

Evaluation

STRENGTHENING
COOPERATION ON HYDROLOGY
AND ENVIRONMENT BETWEEN
TAJIKISTAN AND
AFGHANISTAN IN THE UPPER
AMU DARYA RIVER BASIN
(PYANJ RIVER)

Final report

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Abbreviations

AFG	Afghanistan
CAEWDP	Central Asia Energy-Water Development Program
CAHMP	Central Asia Hydrometeorology Modernization Project
CAREC	Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia
EC	European Commission
GBAO	Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of the Republic of Tajikistan
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
IFAS	International Fund for the Saving of the Aral Sea
IFI	International Financial Institution
IRA	Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEPA	National Environmental Protection Agency of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPD	National Policy Dialogues
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PPCR	Pilot Program for Climate Resilience
RT	Republic of Tajikistan
SCO	Swiss Cooperation Office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SYKE	Finnish Environment Institute
TJK	Tajikistan
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
WB	World Bank

Executive summary

The Amu Darya is a major river of Central Asia with a total length of over 2500 km and the drainage basin covering over 300,000 sq.km. The Pyanj River is a major upstream tributary of the Amu Darya River, it contributes approximately 50% to the Amu Darya's water flow and is largely unregulated¹. Making a considerable part of the Afghanistan–Tajikistan border, the Pyanj River, as well as its basin, requires cooperation of both countries to address pressing issues related to the natural disaster risk reduction and ecosystems protection. Such environmental and hydrological factors as the state of glaciers and snow, soil cover, vegetation, and the impact of human activities in the upper Amu Darya basin are important determinants of water flow and its quality which affect the downstream areas.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has been supporting Tajikistan and Afghanistan in development of institutions, legislation, capacity building and bilateral cooperation since 2012. One of the initiatives was the “Strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin (Pyanj River)” project (hereinafter – the Project).

The Project was implemented from September 2015 to December 2018, building upon earlier activities tracing back to 2012-2014 when the Environment Division of the UNECE in cooperation with the Committee for Environmental Protection of the Republic of Tajikistan and National Environmental Protection Agency of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan initiated a dialogue focused on the common challenges related to the Pyanj River basin. The Project was mainly funded by contributions from Finland from FinWaterWEI II Programme which supported 13 projects in the water sector of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The present evaluation of the 2015-2018 part of the Project was performed in line with the UNECE policy on evaluation and in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, with the latter being the main donor. The *purpose* of the evaluation was to review the implementation and assess the extent to which the objective of the Project was achieved. The evaluation assessed the *relevance* of the Project for the beneficiary countries, *effectiveness* in reaching relevant outcomes, *efficiency* in the use of human and financial resources in reaching the Project's objectives, *sustainability* of the UNECE's work and *impact* on strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin. Via interviewing the key stakeholders, the evaluation also assessed *coordination, complementarity and coherence* with other donor-funded programs, and possibilities to continue supporting the countries in the above-mentioned areas.

According to the Logical Framework of the Project Document, the Project's *development objective* was an improved joint and sustainable transboundary management of water resources and the environment in the upper Amu Darya River basin. The Project *purpose* was to consolidate political and technical bilateral cooperation between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, including information collection, exchange and dissemination on hydrology and the environment in the upper Amu Darya River basin. The expected *results* were formulated as follows:

1. Strengthened institutional framework and expert network for bilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan.
2. Substantive and policy-relevant information for bilateral cooperation on hydrology and environment between Afghanistan and Tajikistan is available.

The *overall conclusion* of the evaluation is that the Project was *very relevant* to the needs and priorities of the beneficiary countries and other donors' initiatives. The Project was designed and implemented to consistently strengthen cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan on essential hydrological

¹ Zoï Environment Network, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. 2013. Visual atlas of cooperation. Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Environment and hydrology in the Upper Amu Darya basin.

and environmental issues in the Pyanj River basin. However, as the expected results of the Project were only partially achieved (see the detailed analysis in Annex I below), it is concluded that the Project was *moderately effective*. The Project demonstrated efficient funds utilization to deliver the outputs, but the allocated resources can be regarded as partially appropriate to the scale of the Project and the needs. The Project *efficiency was satisfactory*.

The preparation of the MoU on environmental protection in 2016 is regarded as a good measure to enhance sustainability of the Project results. However, the exchange of hydrological data goes with interruptions, and neither web-based platforms nor periodical printed publications have been established. The Project results are *unlikely to be sustainable* without further support.

The Project initiated processes for the improvement of the legal frameworks to support cooperation on the environmental issues (MoU on environmental protection has been prepared and submitted, but not approved yet), information exchange and decision making, but did not achieve tangible results in all of these areas. The conclusion is that by the date of the present evaluation, the Project has had a *limited impact*, but achieving such a high standing Project objective and purpose is a time- and resource-consuming process with a strong potential for further development in this case.

The evaluation assessed how *gender* considerations were included in the Project's design, execution and results. According to the Project documents and the interviews, the share of female participants was 17% of all Project event participants in total, with the majority of women coming from Tajikistan.

There were neither overlaps, nor direct *cooperation with other programs*, development agencies or banks beyond information sharing. Exploration of opportunities for close cooperation with the WB and ADB provides evidence of the UNECE's aspiration to continue the developments for improved sustainability of the Project results.

