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საქართველოსთვის



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მეურნეობის სამინისტრო



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ჰაერის ხარისხის გაუმჯობესება
მოქალაქეთა ჯანმრთელობის დასაცავად

AIR QUALITY FOR BETTER CITIZENS' HEALTH



#სუფთაჰაერი
#CleanAir

INTERIM NARRATIVE REPORT

Project "Air Quality for Better Citizen's Health"

EU Contract Number: NDICI-GEO-NEAR/2023/449-977

UNDP Project Number: 01001653

Reporting period: 08-Dec-2023 – 30-Sept-2024

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List of Acronyms

AAD	AMBIENT AIR DIVISION
AAQD	AMBIENT AIR QUALITY DIRECTIVES
AQ	AIR QUALITY
AQG	AIR QUALITY GUIDELINES
AQI	AIR QUALITY INDEX
BAT	BEST AVAILABLE TECHNIQUES
BCI	BEHAVIORAL AND CULTURAL INSIGHTS
BREF	BEST AVAILABLE TECHNIQUE REFERENCE DOCUMENT
CBA	COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS
CO	COUNTRY OFFICE
EE	ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY
EIB	EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK
ELV	EMISSION LIMIT VALUES
EU	EUROPEAN UNION
EUD	EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION
GCF	GREEN CLIMATE FUND
GEF	GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACILITY
GESI	GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
GWP	GLOBAL WARMING POTENTIAL
HACT	HARMONIZED APPROACH TO CASH TRANSFER
IPPC	INTEGRATED POLLUTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL
LEPL	LEGAL ENTITTY OF PUBLIC LAW
LTLEDs	LONG-TERM LOW EMISSIONS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES
MEPA	MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE OF GEORGIA
MIA	MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF GEORGIA
NCDC	NATIONAL CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL
NDC	NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS
NEA,	NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY
NEAP	NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROGRAMME
NPD	NATIONAL PROJECT DIRECTOR
NRL	NATIONAL REFERENCE LABORATORY
PB	PROJECT BOARD
PMU	PROJECT MANAGEMENT UNIT
PSC	PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE
UBA	UMWELTBUNDESAMT- ENVIRONMENT AGENCY AUSTRIA
UNDP	UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
UNECE	UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
UNEP	UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
WHO	WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

1/ Project Description

- 1.1. Name of Coordinator of the grant contract: Giorgi Devidze, Project Manager
- 1.2. Name and title of the Contact person: Giorgi Devidze, Project Manager
- 1.3. Name of Beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies) in the Action: Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, National Environmental Agency, line ministries, State Representatives (Governors), Municipalities, environmental NGOs, industries and, general public.
- 1.4. Title of the Action: “Air Quality for Better Citizen’s Health”
- 1.5. Contract number: NDICI-GEO-NEAR/2023/449-977
- 1.6. Start date and end date of the reporting period: 8 December 2023 – 30 September 2024
- 1.7. Start date and end date of the project: 8 December 2023 to 7 December 2027
- 1.8. Target country: Georgia.
- 1.9. Final beneficiaries &/or target groups¹ (if different) (including numbers of women and men): state and local government institutions, businesses, community groups and general population.
- 1.10/ Total Budget: € 4,087,800 (o/w EU: €4,000,000, UNDP: € 87,800)
- 1.11/ EU Installments received: € 610,461.44
- 1.12/ EU Installments delivered as of 30 Sept 2024:
 - Expenses €68,277.24;
 - Legal commitments € 1,032,324.23.
 - In total €1,100,601.47

¹ “Target groups” are the groups/entities who will be directly positively affected by the project at the Project Purpose level, and “final beneficiaries” are those who will benefit from the project in the long term at the level of the society or sector at large.

