated in these activities. The project team regularly communicated with beneficiaries and collaborated on Capacity Building Plans that addressed both institutional requirements and trends highlighted by UNDP.

Based on evaluations of individual activities, as well as feedback and engagement from the institutions, it can be concluded that the programme significantly contributed to the development of professional capacities, supported the integration of innovations into daily work, and supported the establishment of new processes.

Section 5: Cross-Cutting Issues Integration

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Gender markers in the Project Document were set as GEN 1 for Output 1 and Output 3, and GEN 3 for Output 2.

Despite GEN 1 for Output 1, innovators integrated gender equality considerations throughout project design and implementation, which was reflected in quality assessments by implementation teams and local partners. Women were well represented across all teams, both numerically and in leadership roles.

Output 3 similarly emphasized adherence to gender equality measures, with women comprising most beneficiaries and playing a central role in coordinating and implementing Slovak ODA activities at MFEA and SAIDC.

Unlike these outputs, Output 2 **focused directly on strengthening regional cooperation on gender mainstreaming in security sector reform** in the Western Balkans, as defined by the project title. Through a broad range of activities, the project enhanced the position of women in the security sector, particularly within Ministries of Defense and Armed Forces in the region, raised gender awareness, and deepened understanding of the importance of preventing and addressing gender-based discrimination, sexual abuse, and harassment. These efforts fostered more inclusive and gender-responsive institutional cultures and significantly strengthened regional cooperation and knowledge exchange.

Sustainability and Resilience, Natural Environment, including Sustainable Natural Resource Management

The project addressed sustainability and resilience, the natural environment, and sustainable management of natural resources primarily through the **Slovak Challenge Fund (SCF)**. The SCF supported a range of innovative solutions, focusing on areas such as natural resource management, nature-based solutions, energy transformation, organic agriculture, good governance, and resilient societies. As a result, these issues were not only treated as cross-cutting considerations but were central to the objectives and outcomes of the supported projects.

IV. PARTNERSHIPS AND SUSTAINABILITY

Partnerships

The project primarily collaborated with partners who were either beneficiaries or directly involved in implementing specific activities. Key partners included the Donor and Slovak embassies in the partner countries, supporting decision-making, communication, and overall project implementation.

For the **Slovak Challenge Fund (SCF)**, project partners included businesses and companies from Slovakia and partner countries, serving as the main innovators and drivers of project outcomes. Local communities, organizations, associations, and CSOs played a critical role in identifying community needs and supporting the application of innovative solutions.

For **Output 2**, direct partners were the Ministries of Defense and Armed Forces in the Western Balkans, who not only benefited from SEESAC activities but also helped shape the approaches for mainstreaming gender equality in the security sector. During this period, SEESAC also established new partnerships with the Ministry of Interior and the National Security Agency.

Sustainability

Sustainability is determined by (a) the effectiveness of MFEA SR and SAIDC's knowledge management in utilizing and further developing the knowledge gained through the project, (b) the continued viability of the institutions, policies, and frameworks established or supported by the project (SEESAC), and (c) the ongoing use and scaling up of innovations introduced by the Slovak Challenge Fund.

Under Output 2 of the project, SEESAC, as the implementer, ensures the sustainability of the knowledge gained through a variety of capacity-building activities, while also establishing comprehensive educational systems for the Armed Forces and beyond. Through initiatives such as National Actions Plans, gender-responsive budgeting, gender mainstreaming in military education and training, and the distribution of jointly developed knowledge tools and translated literature, the project partners, with SEESAC's support, are committed to fostering long-term sustainability.

The surging demand from MoDs to SEESAC to continue the regional cooperation on integrating gender in SSR is recorded through evaluations and regular communication at regional meetings. The potential for scaling up also lies in the fact the experience from the Western Balkans can be replicated and used as lessons learned in other regions.

V. UPDATE ON RISKS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The Project Document approved in 2021 defines following risks:

- Substantial risk: Limited interest from private companies to partner the Slovak companies in the calls of Slovak Challenge Fund;
- Moderate risk: Delays caused by persistent COVID-19 situation in implementing projects awarded under the Slovak Challenge Fund, and
- Low risks: Limited interest of MFEA SR ODA specialists to use and institutionalize the knowledge gains by capacity building due to high staff turnover and
- Low risk: Change in regional political climate in the Western Balkans, insufficient operational capacity within national counterparts to implement the solutions and recommendation of the Women in the Military project.

In 2025, none of the anticipated risks affected project implementation, and no new risks were identified.

Mitigation: All risks, including those not explicitly listed in the Risk Log, were actively monitored in accordance with the Monitoring Plan and beyond, ensuring early detection and prompt mitigation if needed.