Key Recommendations

- Future UNECE projects on strengthening cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan on hydrology and environment, if any, should address further development of political dialogue (by means of supporting high-level and expert meetings, capacity building events, joint expeditions along the Pyanj River) and technical dialogue. This can include transboundary climate change adaptation strategy which however requires more funding.
- For any future UNECE activities in this area, the UNECE could support increasing the number of specific meetings between the representatives of Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan and GBAO of Tajikistan. Communications/events/meetings with video conferences (by means of Skype, WhatsApp, Viber etc.) during the year would be a positive addition to keep the discussion going. The UNECE may wish to design future projects taking into consideration the limited local IT capacities.
- The UNECE should give preference to local sub-contractors over the international ones, where possible and appropriate, to potentially enhance the efficiency. The Investments (furniture & equipment) budget line can be regarded as not appropriate for similar projects.
- The UNECE should continue supporting the political and technical dialogue between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, with regular financial and organizational assistance to arrange meetings, capacity building events and expeditions on Pyanj which have become a good practice.
- Approval of the environmental MoU may significantly increase the impact of the Project, though this factor is currently beyond the direct control of the UNECE and can be subject to monitoring only.
- It is recommended to the UNECE to continue exploring cooperation opportunities with the WB, USAID and other international development banks, agencies and governments for increased synergetic impact.

- For future projects, the UNECE may consider adding to the meeting invitations a specific call to the participating organisations to include female experts in the Project. Additional focus on involving groups of female students, educated women, e.g. from the University of Central Asia, and activists from women empowerment organisations in Tajikistan and Afghanistan would be a positive addition. These groups can be invited to attend Project events and expeditions (there is interest to this in Dushanbe).
- Further advancement could include meetings with local women in villages, encouraging them to discuss problems and assisting development of women-led community projects on the Pyanj River.

Introduction

A. Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation was to review the implementation and assess the extent to which the objective of the Project was achieved. The evaluation assessed the *relevance* of the Project for the beneficiary countries, *effectiveness* in reaching relevant outcomes, *efficiency* in the use of human and financial resources in reaching the Project's objectives, *sustainability* of the UNECE's work in and *impact* on strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin. Via interviewing the key stakeholders, the evaluation also assessed *coordination, complementarity and coherence* with other donor-funded programs, and possibilities to continue supporting the countries in the above-mentioned areas and pulling efforts with the UNECE. The results of the evaluation will support improvement of the future technical cooperation projects and activities implemented by the UNECE. The results of the evaluation will be important for the discussion with donors and partner organizations for any future work by the UNECE in the Central Asia region and beyond.

B. Scope

The evaluation was guided by the objective, outcome, activities and indicators of achievement established in the logical framework of the Project document. The evaluation considered to what extent the Project a) strengthened institutional framework and expert network for bilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and b) provided substantive and policy-relevant information for bilateral cooperation on hydrology and environment between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The evaluation covered the full period of implementation from September 2015 to December 2018 with no exclusions, and it took stock of results achieved during the period 2012-2014. The evaluation assessed how gender considerations were included in the Project's design, execution and results. Recommendations were made on how gender can be included in the design of the future projects of UNECE. To the extent that relevant information was made available in documentation and interviews, activities of partner organizations, previous reviews and evaluations conducted, and any other information which pertains to the UNECE efforts in the successful execution of the Project were included in the evaluation.

C. Methodology

The evaluation was conducted in September-November 2018. The methodology for the evaluation included the following:

1. Desk study of project materials found on the UNECE website (project descriptions, reports, documents, publications etc.), information provided to the Consultant by the UNECE Project Manager, other information sources (the full list of documents is attached as Annex II).
2. Interview with 28 Project participants and representatives of donors present in the area (face-to face, via telephone and Skype), including Committee of Environment Protection of Tajikistan and its Hydromet Agency, Ministry of Energy and Water Resources of Afghanistan, NEPA of Afghanistan, OSCE Centre in Dushanbe, UNDP Tajikistan Country Office, Zoi Environment Network, GIZ

Tajikistan, Swiss Cooperation Office, JICA Tajikistan, World Bank's Central Asia Hydromet Modernization Program, FIN Water WEI II Program etc. (the full list of interviewees is attached as Annex V).

3. Travel to Dushanbe, Tajikistan on October 24-27, 2018 to conduct face-to-face interviews with the key participants of the Project.
4. Analysis of the electronic survey of 15 internal and external stakeholders, conducted in English, Russian and Dari depending on the first language and/or preference of the respondents. The questionnaire (attached as Annex III) was developed by the Consultant.

Findings

Relevance

According to the findings of desk research, interviews and surveys, the Project addressed key issues related to transboundary management of water resources and the environment in the upper Amu Darya River (Pyanj River) basin.

The Project was built upon earlier activities tracing back to 2012-2014 when the Environment Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in cooperation with the Committee for Environmental Protection of the Republic of Tajikistan and National Environmental Protection Agency of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan initiated a dialogue focused on the common challenges related to the Pyanj River, including:

- Insufficient water resources knowledge, in particular with regard to the effects of climate change.
- Frequent severe floods and mudflows.
- Vulnerable ecosystems.

The activities of 2012-2014 brought tangible outcomes, such as fostering the dialogue between Tajikistan and Afghanistan through four bilateral meetings, increasing shared understanding of the issues via two expeditions along the Pyanj River, and establishing a background for further cooperation by the endorsement of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on exchange of hydrological data² and of Terms of Reference of the Technical Working Group on hydrological monitoring. The 2015-2018 part of the Project took these achievements forward by deepening the dialogue and shared understanding in a series of further bilateral meetings, training events and expeditions, preparing and submitting for approval a Memorandum of Understanding on environmental protection³. With this regard, the Project design can be regarded as highly relevant as it served as a logical continuation of the previous stage and provided consistent support to the gradual progress of the political and technical dialogue between the countries.