2/ Executive Summary

During the reporting period, substantial progress was made in advancing the project's objectives, with several key milestones achieved. UN-to-UN Agreements with UNECE and WHO, and Letters of Agreement (LOA) with the UBA were successfully signed, and the necessary funds were transferred. In April 2024, the formal project launch took place, representing a significant achievement in the project timeline. The establishment of the Project Board and its inaugural meeting further strengthened the project's governance structure, while the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the feasibility study on Best Available Techniques (BAT) regulation were completed to guide the next phase of the study.

Key progress was also made in enhancing national capacities, infrastructure, and tools for air quality (AQ) monitoring and management:

- Output 1: The project focused on improving ambient AQ monitoring, modelling, forecasting, and data quality management. UBA worked with the National Environmental Agency (NEA) to finalize technical specifications for AQ monitoring stations. Procurement of the stations is set to begin, alongside training NEA staff in operating and maintaining them. Additionally, UBA began the subcontracting process with GeoSphere Austria to enhance air quality modelling and forecasting, while WHO conducted online capacity-building sessions for national staff on AQ modelling tools.
- Output 2: The groundwork for developing frameworks and tools for gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in AQ management was laid. Collaboration with WHO and UNECE is set to begin in 2025, with consultants being identified to develop these frameworks. Meetings between UNECE, WHO, and other key stakeholders were held to plan the next steps.
- Output 3: Preparations continued for providing technical assistance to decision-makers and industry representatives in regulating industrial emissions, with offers from 29 companies interested in participating in feasibility studies, study tours, and training programs on BAT.

Overall, the project remains on track, with significant administrative processes finalized, technical work underway, and a robust plan for the continuation of activities aimed at improving air quality and ensuring the effective inclusion of gender and social aspects in environmental governance.

3/ Background

Georgia has long faced significant air pollution issues, particularly in densely populated areas like Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, and industrial zones such as Zestaponi, where fine particulate matter containing manganese is a concern. The main causes include high levels of exhaust emissions from vehicles due to an increasing number of vehicles and outdated fleets, poorly planned roads, and underdeveloped public transportation. Industrial emissions, especially from large combustion plants and steel manufacturing, also contribute, as do household heating with firewood and the construction sector.

These issues are exacerbated by unfavourable meteorological conditions, such as high temperatures and stagnant air, leading to temperature inversions and summer smog. Air quality measurements consistently show exceedances of limit values for pollutants like fine particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide. These pollutants have acute and chronic health effects, especially on vulnerable populations like children, pregnant women, the elderly, and those with respiratory conditions. Long-term exposure can lead to various health issues, including Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), cardiovascular diseases, and respiratory infections.

Despite the significant health impacts, there is limited environmental health data in Georgia. Global assessments from organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) indicate that air pollution is a significant factor in mortality and morbidity in the country. For instance, air pollution ranks as the sixth leading risk factor for death and disability combined in Georgia, with diseases like ischemic heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer being linked to

air pollution. In 2019, each person's annual mean exposure to PM_{2.5} was estimated at 18 µg/m³, translating to an estimated 3,112 deaths in the country.

The key components of the project:

- Strengthening Air Quality Monitoring Infrastructure: Improving the air quality monitoring network in existing air quality management zones, with a specific focus on areas such as Chiatura, affected by elevated levels of "toxic" dust containing manganese due to open-pit mining operations.
- Enhancing Modelling and Forecasting Capacities: Upgrading the modelling and forecasting capabilities of the National Environmental Agency (NEA) of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA), ensuring the quality and validity of air quality measurements.
- Air Quality Health Modelling and Assessment: Improving knowledge and capacities of responsible national agencies- NEA and the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC)- in air quality health modelling and assessment.
- Establishing a National Reference Laboratory: Supporting the Government of Georgia (GoG) in establishing and commissioning a national reference laboratory, while building national capacities in the operations and maintenance of analytical and inter-calibration equipment.
- Capacity Building and Knowledge Dissemination: Enhancing the knowledge and capacities of decision-makers and relevant stakeholders in air quality health aspects, including risk communication. Implement a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) framework in air quality management, incorporating a toolkit and checklist.
- Technical Regulations on BAT (Best Available Techniques): Elaborating and supporting the adoption of technical regulations on BAT, ensuring a comprehensive and effective regulatory framework.
- BAT Incentives Study: Conducting a study on BAT incentives, presenting concrete proposals and strategies for their promotion.
- Pilot Project on BAT: Implementing a pilot project on BAT, emphasizing private sector cost-sharing as a sustainable approach.
- Capacity Building for Regulation of Industrial Emissions: Building knowledge and capacity among MEPA and industry representatives regarding the regulation of industrial emissions and BAT compliance.