VI. KEY CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Challenges

In 2025, there were no notable challenges that affected project implementation. Notably, both the Donor and the Project Board approved two non-cost project extensions, which facilitated the optimal utilization of remaining financial resources toward achieving the project objectives, especially those related to Capacity Development outlined under Output 3.

Lessons Learned

Throughout the project implementation, from 2022 (or from 2018), the most significant **lessons learned** were:

Lesson Learned 1: Engagement of the private sector is more effective through individualized support

Engaging the private sector is most effective through individualized support. Providing tailored guidance on project design, UNDP processes, and reporting helps entrepreneurs navigate institutional requirements and builds their capacities to implement innovative solutions successfully.

Lesson Learned 2: Alignment and building ownership

Aligning the project with national, regional, and global priorities strengthens partner engagement and ownership. Embedding project mechanisms within institutional practices helps ensure durability of results, even amid changing political priorities.

Lesson Learned 3: Carefully selecting priorities and target territories is essential

Any support initiative should be based on the needs and priorities of the country or beneficiaries to avoid a donor-driven approach. Priorities should align with national and international requirements, existing strategies, and plans. It is also important to assess the availability of financial resources to ensure full implementation.

Lesson Learned 4: Partnerships and coalitions

Building partnerships and coalitions is essential for achieving strong results and impact. The SEESAC initiative implemented under this project demonstrated the effectiveness and added value of collaborative approaches over working in silos.

Recommendations

A key recommendation from project implementation is to maintain continuity, pursue scaling-up efforts, and foster innovation throughout all project components. For future collaborations, it would be advantageous to identify a strategic priority area that aligns with the Donor's interests, enabling UNDP to deliver effective and sustained support, even with limited resources. Although Slovakia is a smaller donor, it holds considerable potential to provide catalytic seed funding for larger initiatives and to share valuable expertise, including insights from the private sector.

VII. FINANCIAL SUMMARY⁹

Table 1: Overview of available resources for the project period 2022-2025

Donor	Leftover from previous project phase (2018-2021)	Contribution Received (2022-2025)	Available Resources (2022-2025)
MFEA SR	109,688.28 USD	774,297.83 USD	883,986.11 USD

The amount USD 774,297.83 USD includes the revenue received from the donor during the current project phase 2022-2025. The contribution was received in 3 installments (300,000 EUR in March 2022, 300,000 EUR in December 2022 and 114,420 EUR in April 2024) what is equal to 774,297.83 USD. Total available budget for the project period 2022-2025 including the leftover from the previous project phase was 883,986.11 USD.

Table 2: Overview of funds allocation and utilization in 2025

Output	MFEA SR resources (USD)	
	2025 Budget	2025 Utilization*
Output 1 - Enabling environment for Slovak private companies (Slovak Challenge Fund)	0.00	0.00
Output 2 - Slovakia's ODA niche in the field of Security Sector Reform (SEESAC component)	6,974.75	6,942.24
Output 3 - Capacities of Slovak ODA practitioners and Project Management costs incl. communication costs	97,675.90	92,139.20
Total	104,650.65	99,081.44

The Project Board approved a total budget of USD 87,716.65 for Y2025 in 2024. In March 2025, the budget was revised to USD 104,650.65 following the re-allocation of USD 16,934.00 leftover from 2024 to the 2025 budget; this revision also included coverage for the non-cost extension through 31 December 2025.

*The actual project budget utilization for 2025 is USD 99,081.44 (as of 21 November 2025). The final amount will be confirmed after the year-end financial closure, which is scheduled for completion by March 2026. Currently **remaining funds** (USD 5,569.21) **are expected to be fully utilized by the end of 2025**. The final financial statement will be provided to the donor by June 30, 2026 at the latest.

Additionally, according to the signed Financing Agreement, if the project is completed as per the project document and less than USD 5,000 remains after all commitments and liabilities are met, these funds will automatically be reallocated by UNDP. In that case, any remaining unspent funds will be transferred to the *Public and Private Finance for Development* project (Project No. 01001929), which is also supported by the SlovakAid.

The **overall funds utilization during the 2nd phase of the project (years 2022-2025)** can be found in [Annex III. Multi-year Funds utilization \(2022-2025\)](#)

⁹ Data contained in this financial report section is an extract of UNDP financial records. All financial provided above is provisional. Certified financial statements will be provided on (30 June of the following year).