In spite of the fact that both countries are facing problems that may be more acute than the Pyanj River hydrological and environment issues, 82% of the surveyed project participants confirmed that the Project was relevant to the needs of both countries. The documents identifying these issues as national priorities are “The Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on Cooperation in the Field of Development and Management of Water Resources of Pyanj and Amu-darya rivers” and the above-mentioned MoU on exchange of hydrological data, signed in 2010 and 2014 correspondingly.

The interviewed representatives of the Committee on Emergency Situations and Civil Defense under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan (RT), Khorog-based Affiliation of the International Organisation for Migration in RT, UNECE Office in Almaty, highlighted the importance of collaboration between Afghanistan and Tajikistan on the early warning and response to emergencies (floods and mudflows) mechanisms.

In terms of relevance to other projects, the Project design can be regarded as of particular relevance to a project of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) entitled “Water Resources Management in Pyanj River Basin” (total financing amount USD 31,730,000, project approved on September 28, 2016,

² Full title: “Memorandum of Understanding on exchange of hydrological data and information relating to the Panj-Amu Darya river basin between the state authorities of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Republic of Tajikistan for the period of 2015–2017 and prospectively until 2020” (signed 25.11.2014)

³ Full title: “Memorandum of Understanding on Exchange of Information and Bilateral Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection in the Panj-Amu Darya River Basin between the National Environmental Protection Agency of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Committee for Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan”

anticipated closing date June 30, 2022⁴). This ADB-funded project aims to strengthen water resource management, which is in line with the UNECE's efforts, and to modernize and climate-proof irrigation and drainage infrastructure, to boost farmers' water use skills and farm management capacity.

The World Bank runs a “Central Asia Hydrometeorology Modernization Project” (total financing USD 39,200,000, project approval date May 26, 2011; closing on March 31, 2021⁵) that is relevant to the Project due to its component related to information sharing and strengthening of hydrometeorological services in the Republic of Tajikistan.

The Project is also relevant to the USAID-funded “Smart Waters” project (total budget USD 9,500,000, duration October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2020⁶) which aims to address the knowledge issues in the water sector in Central Asia and Afghanistan⁷, build working relations among water managers and specialists, and demonstrate the potential of basin management approach and cooperation with the academia.

Promoting the cross-border water management cooperation between two countries, the Project can be regarded as relevant to the UNECE's “Transboundary cooperation in Chu and Talas river basin” project, and as an important expansion of this theme raised by the UNECE. The “Afghan-Tajik cooperation” and the “Chu-Talas” projects share some common features, such as working towards the establishment of intergovernmental agreements, recruiting experts from the both involved countries to form Working Groups, producing materials for dissemination to raise the awareness.

In general, the Project design and development interventions were relevant to meeting the Project objective (supported by 64% of the survey respondents). Communication, planning and information exchange are important elements of sustainable transboundary management, and all of them were included in the Project design. The representatives of UNEP in Kabul, Ministry of Energy and Water Afghanistan, Khorog-based Affiliation of the International Organisation for Migration in RT, Administration of GBAO in RT, stated in their interviews and survey responses that meeting in person, knowledge-sharing and joint activities were crucial for the experts from Afghanistan and Tajikistan to improve their shared understanding of the issues and mutual interest. Planned activities on the preparation of documents backing further cooperation (Memorandum of Understanding on environmental protection, road-map, work programme) were necessary to set the direction of future joint developments. The scheduled development of web-based platforms, though relevant in terms of creating a tool for continuous data exchange, could be regarded as somewhat premature due to the lack of formal intergovernmental agreement on information sharing which, as the UNECE had reported, made it difficult to agree on a country to host the website.

The Project can be regarded as a valuable contribution to the UNECE regular programme of work as it is directly linked to par. 8 and par. 30 of Programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2016-2017⁸ and to paras. 17.10 – 17.12 of the Subprogramme 1 Environment of the Biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2018-2019⁹.

⁴ Website: <https://www.adb.org/projects/documents/taj-water-resources-management-in-pyanj-river-basin-pp>
The latest Project Procurement Plan dated February 7, 2018: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-documents//47181-002-pp-en.pdf>

⁵ Website: <http://projects.worldbank.org/P120788/central-asia-hydrometeorology-modernization-project?lang=en&tab=overview>

The Project Paper referred to by the WB Project Manager:

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/904441533353436310/pdf/Central-Asia-PP-07132018.pdfm>

⁶ Website: <https://www.usaid.gov/kyrgyz-republic/fact-sheets/smart-waters>

⁸ Programme of work of the Environment subprogramme: programme of work and the list of publications of the Environment subprogramme for 2016–2017 (2015). [United Nations Economic and Social Council]

⁹ Biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2018-2019 (2017). [United Nations General Assembly]

Since the Project was designed and implemented to consistently strengthen cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan on essential hydrological and environmental issues in the Pyanj river basin, at the request of these countries, it can be concluded that its relevance is very high.

Effectiveness

The expected accomplishments (outcomes) of the Project were partially achieved. Detailed information on the status and achievements is available in Annex I, along with the survey results on each expected outcome.

In total, 55% of the surveyed Project participants confirmed that the Project contributed to improving joint and sustainable transboundary management of water resources and the environment in the upper Amu Darya River basin (46% of respondents agreed with the statement, 9% partially agreed and pointed out that the Project contributed to improved joint activities on the border river). At the same time, 55% of the respondents agreed with the statement that the Project improved capacity of key stakeholders to strengthen transboundary water cooperation.