4/ Progress Review

Administrative Tasks

- During the reporting period, significant progress has been made in advancing the project's objectives.
- All UN-to-UN Agreements and Letters of Agreement (LOA) with the UBA have been successfully signed, and the necessary funds have been transferred.
- In April 2024, the formal project launch took place, marking a key milestone in the project timeline.
- The establishment of the Project Board and the successful holding of its two meetings further strengthened the project's governance structure.
- Coordination mechanism has been established and first meeting was hosted by UNDP in October 2024, to ensure strong coordination and collaboration between EU funded Air Quality Projects: Support to Environmental Protection and Fight Against Climate Change in Georgia, Air Quality for Better Citizens' Health in Georgia, Improvement of Air Quality Instruments and Vehicle Emission Standards. Next step will be inviting other non-EU funded initiatives that engage on Air Quality related matter in Georgia to ensure better coordination and inclusivity.

- To ensure effective monitoring and risk management, the Project Risk Log and Logframe have been created within the UNDP Quantum system. Project Logframe has been uploaded and approved into the EU portal- Opsys to meet donor reporting and monitoring requirements.

OUTPUT 1- NATIONAL CAPACITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE AND TOOLS ENHANCED IN AQ MONITORING, MODELLING AND FORECASTING AND DATA QUALITY MANAGEMENT

This Output envisaged the project's commitment to strengthening the national infrastructure for air quality monitoring and forecasting. Through the development of improved modeling tools and the enhancement of data quality management systems, the project has empowered national institutions to monitor and forecast air quality more effectively.

➤ **Activity 1.1 Improve ambient AQ monitoring network**

- 1.1.1 – Improve Ambient AQ monitoring network.
 - Review of existing documentation on AQ monitoring stations, consultations with representatives of AAD, NEA
 - Development/adaptation of specifications for AQ monitoring equipment, conduct market research for the equipment and contribute to preparation of the tender dossier (minimum requirements and technical qualifications of suppliers).
- 1.1.2 – Procurement, installation, and commissioning of AQ monitoring equipment.
- 1.1.3 – Trainings

During the reporting period:

- Communication and active consultations between UNDP, UBA, and the National Environmental Agency (NEA) has been ongoing to finalize the technical specifications for the necessary equipment, and this process is nearing completion.
- The administrative processes related to this work have been successfully finalized, paving the way for the urgent commencement of the procurement process for AQ monitoring stations. These developments are critical for enhancing the country's capacity to monitor and assess air quality in real time.

➤ **Activity 1.2 Introduce national AQ modelling and forecasting tools and enhance staff capacities in their application**

- 1.2.1- Consultancy service on AQ modelling a forecasting and Environmental Health tools.
 - 1.2.1.1 Development/adaptation of environmental health impact assessment tools (AirQ+, CLIMAQ-H, HEAT, BAR-HAP) for Georgian needs.
 - 1.2.1.2 Development/adaptation of a training curriculum on the environmental health impact assessment tools and their application.
 - 1.2.1.3 Delivery of capacity building workshops for both environment and public health professionals.
 - 1.2.1.4 Subcontracting to GeoSphere (or organizations with similar expertise) for AQ modelling and forecasting expertise.
 - 1.2.1.5 Feasibility study in close consultation with MEPA/NEA and parallel EU projects on air quality modelling for enabling MEPA/NEA to select the most appropriate/optimum model(s) and forecasting tool(s).
 - 1.2.1.6 Technical advice and trainings to NEA staff in proper operations of AQ modelling and forecasting tools.
 - 1.2.1.7 Interaction with complementary projects under EU Green and Health Programme.
- 1.2.2 Procurement of data validation and data management software
- 1.2.3 Trainings