VIII. ANNEXES

- [Annex I: Progress Review: detailed matrix of activities and results](#)
- [Annex II: Updated Risk Log](#)
- [Annex III: Multi-year Funds Utilization \(2022-2025\)](#)
- [Annex IV: Knowledge Generation](#)
- [Annex V: Slovak Challenge Fund Summary \(2020 – 2024\)](#), also [Slovak Challenge Fund at Glance](#)
- [Annex VI: Capacity Building list of events and participants in 2025](#)

Annex I: Progress Review: detailed matrix of activities and results

Output 1	Indicators	Baseline 2025	Annual target 2025	Progress ¹⁰ 2025
Enabling environment for Slovak private companies to contribute to Slovakia's international development cooperation strengthened Output ID: 00110636. Budget 2025¹¹: USD 0.00 Expenditures 2025: USD 0.00	Number of workshops for Slovak companies and other SCF potential applicants to SCF	62	0	62
	Number of private sector/other partners that benefit from the services/workshops/support	24	0	24
	Number of SCF projects developed and delivered	16	0	16
Planned activities	Results			
As the project was originally scheduled to conclude by the end of 2024 and this output was completed, no activities were planned or implemented in 2025.	N/A for 2025			

Output 2	Indicators	Baseline 2025	Annual target 2025	Progress 2025
Slovakia's positioning as development cooperation provider in the field of security sector reform strengthened Output ID: 00112633 Budget 2025: USD 6,974.75 Expenditures 2025: USD 6,942.24	Number of regional meetings on gender in the military held	15	0	15
	Number of partners benefited from the initiatives held within the gender in military events	24	0	24
	Number of practical solutions for gender equality implemented through the support of small-scale projects	17	0	17
Planned activities	Results			
As the project was originally scheduled to conclude by the end of 2024 and this output was completed, no activities were planned or implemented in 2025.	N/A for 2025			

¹⁰ Progress represents the milestone for 2025 or as on table in Chapter III/Section 3 Progress against targets/Reporting period (2025)

¹¹ Budget as per budget revision made in March 2025

Output 3	Indicators	Baseline 2025	Annual target 2025	Progress 2025
Activity 2: MFEA SR, SAIDC, other national and international ODA stakeholders equipped with skills, procedures and programmatic/ strategic tools to provide effective and high-quality ODA. Output ID: 00112634 Budget 2025: USD 54,386.12 Expenditure 2025: USD 47,739.83 (as of 21 November 2025) Activity 4: Project Management costs incl. communication and office management costs Budget: USD 43,289.78 Expenditure to date: USD 44,399.37 (as of 21 November 2025)	Number of Slovak ODA practitioners benefited from executed capacity building activities	40	0	76
Planned activities	Results			
Increase the capacities of the ODA professionals by various capacity development tools such as professional trainings, community workshops, monitoring missions as well as the support to the organization of and participation in broader national and regional events and workshops, or other networks involved in international development cooperation.	The capacity building component in 2025 blended hands-on training, tailored content, and international collaboration, directly supporting the professional growth and effectiveness of Slovak development practitioners			

Annex II: Updated Risk Log

#	Description	Date Identified	Type	Impact & Probability	Counter-measures / Mngt response	Owner	Last Update	Status
1	Limited interest from private companies to partner the Slovak companies in the calls of Slovak Challenge Fund	December 2021	Financial Operational	Impact: 5 Probability: 3	Existing networks engaging with Slovak companies will be fully used to mitigate this risk	Project manager	December 2024	As this risk relates to Output 1 , which was completed in 2024, the risk was no longer monitored in 2025.
2	Delays caused by persistent COVID-19 situation in implementing projects awarded under the Slovak Challenge Fund	December 2021	Financial Operational	Impact: 3 Probability: 3	Monitoring and flexible adaptation to the existing situation. Requesting the innovators to be prepared to use the alternative mechanism and tools (e.g. online environment) if applicable.	Project manager MFEA SR representative	December 2024	As this risk relates to Output 1 , which was completed in 2024, the risk was no longer monitored in 2025.
3	Limited interest of MFEA SR ODA specialists to use and institutionalized the knowledge gains by capacity building due to a high staff turnover	December 2021	Operational	Impact: 1 Probability: 2	Involve beneficiaries into the design of project activities, get beneficiaries official commitment of the project implementation plan	Project manager	June 2025	The identified risk did not occur during implementation.
4	Change in regional political climate in the Western Balkan, insufficient operational capacity within national counterparts to implement the solutions and recommendation of the Women in the Military project	December 2021	Strategic	Impact: 2 Probability: 2	Needs assessments, participation on donor coordination meetings, harmonization with other donors	Project manager UNDP SEESAC team	December 2024	As this risk relates to Output 1 , which was completed in 2024, the risk was no longer monitored in 2025.