According to the survey results, 64% of the surveyed Project participants observed challenges/obstacles to achieving the project objective and expected outcomes. These challenges/obstacles can be grouped into the following two categories reflected below and supported by the statements of the experts (references are given in parentheses after each statement).

1) Political and security issues

- Security issues related to the situation in Afghanistan (representatives of Zoi Environment Network, NGO “Milal-Inter”, SYKE, UNECE’s Office in Almaty).
- Limited interest to the Project from the side of Afghanistan (representative of NGO «Milal-Inter»). Presumably, this could be linked to the security issues in the country.
- Still insufficient will for cooperation between the two countries (representative of the National Environmental Protection Agency, Afghanistan).
- Volatile and changing geopolitical situation (representatives of Zoi Environment Network, Administration of GBAO, Pamir Biological Institute).
- Long permission process - Tajik visa procedures for the citizens of Afghanistan (representatives of OSCE, Zoi Environment Network, NGO “Milal-Inter”).

2) Communication and understanding issues

- Insufficient understanding of the importance of cooperation at different levels (representative of PPCR in Tajikistan).
- Information sharing complicated by the fact that water resources are a politically sensitive issue and that not all the information could be shared, at least from the point of view of the Tajik side (representative of OSCE).
- Irregular flow of hydrological data from Afghanistan (representatives of Agency for Hydrometeorology, Committee for Environmental Protection of the Republic of Tajikistan).
- Natural lack of experts closely familiar with and having work experience in both countries, not only one of them (representative of Administration of GBAO).
- Insufficient involvement of local communities (representative of Administration of GBAO).

The issue with the Memorandum of Understanding on environment which has not been approved by the Government of Tajikistan so far should be regarded separately. It was reported that the MoU approval procedure had been lasting for a year with no official decision announced, and none of the interviewed and surveyed experts claimed that they knew what exactly caused such a long processing time. The interviewed representatives of the Committee on Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, while not knowing the exact reason, assumed that this could be linked to the Tajikistan national security issues, while the surveyed representatives of OSCE and

FinWater WEI II programme in Tajikistan noted that the process of signing MoUs and other high-level documents takes a lot of time. For comparison, the approval of a similar Memorandum between Finland and Tajikistan took 14 months. It can be assumed that the limited commitment and country ownership play a strong role in the approval delay.

The planned and implemented activities of the Project gave impetus to the cooperation process but, following the survey results and in line with the actual Project outcomes analysed in Annex I, were not entirely sufficient to achieve the Project objective. In total, 36% of the survey respondents rated the activities as “entirely sufficient” or “sufficient”. The following main elements were suggested by the surveyed and interviewed representatives of National Agency for the Protection of Environment (NEPA) of the IRA in Badakhshan, UN Environment – Afghanistan, NGO “Milal-Inter”, Administration of GBAO and OSCE as having the potential to complement the Project activities:

- Increasing contacts between the representatives of the Afghanistan’s Badakhshan Province and of the Tajikistan’s Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO).
- Complementing similar-type communications/events with video conferences (e.g. Skype) during the year. This would keep the discussions ongoing and it would be a good follow up.
- Improving coordination with the local authorities.
- Continue involving the concerned institutions from both countries as much as possible.

The interviewed representative of Administration of GBAO and Pamir Biological Institute of the Republic of Tajikistan expressed their interest to a deeper involvement into the future cooperation activities.

Since the Project contributed to the improved capacity of the national stakeholders and to restoring the hydrological data exchange, its implementation supported the following expected accomplishment of the UNECE regular programme of work under the Subprogramme 1 “Environment”: (c) Strengthened national capacity for environmental monitoring and assessment systems in the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia¹⁰.

Finally, as the Project has been supporting the transboundary cooperation development and information exchange on hydrology and environment in the basin of the border river Pyanj, it can be considered as corresponding to the Water Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes in line with Article 2 General Provisions, Article 6 Exchange of Information, Article 9 Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation, Article 10 Consultations, Article 13 Exchange of Information between Riparian Parties, Article 14 Warning and Alarm Systems, Article 16 Public Information¹¹, as well as to SDG 6 and, in particular, its indicator 6.5.2 – transboundary cooperation¹². As reported by the UNECE Project Manager, though Afghanistan and Tajikistan were not signatory to the Convention and had not stated their intention to be part of it, both countries aspired to follow its provisions.

As the expected outcomes of the Project were partially achieved, it is concluded that the Project was moderately effective.

Efficiency

¹⁰ Proposed strategic framework for the period 2018-2019. Part two: biennial programme plan. Programme 17 Economic development in Europe (2016). [United Nations General Assembly]

¹¹ Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes as amended, along with decision VI/3 clarifying the accession procedure (2013). [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe]

¹² http://www.unwater.org/app/uploads/2018/01/SDG6_TABLE_INDICATORS_jan2018-06-02.png

No major delays in the project implementation schedule have been observed.

According to the draft final substantive report and funds utilization report¹³, the Project budget 2015-2018 was €175,150.00. The “Initial Project Budget” column in Table 1 below reflects the initial distribution of funds, with more than half of the overall budget (53.1%) allocated to the Sub-contracting component, and €36,000.0 (20.6%) reserved for the Technical Assistance (TA) personnel costs. The initial budget also included €10,000.0 (5.7%) for furniture and equipment (the “Investments” line in the budget breakdown provided in the draft final substantive report and funds utilization report¹², Annex I, and cited below in Tables 1 and 2).