During the reporting period:

- Process of subcontracting an expert institution to enhance air quality modeling and forecasting has commenced. Discussions are underway, with the Austrian National Meteorological Service, GeoSphere Austria, being considered as a potential partner. This collaboration is expected to significantly improve the country's capacity for accurate air quality forecasting and modeling, contributing to more effective environmental management and public health protection.
- Trainings on WHO AQ modeling and forecasting tools-several online meetings have been organized by WHO Country Office in Georgia with the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (ECEH) in Bonn. The National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC) has been supporting the project with identifying relevant staff tasked to draft a situation analysis considering country context, demonstrating air quality-related capacity, policy documents, data availability, etc. which will lead to further adaptation of the WHO Tools (AirQ+, CLIMAQ-H, HEAT, BAR-HAP) for Georgian needs. Next step is conducting capacity building workshops for national environmental and public health specialists.
- **Activity 1.3 Support to establishment and effective operations of NRL**
 - 1.3.1 Support to establishment and effective operations of NRL
 - 1.3.1.1 Review of the feasibility study/cost analysis for establishing NRL in Georgia developed under EU EPFACC project.
 - 1.3.1.2 Technical advice for detailed specifications for analytical and calibration equipment of the reference laboratory of NEA
 - 1.3.1.3 Conduct capacity building trainings for operating a NRL, including O/M and calibration equipment, QA/QC procedures, analysis, intercalibration and intercomparison protocols.
 - 1.3.2- Building NRL infrastructure and its international accreditation

During the reporting period:

- UBA started discussions and information sharing with NEA focusing on finalizing the technical specifications needed to support the operations of the National Reference Laboratory (NRL).
- Multiple sample documents have been shared from EU member states on specifications and operations of the NRLs in these respective countries. These specifications are critical for ensuring the lab's functionality in air quality analysis. Once the technical details are agreed upon, the procurement process will begin.
- **Activity 1.4 Develop capacities of the relevant stakeholders in risk communication and increase population awareness on the adverse health effects from air pollution.**
 - 1.4.1 - Develop and conduct Behavioral and Cultural Insights (BCI) study on public perceptions related to air quality at the beginning of the project.
 - 1.4.2- Develop and conduct training workshops on risk communication and awareness raising on the adverse effect of air pollution on health.
 - 1.4.3- Design and conduct awareness raising campaign on air quality.

During the reporting period:

- WHO- national research agency, the Analysis and Consulting Team (ACT), has been contracted for conducting the BCI study to understand perceptions and behavior related to air quality in

Georgia. BCI Team at the WHO European Region has identified a consultant, who has been contracted to support ACT with an expertise.

- The contracted consultant has drafted a Research Protocol for the BCI study, which has undergone a national scientific review, currently is submitted to a National Institutional Review Board (IRB)- Commission for Ethical Evaluation of Biomedical Research. The further step is to obtain WHO Research Ethics Review Committee (ERC) approval, which is prerequisite to start research itself, that should be accomplished by end of the March 2025.

OUTPUT 2- NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND TOOLS ON GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN AQM DEVELOPED AND CAPACITIES FOR THEIR APPLICATION BUILT

Acknowledging the shortcomings in recognizing and responding to gender dynamics and social inclusion considerations in relation to the management of AQ, the activities of Output 2 are intended to provide pragmatic solutions to allow for systematic application of gender-related issues in AQ management practices.