Annex III: Multi-year Funds utilization (2022-2025)

21-Nov-25

OUTPUT	PLANNED ACTIVITIES	Expenses by years (in USD)				Responsible Party	Funding Source	Budget Description	Total Planned Budget
		2022 Expenses	2023 Expenses	2024 Expenses	2025 Expenses (Nov-25)				USD
Output 1 (ID 00110636) - Enabling environment for Slovak private companies to contribute to Slovakia's international development cooperation strengthened	Activity 1.1: Private Sector (assessment)	0.00	3,967.59			UNDP IRH	MFEA SR	SCF projects (Innovation challenge) Events GMS	465,661.66
	Activity 1.2: Private Sector Engagement Facility (PSE) / Slovak Challenge Fund	77,022.29	128,504.38	221,680.50	0.00				
	GMS (Output 1)	6,161.78	10,590.68	17,734.44					
Output 2 (ID 00112633) - Slovakia's positioning as development cooperation provider in the field	Activity 2.1: Women in Military Initiative	58,270.05	24,845.29	85,276.92	6,428.00	UNDP IRH/ SEESAC	MFEA SR	Onward granting (implemented through SEESAC project)	188,801.68
		4,661.60	1,987.62	6,817.95	514.24				
Output 3 (ID 00112634) - MFEA SR and other national ODA stakeholders equipped with skills, procedures and programmatic/ strategic tools to provide effective and high-quality ODA.	Activity 3.2: Capacity building for Slovak ODA practitioners incl. private sector related event	5,385.91	7,274.36	1,833.00	47,739.83	UNDP IRH	MFEA SR	Training costs Event organisation Travel, Publications Consultancy contracts	62,233.10
Direct Implementation Costs	Project Manager; Project Assistant, Office costs	40,183.38	27,129.85	40,264.97	37,574.24		MFEA SR	Staff costs Office costs	145,152.44
Communication of Results	Production and dissemination of basic communication materials	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		MFEA SR	Communication costs	16,591.20
	GMS (Output 3)	3,645.53	2,752.70	3,367.84	6,825.13			GMS	
Total Project Budget		195,330.55	207,052.47	376,975.62	99,081.44				878,440.08

Annex IV: Knowledge Generation

- EU DELEGATED COOPERATION AND SLOVAK INVOLVEMENT - practical recommendations and brief guidelines for preparation of EUDC projects

The document itself is as a separate file.

Annex V: Slovak Challenge Fund Summary (2020-2024)

PROJECT TITLE YEAR OF THE CALL	INNOVATOR	COUNTRY	PROJECT AND RESULTS	AWARD (USD)	CO- FUNDING (USD)
Innovative technologies in the fight against global drought 2023	MicroPoll	Serbia	The project successfully tested a small, portable wastewater treatment plant in Serbia, achieving over 80% efficiency in removing pollutants such as micropollutants, microplastics, and pathogens. The treated water proved suitable for agricultural use. Thanks to its user-friendly design and affordability, technology offers a practical solution for smaller communities, supporting sustainable agriculture, environmental protection, and public health.	40,000.00	10,000
BEE BREEDING SYSTEM - Empowering Bees and Ecosystems Through Innovative Breeding 2023	BELABELA TECHNOLOGY	Serbia	The project tested an innovative Bee Breeding Box with an integrated Heating Device designed to combat Varroa destructor , one of the major global threats to bee colonies. The system uses controlled hyperthermic treatment directly inside the hive, eliminating parasites without the need to handle bees.	40,000.00	27,050.00
AI-driven Virtual Power Plant feasibility in Serbian environment 2023	Powerex	Serbia	The project explored the potential of virtual power plants (VPPs) in Serbia—small energy communities generating electricity from renewable sources. Using artificial intelligence to monitor and predict energy production and consumption, the project demonstrated the economic and environmental benefits of VPPs and confirmed their potential to enhance the stability of the electricity grid.	38,000.00	17,500.00
Smart Museum in Sarajevo - Digitization of visitor experience via smart Content Management System 2023	DODO Solutions	Bosnia and Herzegovina	The project developed a QR-based digital platform for the Museum of Genocide in Sarajevo. The solution digitized exhibits, enhanced visitor engagement, and improved accessibility through multilingual multimedia guides. This innovation enriched the visitor experience while increasing the museum's operational efficiency.	40,000.00	32,600.00
Bio-decontamination of heavy metals pollution by microalgae 2023	BioX Technologies	Bosnia and Herzegovina	The project tested an innovative technology to environmental remediation by using cultivated aquatic microalgae to extract heavy metals from soil. Unlike conventional methods that depend on chemical treatments or physical extraction, this technique is significantly more energy-efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly.	33,096.50	12,900.00