However, in 2018 the Project budget was amended¹⁴ without change of the total budget amount (Table 1 below), and the main modification was the reallocation of funds from the Investments component to the Sub-contracting component. As the draft final substantive report and funds utilization report explain, local beneficiaries often lack means to properly maintain equipment after procurement and installation. This modification was made to avoid waste of funds, damage and loss of the equipment purchased by the donor organization. According to the FinWater WEI II National Program Manager, the decision to reallocate funds between the Investments and Sub-contracting budget lines was made correctly and on time: “A small-scale equipment upgrade would not be particularly helpful as the need for new equipment supply in this area is very high. Instead of that skills have been enhanced”. The reallocation also resulted in the slight reduction of the TA personnel and Travel and subsistence components funding, from which the Sub-contracting component received extra €10,387.0.

Table 1. Initial and modified project budgets compared

Budget item	Initial Project Budget (EURO)	Initial Project Budget (%)	Modified Project Budget according to Amendment 1 (EURO)	Modified Project Budget according to Amendment 1 (%)
TA* personnel	36,000.0	20.6%	25,820.0	14.7%
Sub-contracting	93,000.0	53.1%	113,387.0	64.7%
Investments	10,000.0	5.7%	0.0	0.0%
Travel and subsistence	6,000.0	3.4%	5,793.0	3.3%
Monitoring and evaluation	10,000.0	5.7%	10,000.0	5.7%
UN Programme Support costs (13%)	20,150.0	11.5%	20,150.0	11.5%
TOTAL	175,150.0	100.0%	175,150.0	100.0%

* Technical Assistance

The most recent details on budget expenditure that have been made available to date are provided in Table 2 below¹⁵. By July 1, 2018, 93.6% of the overall project budget had been utilized; the remaining

¹³ Draft progress report 1 September 2015 – 30 June 2018 provided by the Project Manager

¹⁴ Amendment №1 to the Agreement between the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (The Ministry) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), signed by Mr. Jaakko Lehtovirta, Director, Unit for Russia, on behalf of Mr. Maimo Henriksson, Director General, Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, on 5/7/2018, and Mr. Michael Sylver, Executive Officer, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, on 27/6/2018.

¹⁵ Draft progress report 1 September 2015 – 30 June 2018 provided by the Project Manager, Annex I

6.5% are expected to be spent by the end of December 2018 on the rest of the UN Programme Support costs and on Monitoring and evaluation.

Table 2. Project budget expenditures

Budget item	Modified Project Budget according to Amendment 1 (EURO)	Expenditures between 1 Sep 2015 and 30 June 2018 (EURO)	Expenditures between 1 Sep 2015 and 30 June 2018 (%)	Expenditures between 1 July and 30 December 2018 (EURO)	Expenditures between 1 July and 30 December 2018 (%)
TA* personnel	25,820.0	25,820.0	100.0%	0.0	0.0%
Sub-contracting	113,387.0	113,387.0	100.0%	0.0	0.0%
Investments	0.0	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0%
Travel and subsistence	5,793.0	5,793.0	100.0%	0.0	0.0%
Monitoring and evaluation	10,000.0	0.0	0.0%	10,000.0	100.0%
UN Programme Support costs (13%)	20,150.0	18,850.0	93.6%	1,300.0	6.6%
TOTAL	175,150.0	163,850.0	93.6%	11,300.0	6.5%

* Technical Assistance

As the above analysis shows, the major part of the financial resources allocated to the project had been utilized by July 1, 2018, and the remaining part is expected to be used by the end of the project term.

A detailed list of the project outputs 2015-2018 includes:

- Organization of the bilateral high-level meeting held on October 22–23, 2015 in Dushanbe with participation of 7 officials from Afghanistan, 30 officials from Tajikistan as well as representatives from NGOs and international organizations such as the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, UNECE, WMO, OSCE, UNDP, FinWater, FOCUS and others. Total number of participants: 58, including 48 men (83%) and 10 women (17%).
- Organization of the Experience exchange and training on the development and improvement of the network of hydrological monitoring and data exchange on the Pyanj / Amudarya river with participation of experts from the Republic of Tajikistan, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Russian Federation, that took place on October 13-15, 2016. The event included an expedition to two hydro-posts (Aivadj and Lower Pyandj) in the Tajikistan territory. Total number of participants: 18, including 15 men (83%) and 3 women (17%).
- Organization of the Environmental hydrological expedition in the upper Amudarya/Pyanj river basin on September 20-27, 2017. Total number of participants: 10, all men (100%).
- Organization of the ensuing regional seminar entitled “Dialogue and partnership on issues of environmental protection and sustainable use of water resources in the Amu-darya/Panj river basin” that took place on September 28-29, 2017 in Khorog, Tajikistan. Total number of participants: 51, including 41 men (80%) and 10 women (20%).
- Organization of the Technical meeting of specialists and experts from the Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on “Cooperation between Tajikistan and Afghanistan on Hydrology and Environment for Sustainable Development of the

Panj/Amudarya River Basin” that was held on 10 May 2018 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Total number of participants: 47, including 37 men (79%) and 10 women (21%).

- Organization of the Training on hydrology and environmental monitoring of catchment area of the Panj/Amudarya River basin on 11-12 May 2018 within the framework of Tajik-Afghan cooperation. Total number of participants: 44, including 39 men (89%) and 5 women (11%).

Compared to the budget of the project, the above listed outputs including all Project events with 228 participants suggest that funds were utilized in an efficient manner, which was confirmed by the surveyed and interviewed participants (see the percentage and quoted opinions below).

Following the above analysis and the survey results, it can be concluded that the Project resources were used efficiently (confirmed by 91% of the survey respondents) and commensurate to the Project results (confirmed by 82% of the survey respondents). The representative of NGO «Nature protection team» subcontracted for organization of two events in Tajikistan within the Project also confirmed in the interview that the resources available for organization of the Project events were sufficient for this purpose and used efficiently.