- **Activity 2.1 Develop gender equality and social inclusion framework and toolkit, including checklist.**
 - 2.1.1- Consultancy service on development of GESI and Environmental Health tools
 - 2.1.1.1 Develop gender equality and social inclusion mainstreaming framework and a checklist with focus on air quality management and health.
 - 2.1.1.2 Review of national framework related to gender equality and mainstreaming into environmental policies and existing tools, methods and resources on gender mainstreaming into air quality management.
 - 2.1.1.3 Preparation of gender equality part of the overall Gender Equality and Social Inclusion framework, including a toolkit and check list
 - 2.1.1.4 Contribute to a guidance note on piloting the application of the tailored tools to the relevant key counterparts and application of the framework.
- **Activity 2.2 Build capacities of relevant stakeholders in application of gender equality and social inclusion tools in AQ management**
 - 2.2.1- Consultancy service on trainings and practical application of GESI and EH tools
 - 2.2.1.1 Develop training materials on environmental health aspects of gender equality and social inclusion.
 - 2.2.1.3 Conduct pilot assessment in collaboration with key national counterparts (MEPA, NCDC, etc.)
 - 2.2.1.4 Develop a set of training material based on gender mainstreaming in air quality management.
 - 2.2.1.5 Contribute to at least one capacity building workshop on gender equality under gender mainstreaming framework.

During the reporting period:

- Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) initiatives are set to be implemented in collaboration with UNECE and WHO starting in 2025. However, efforts to identify suitable consultants have already commenced.
- During a mission to Tbilisi, the UNECE Regional Adviser on Environment met with WHO colleagues from both the country office and the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health in Bonn to hold initial discussions on the joint undertaking.
- It was agreed that by the end of October 2024, both UNECE and WHO would identify appropriate consultants for gender equality and social inclusion and organize an initial meeting involving staff and consultants to outline the way forward.

OUTPUT 3- ENABLING ENVIRONMENT, KNOWLEDGE AND IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITIES OF DECISION-MAKERS AND INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES ENHANCED IN REGULATION OF INDUSTRIAL EMISSIONS

- Activity 3.1 Provide technical assistance to decision-makers and industry representatives in creating enabling policy and legal-regulatory basis, knowledge, and implementation capacities for implementation of the Law on Industrial Emissions
 - 3.1.1- Local consultants to update technical regulations on industrial emissions
 - 3.1.1.1 Review and update of existing draft regulations in line with national and EU legislation, including Best Available Technique Reference Document (BREFFS) & Best Available Technique (BATs)
 - 3.1.2- Consultancy service on BAT
 - 3.1.2.1 A feasibility study to estimate the cost of implementing BATs for at least 1 existing plant.
 - 3.1.2.2 A study, including recommendations for the GoG on specific industries' incentives.
 - 3.1.2.3 A study tour to an EU country for relevant decision-makers and industry representatives to learn about an EU country's experience on IPPC BAT and its practical operation.
 - 3.1.2.4 Training sessions for industry representatives, regulators, and law enforcement officers
 - 3.1.2.5 Development/adaptation of training modules /manuals /guidebook(s), and an e-learning self-paced course in Georgian
 - 3.1.3- Grant to SMEs on pilot BAT
 - 3.1.3.1 Pilot on retrofitting/upgrading a selected facility on a cost-sharing basis.
 - 3.1.3.2 Sharing of pilot BAT results with other industries and key decision-makers for replication and upscaling
 - 3.1.4 Trainings and consultations

During the reporting period:

- Preparation for the activities under 3.1 (feasibility and incentives studies, study tour and training programme on BAT) is progressing. Offers have been received from 29 companies expressing interest in participating.
- Terms of Reference (TOR) for the feasibility study on Best Available Techniques (BAT) regulation have been prepared and approved by the project Board.