Integrated solar roofing system on the flagship touristic sustainability complex (Goat town) 2022	Nice Visions	Moldova	The project installed an integrated solar roofing system combining photovoltaic modules and roofing materials in a tourism facility in Moldova. Serving as a demonstration of low-carbon, energy-efficient construction, it aimed to increase energy independence in the tourism sector and reduce emissions from energy production.	39,310.00	15,130.00
Digital development of organic agrotourism in North Moldova 2022	Pro4CE	Moldova	The project boosted organic agrotourism and the local food business in northern Moldova by improving market access for local producers through digital tools, including an interactive map showcasing food producers, service providers, and accommodations. It also supported and trained participants in developing and digitally presenting their offers, helping stakeholders promote their products and services professionally and attractively.	37,150.00	18,418.00
PickMol 2021	Saftra Photonics	Moldova	The project tested a new screening method for sensitive detection of POPs in water . The PickMol™ technology is portable, user-friendly, green, and affordable, enabling local partners— Apele Moldovei and the Environmental Agency of Moldova —to conduct EU-standard water monitoring at a significantly reduced cost.	37,106.00	13,887.00
Artaban - autonomous four-legged robot designed to support 2021	Panza Robotics	Moldova	The project tested Artaban , an autonomous four-legged robot designed to support routine and hazardous operations across industries in Moldova, while also providing educational lessons for universities .	40,000.00	17,000.00
SPEAR hydro in Moldova 2021	Archee	Moldova	The project tested Spear Hydro , a renewable energy plant using fins under a barge—more efficient than traditional turbines—capable of generating over 190 kW and offering a sustainable energy solution for cities	40,000.00	10,000.00
Research and Application of Mushroom in Ecology 2021	LEO HAM	Moldova	The project tackled soil pollution , primarily from fuels and pesticides, using innovative mycoremediation techniques that harness mushrooms' natural ability to clean contaminated soil.	US\$32,000.00	8,000.00
Implementation of the Smart City Platform in the City of Chisinau 2020	Alam, s.r.o.	Moldova	The project developed an innovative smart city platform in Chisinau, integrating key city technologies and data to optimize resource management and provide citizens, businesses, and NGOs with accessible information.	39,999.00	26,595.00
Municipal Renewable Energy (MUREP): Utilization of Solar Energy in a Municipality of Karpoš 2020	Enviros	North Macedonia	The project developed a comprehensive energy plan for the Municipality of Karpoš , including feasibility studies for installing solar PV on municipal and public buildings to attract investors and tourists .	38,340.90	8,500.00

Organic Agriculture as a Driver for Tourism Destination Development Through Branding of Local Products 2020	Pro4CE	Moldova	The project piloted a new business model in the beneficiary country, creating cross-sector partnerships between organic agriculture and tourism to generate synergies for regional development	38,340.90	20,645.10
Greener Mobility: Know-How Transfer in the Area of Electromobility 2020	Seak	North Macedonia	The project transferred Slovak private-sector know-how to Technical University in Skopje , strengthening institutional readiness in electromobility and installing an electric car charging station for education and daily use.	20,000.00	13,520.00
Piloting of Point of Care Diagnosis Solution S-Case for Improvement of Primary Care and Remote Monitoring of Patients 2020	S-Case	North Macedonia	The project piloted the S-Case solution , currently at TRL 6 , a portable point-of-care device combining a pulse oximeter, blood pressure monitor, thermometer, and glucometer, with a digital patient database and remote data transmission capabilities.	40,000.00	10,000.00

Annex VI: Capacity Building list of events and participants in 2025

The goal of the Capacity Building program is to enhance the capabilities of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, particularly the ODA team and Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation. The activities were designed to primarily strengthen the capacities in ODA-related areas and technical skills.

Training	Place	Number of participants	Dates
Projects'/Programs' monitoring with focus on field work	Bratislava, Slovakia	11	3 – 4 April 2025
Communication skills training focused on conflict situations	Bratislava, Slovakia	10	29 April 2025
Excel training (advanced)	online	5	April/July 2025
Generative AI training	online	4	8-9 October 2025
Enhancing the capacities of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and SAIDC in EU delegated cooperation	Bratislava, Slovakia	5	May-June 2025

Events	Place	Number of participants	Dates
OECD DAC Working Party on Development Finance Statistics	Paris, France	1	30 June – 2 July 2025
Ambrela Development Forum 2025	Bratislava, Slovakia	Approx. 220 ¹²	16 October 2025

¹² Total number of ADF 2025 participants is not included in the indicator reporting as UNDP was the partner of the event.