More than half of the survey respondents (55%) agreed that the resources, both financial and human, were appropriate to the scale of the Project and the needs identified by the beneficiary countries. The representative of Zoi Environment Network commented that the resources were appropriate for initiation of cooperation and the kick-off, but not appropriate for the long-term and large-scale impact of the Project. The representatives of NEPA and NGO “Milal-Inter” suggested that a longer time frame of the Project would help achieve the results more efficiently.

According to the information received from the representative of Zoi Environment Network, the major issue was the lack of flexibility in expenditures and planning due to the current UN financial rules and regulations that were not adjusted to the changing situation. For instance, the number of participants from Afghanistan often stays unknown until the last moment, and this affects the travel and catering costs for the Project events. The representative suggested that simplification of financial procedures would increase flexibility in project management in line with the changing situation. Another issue with regard to the Project funding was reported by the UNECE Project Manager: it was impossible to implement one of the planned Project activities, i.e. to upgrade and translate into local languages the Cooperation Atlas, due to limited capacity in Tajikistan and too high fees of the Geneva-based company which produced the first version.

As the Project demonstrated efficient funds utilization to deliver the outputs, but the allocated resources can be regarded as partially appropriate to the scale of the Project and the needs, it can be concluded that the Project efficiency was satisfactory.

Sustainability

According to the interviews and the survey outcomes, the Project results may continue without further intervention but only to a certain extent (64% of the surveyed participants).

The surveyed and interviewed representatives of Committee for Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, NEPA, Pamir Biological Institute, Zoi Environment Network, Khorog-based Affiliation of the International Organisation for Migration, NGO “Milal-Inter” expressed their concerns over the Project results sustainability. The dialogue and some shared activities may continue after the end of the Project, as well as the data exchange in case the Afghan side resumes the process after the break in the late 2017 – 2018, but to continue meetings of the working groups necessary to advance the institutional framework and expert network developments, extended support was desirable. No mechanism to continue the meetings on a regular basis without further external

support has been established, which can be explained by the short time frame of the intervention and related to the issue of ownership and the countries' commitment to the Project goals.

Out of the surveyed participants, 46% agreed that the measures to enhance sustainability of Project results were given sufficient attention, and 18% disagreed with this statement. Preparation of the MoU on environmental protection can be regarded as a good measure to enhance sustainability of the Project results. It should also be pointed out that the implementation of the MoU cannot be guaranteed even if it comes into force.

Both countries have an agreed list of common priorities which can serve as a tool for cooperation and synergies in the future, as evidenced by documents and 55% of the surveyed participants. The documents include “The road map for sharing and distribution of environmental information, including indicator-based assessments on the state of the environment”, draft version dated August 15, 2017, and “Cooperation programme on hydrology for 2018-2020, and prospectively until 2022” have been developed in the framework of the Project and provided by the Project Manager. Also, a list of joint “suggestions and recommendations for consideration and implementation” was provided in the Report about the technical meeting and training on hydrology and ecology for sustainable development in the Panj / Amu River basin between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, May 10-12, 2018.

In spite of the fact that a draft Road-map for improved information and its dissemination has been prepared, there is no certainty regarding the continued availability of substantive and policy-relevant information for bilateral cooperation on hydrology and environment between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Since no regular communication and dissemination mechanisms have been firmly established (neither web-based platforms nor periodical printed publications etc.), there is a possibility that the access to the up-to-date information will deteriorate after the intervention is finished. The same can be said about the hydrological data exchange as the process has been restored after an interruption that lasted for decades and has not had enough time to become regular and stable.

The surveyed representatives of PPCR in Tajikistan and Zoi Environment Network stated that no policy contradictions were observed, while the surveyed experts from NGO “Milal-Inter”, Pamir Biological Institute, Administration of GBAO argued that the policy contradictions did affect implementation and prevent the sustainable achievement of the developmental objectives, explaining this by the complex and precarious situation in Afghanistan. The representative of NEPA also mentioned in his survey responses that the policy contradictions played their role. Nevertheless, the majority (64%) of the surveyed participants stated their belief that in the future the political context would be supportive to similar projects.

Sixty-four percent of the survey respondents agreed that the Project could be continued under the National Policy Dialogues, supporting attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals as part of the Water Action Decade. However, it should be taken into account that Afghanistan is currently not on the list of the NPD programme participants¹⁶ so the processes could be potentially connected only in the future in case Afghanistan joins. In Tajikistan, the NPD platform operates under the Government of Tajikistan, with discussions held on high-level policy issues including water. It has been reported¹⁷ that a local partner NGO “Milal-Inter” shared their report on the Project at the High Level International Conference on International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” that took place in June 2018 in Dushanbe.

As evidenced by the meeting reports and confirmed by the interviewed representative of Zoi Environment Network, the UNECE informed numerous donors on the Project and invited other players to participate in the meetings. Along with the fact that the opportunities for cooperation with other donors, especially with the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, have been explored (see details

¹⁶ <https://www.unece.org/env/water/npd/countrydialogues.html>

¹⁷ <https://www.unece.org/env/water/npd/countrydialogues.html>

in the “Coordination, complementarity and coherence with other donor-funded programs” section below) this provides evidence of the UNECE’s aspiration to continue the developments for improved sustainability of the Project results.

As only some of the activities initiated by the Project are likely to continue independently, and only under certain circumstances, such as improved security in Afghanistan and strengthened commitment and ownership by the states, it can be concluded that the Project results are unlikely to be sustainable without further support.