5/ Project Visibility

Throughout the reporting period, the project followed the visibility plan utilizing the major platforms for promoting project activities including the UNDP website and social media channels of Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter)

Date	Title	Source	Link
18-Apr-24	Launching Partnership for Clean Air in Georgia	x.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://x.com/UNDPGeorgia/status/1780869932286116064

Date	Title	Source	Link
18-Apr-24	Launching Partnership for Clean Air in Georgia	instagram.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://www.instagram.com/p/C55QiRAt4oT/
18-Apr-24	Launching Partnership for Clean Air in Georgia	linkedin.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7186661843229167616
18-Apr-24	Launching Partnership for Clean Air in Georgia	threads.net/UNDPGeorgia	https://www.threads.net/@undpgeorgia/post/C55gKV5M6Ur
19-Apr-24	Launching Partnership for Clean Air in Georgia	undp.org/georgia	https://www.undp.org/georgia/press-releases/clean-air-project-launch
19-Apr-24	Launch of the project	facebook.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.829876049178613&type=3
19-Apr-24	Launch of the project	x.com/DougUNDP	https://x.com/DougUNDP/status/1781278573262721107
19-Apr-24	Launch of the project	x.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://x.com/UNDPGeorgia/status/1781285793023029436
22-Apr-24	Launch of the project	instagram.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://www.instagram.com/p/C6DR5SSJHDo/?img_index=1
9-May-24	Europe Day: Clean Air For Georgia	Facebook.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.843252571174294&type=3
9-May-24	Europe Day: Clean Air For Georgia	x.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://x.com/UNDPGeorgia/status/1788487274805534822
9-May-24	Europe Day: Clean Air For Georgia	linkedin.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7194263597428969472
13-May-24	Europe Day: Clean Air For Georgia	facebook.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.846001010899450&type=3
13-May-24	Europe Day: Clean Air For Georgia	x.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://x.com/UNDPGeorgia/status/1789987153625153829

Date	Title	Source	Link
13-May-24	Europe Day: Clean Air For Georgia	instagram.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://www.instagram.com/p/C66Vjt-NnGS/?img_index=1
13-May-24	Europe Day: Clean Air For Georgia	instagram.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://www.instagram.com/p/C6vc5n5tlxV/?img_index=1
13-May-24	Europe Day: Clean Air For Georgia	linkedin.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7195781696166772737
6-Sep-24	International Day of Clean Air For Blue Skies	Facebook.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=922810373218513&set=pb.100064686759608.-2207520000&type=3
6-Sep-24	International Day of Clean Air For Blue Skies	x.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://x.com/UNDPGeorgia/status/1831964831580352872
6-Sep-24	International Day of Clean Air For Blue Skies	instagram.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://www.instagram.com/p/C_kSTQwsCPO/
6-Sep-24	International Day of Clean Air For Blue Skies	linkedin.com/UNDPGeorgia	https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7237724284553486338
7-Sep-24	International Day of Clean Air For Blue Skies	threads.net/UNDPGeorgia	https://www.threads.net/@undpgeorgia/post/C_nQI-lotSL

In addition, project:

- Participated in the EU Day on May 11, 2024, working closely with the EU delegation, MEPA, and NEA.
- Participated and represented the project in the World Bank forum and EU Twinning project (Support in Implementation of Health Impact Assessment practice in Georgia) activities related to Air Quality in Georgia. April 2024
- Developed project-related visibility materials (t-shirts, bags, banner) and obtained necessary approvals through the Digttools platform.
- In all these events project ensured EU visibility.

6/ Project Risks and Issues

Several potential risks could affect the project's progress. Delays in the procurement, installation, and commissioning of air quality (AQ) monitoring equipment may cascade into setbacks for training and other critical activities. Securing land for new AQ stations and constructing the National Reference Laboratory (NRL) could face unforeseen complications. Additionally, challenges in sourcing and adapting appropriate data validation and management software might impede AQ forecasting and modeling, especially if the software does not integrate well with the existing station network. There is also a risk

of misalignment between gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) initiatives and environmental frameworks, potentially resulting in ineffective policy integration or stakeholder resistance. The feasibility study for Best Available Techniques (BAT) implementation may reveal high costs or complex retrofitting requirements, leading to industry pushback and delays. Lastly, insufficient training for government and industry personnel on BATs and the Integrated Permitting System could hinder the project’s successful implementation.