Impact

Given the fact that the MoU on environmental protection has been prepared and submitted to the Government of Tajikistan for approval but has not received it yet, the impact of the Project on the legal framework challenge of transboundary water and environment cooperation between the riparian states is unclear. On one hand, the fact that the MoU has been developed (in four languages: English, Russian, Tajik and Dari) in cooperation with the experts from both countries and that the Government accepted it for consideration is the evidence of successful effort in this area. On the other, if the MoU does not get an approval, no tangible impact on the actual legal framework on environment will be delivered. The ratings and comments of the surveyed experts given to this point varied (18% of the respondents voted for each of the three ratings: “very significant impact”, “significant impact”, “limited impact”). The representative of PPCR Tajikistan highlighted the “created working groups of the key ministries of the two countries” as a tangible achievement. The representative of Zoi Environment Network suggested that “Tajikistan is still developing its new river-basin based water management (with ADB support) and the Project provided some useful information for decision making, however it is too early to see reflections on legal frameworks – it is time- and resource-consuming process.”

The high impact on the legal framework challenge of the Project phase that ended in 2014 and resulted in the endorsement of the MoU on hydrology was apparent as the MoU was not only approved but also backed the further tangible work on data exchange and further dialogue on hydrology; though the achievements of 2014 are beyond the scope of the present evaluation, it can be said that this example is rather promising in terms of what the impact can be in the future if the MoU on environment is approved.

The Project impacted on the information exchange between Afghanistan and Tajikistan in terms of the hydrological data exchange as confirmed by the Deputy Director of the Hydrometeorology Agency of Tajikistan and the UNECE Project Manager, and the information exchange at shared events as demonstrated by the meeting reports. The surveyed participants’ responses on the impact of the Project on information exchange and decision-making were mixed but the high ratings prevailed (45%). It is currently unclear whether this information has been accepted by the highest echelons of the both Governments and considered as calling for action.

Among the surveyed participants, 46% stated that without the Project the situation in hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin (Pyanj River) would be worse, while 36% affirmed that the situation would be the same (no change).

Taking into account that the Project initiated processes for the improvement of the legal frameworks, information exchange and decision making, but its further impact depends on the environmental MoU approval, it is concluded that to date the Project has had a limited impact.

Gender aspects

In the Project design the cross-cutting objective of gender equality was taken into account by stating the intention of the UNECE to make efforts, to the extent possible, to balance participation in meetings and training events of men and women, and to involve a broad range of stakeholders with regard to water and environment in the process to reflect opportunities to reduce inequality¹⁸.

Table 3 below represents the share of male and female participants in each Project event, as well as in the totality of Project event participants in 2015-2018. The average share of female participants in the events was 14%, while the share of all women among all Project events participants in 2015-2018 was slightly higher – 17%. The highest share of female participants (21%) was observed at the Technical meeting of specialists and experts on May 10, 2018, and the lowest share (0%) was for the Environmental hydrological expedition that took place on September 20-27, 2017, which might be linked to the security issues. According to the meeting reports, all women except from only one (representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of IRA) who participated in the Project events were representatives of either Tajikistan or international organisations. This could be explained by the domination of men in leading positions, in particular in Afghanistan, that was mentioned in the Project document 2015 as a restriction in this respect¹⁹. According to the UN Women²⁰, women in Tajikistan are also under-represented in decision-making, and few of them are involved in disaster preparedness and humanitarian response. In 2018 the UNECE Project Manager reported that the cross-cutting issue of gender equality and participation continued to be a problem in both countries, and in particular in Afghanistan²¹. In an interview, the UNECE Project Manager commented that the invitations to the Project meetings were sent out by the Committee for Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and that, most likely, the invitations did not contain a specific call to the participating organisations to include female experts in the Project.

Table 3. Number and share of male and female participants in the Project events

№	Event	Men	Men, %	Women	Women %	Total number of participants
1	Bilateral high-level meeting, October 22–23, 2015	48	83%	10	17%	58
2	Experience exchange and training, October 13-15, 2016	15	83%	3	17%	18
3	Environmental hydrological expedition, September 20-27, 2017	10	100%	0	0%	10
4	Ensuing regional seminar, September 28-29, 2017	41	80%	10	20%	51
5	Technical meeting of specialists and experts, May 10, 2018	37	79%	10	21%	47
6	Training on hydrology and environmental monitoring, May 11-12, 2018	39	89%	5	11%	44
Average number and share of participants		32	86%	6	14%	38
Total number and share of participants in all events		190	83%	38	17%	228

¹⁸ Strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin (Pyanj River). TAP – Tajik-Afghan Pyanj project (2015). [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe]

¹⁹ Strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin (Pyanj River). TAP – Tajik-Afghan Pyanj project (2015). [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe]

²⁰ <http://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/tajikistan>

²¹ Draft progress report 1 September 2015 – 30 June 2018 provided by the UNECE Project Manager

At the same time, as demonstrated by the NGO “Milal-Inter” in their Project report produced in 2017²², a meeting between the Project participants and the local community members that took place in the Afghanistan’s Ishkashim area involved female residents that came to speak about poor performance of the authorities and of the other residents in maintaining the localities free of pollution. There is no clear indication of the number of women that participated in the meeting but a photo on page 5 shows 14 women and 18 men present in the meeting room, and the representative of the NGO “Milal-Inter” confirmed in the interview that the share of female participants in that meeting was high (“approximately a half”). This might be related to the location of the meeting venue which was within a local area in Afghanistan and did not require cross-border travelling in order to be attended by the local residents (including women).