More details on emerging risks and mitigation measures are presented in Annex I – Risk Log.

7/ Lessons Learned

- **Closer Coordination** is the key lesson learned in the reporting period as similar/parallel projects add the significant value of shared knowledge and resources. By fostering collaboration among organizations with aligned objectives, we have been able to leverage each other's strengths, avoid duplication of efforts, and enhance overall impact.
- **Effective communication** and regular coordination meetings have proven essential in identifying best practices and challenges, enabling us to adapt our strategies in real-time and achieve more sustainable outcomes for the communities we serve.

8/ Conclusions and way forward

Summary

Under Output 1, substantial preparatory work has been undertaken to enhance national capacities for air quality (AQ) monitoring, modelling, forecasting, and data quality management. Technical specifications for AQ monitoring equipment are nearing finalization, positioning the project to initiate the procurement process soon. Similarly, the groundwork for the introduction of national AQ modelling and forecasting tools has been laid, with consultations ongoing to partner with GeoSphere Austria and initial discussions held with WHO regarding the adaptation of tools such as AirQ+ and CLIMAQ-H. The project is also in the early stages of supporting the establishment of a National Reference Laboratory (NRL) for air quality, with discussions on specifications and infrastructure development underway. Additionally, preparatory efforts for a Behavioral and Cultural Insights (BCI) study on public perceptions of air quality have been initiated, pending approval from the WHO Research Ethics Review Committee. Other outputs, such as Output 2, which focuses on gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in AQ management, and Output 3, which aims to enhance regulatory capacities for industrial emissions, are primarily in the planning and pre-positioning phases. GESI framework development is slated for 2025, with consultants expected to be identified by the end of 2024. For industrial emissions, initial reviews of draft regulations and plans for a pilot BAT program have set the stage for more active implementation next year.

Way Forward

Looking ahead to the next year, the project is well-positioned to move from preparatory activities to full-scale implementation:

- **AQ Monitoring Equipment:** Once the technical specifications are finalized and procurement processes initiated, the focus will shift to the installation of real-time AQ monitoring stations and subsequent training for operational use.
- **AQ Modelling and Forecasting:** Building on ongoing consultations with GeoSphere Austria, 2025 will see the full integration of national AQ forecasting tools, with an emphasis on training professionals in the use of these systems.
- **National Reference Laboratory (NRL):** Discussions on technical specifications will progress toward infrastructure development, with the aim of operationalizing the NRL and securing international accreditation in the following year.

- Risk Communication and Public Awareness: With the BCI study pending approval, efforts will be made to launch the research and develop public awareness campaigns on air quality risks, laying the foundation for broader community engagement.
- Outputs 2 and 3 are similarly positioned for next year's implementation phase. The GESI framework development will commence in 2025, supported by capacity-building activities for stakeholders.
- In the industrial emissions sector, the project will focus on finalizing regulations, implementing the BAT pilot program, and increasing technical support to regulators and industries.
- Strengthen coordination mechanisms and information sharing across air quality projects by regularly convening stakeholders to discuss and address sector-related issues. Expand the participant list to ensure comprehensive inclusivity by involving all key players—donors, NGOs, state agencies, and academia—in coordination efforts.

The preparatory work completed thus far has strategically set the stage for effective implementation in 2025, ensuring the necessary infrastructure, partnerships, and regulatory groundwork are in place to advance air quality management and governance.

For further details, please see Annex 2 – Work Plan

Annexes

- I. Updated Risk Log
- II. Updated Work Plan (Approved by the Project Board on April 19th, 2024)
- III. Management Declaration
- IV. Financial Report
- V. Payment Request