The main organisations with an explicit focus on gender equality as a part of their policies that participated in the Project meetings according to the meeting reports were OSCE and UNDP. Representatives of Water Users Association “Ob Umed” (Tajikistan) and PPCR Secretariat (Tajikistan) aiming at increasing the involvement of women into the related activities also participated in the events. There is a number of other organisations entirely dedicated to women empowerment and operating in Tajikistan and Afghanistan, but with no recorded participation in the Project events, e.g. UN Women and Women for Women International working in Afghanistan since 2002, UN Women in Tajikistan operating since 1999 and holding an office in Dushanbe, Women Empowered (WE-Afghanistan) established in 2013 with an office in Kabul. Also, Khorog in GBAO, Tajikistan, hosts the University of Central Asia which enrolls both female and male students, corresponding to the principle of equal rights to education. According to the information provided at the University’s website, about 46% of all students are women²³.

The conclusion is that the gender equality aspects were included in the Project design in the parts of aspirations to balance participation of men and women and involving stakeholders related to the environment/water and gender equality aspects. The participation of women in the Project events was limited, presumably due to the general under-representation of women in the related professions in Tajikistan and, in particular, in Afghanistan.

Coordination, complementarity and coherence with other donor-funded programs

One of the aims of interviewing the key internal and external stakeholders within the present evaluation was to assess coordination, complementarity and coherence of the Project with other donor-funded programs, and to identify possibilities to continue supporting the countries in the above-mentioned areas and pulling efforts with the UNECE.

The first phase of the Project started in 2012 and was supported by the UNECE and a small contribution from the Russian Federation. The Finnish Government joined in 2015 and sponsored the main activities including facilitation of the Tajikistan and Afghanistan dialogue, meetings, training events, and the expedition.

According to a representative of Zoi Environment Network, “coordination with all projects was part of project design and implementation. All interested partners were invited to meetings and events organized by the project, including the ADB Pyanj river basin project management staff from the Ministry of water-energy and the ADB office. In addition, coordination and synergies with other projects – e.g. World Bank Hydromet modernization project and Afghanistan WMO and WB meteorological modernization projects were maintained, and experience from Chu-Talas was presented in relevant context either by the UNECE staff or by local experts with experience in Chu-

²² Strengthening cooperation in the field of hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the basin of Amu Darya/Panj (2017). Project report. [Association “Milal-Inter”]

²³ <https://www.ucentralasia.org/Schools/ArtsAndSciences>

Talas (i.e. former project manager of Chu-Talas shared advice)". The meetings materials, lists of participants and interviews confirm that. During the earlier stages OSCE has been playing an important role by providing support to meetings and events in 2012-2015.

The coordination and sharing of information between donor agencies and international financial institutions (IFIs) usually took place during relevant conferences, expert meetings and training seminars in Dushanbe and Khorog (no meetings in Kabul were held for security reasons). All relevant projects and partners were always invited to the Project meetings and events from Tajikistan, and to extent feasible from Afghanistan (visa and logistics issues as well as budget availability were reported to be an issue).

The draft progress report from the UNECE to WaterWEI II admin team and Finnish Environment Institute (dated 14.08.2018) mentions that "cooperation with projects or programmes of similar activities, like the above-mentioned project of ADB and also the World Bank, have been established and partnership explored. In consultations with national authorities of Afghanistan and Tajikistan an idea of developing a joint project to be submitted to the Global Environment Facility was agreed on". The UNECE Project Manager further commented in an interview that the concept of the Project for the GEF had been developed and the related documents had been shared with representatives of the countries for their consideration.

Additional documents and two interviewed WB's Program Managers (CAEWDP and CAHMP) confirm that active discussions had been held between the UNECE Environment Division and the WB's ongoing and planned programs regarding possible cooperation on the Pyanj River. According to the WB Program Manager, "WB's and UNECE's staff are in constant contact seeking opportunities for working together in Central Asia. Positive experience of collaboration already exists. The examples include sharing the costs for joint workshops, promotions, policy dialogue in the regions".

According to the UNECE Project Manager, currently the UNECE actively explores different partnership opportunities. For example, with the WB discussion is ongoing to jointly engage in improving policy dialogue on hydrology and environment between the countries. Opportunities to strengthen cooperation among the local communities are sought through the collaboration with the Oxfam and CAREC's office in Dushanbe. There were no examples of collaboration or coordination with ESCAP, the Resident Coordinators Offices in Afghanistan and Tajikistan or UNAMA.

According to two key project participants, the Project complemented the ADB's project titled "Water Resources Management in Pyanj River Basin". However, ADB does not show interest for cooperation with the UNECE at the moment. According to the ADB Project Manager's email, the project on the Pyanj River is "still at the beginning of the project implementation, struggling to solve current issues and not in the stage of considering future collaboration".

The conclusion is that there were neither overlaps, nor direct cooperation beyond information sharing with other programs, development agencies or IFIs.

Examples of coordination among other donors

There are many development agencies and IFIs working in the water and environment protection areas in Tajikistan. Since the number of beneficiaries (Ministries and Agencies) is limited, some competition among the donors is not uncommon. Attempting to avoid duplication of efforts and increasing efficiency, the Coordination Committee of donors (with a dedicated secretariat supported by the Swiss Cooperation Office) was established in 2016 under the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources of Tajikistan. All major and most active donors are represented in the Committee. According to the interviewed UNDP representative, experience and information exchange takes place. The meetings are held annually, and the secretariat works in between the meetings.

It is worth mentioning the coordination arrangement of major organizations dealing with water resources in Tajikistan. Following the initiative by the Government of Tajikistan, the WB, ADB, Swiss Cooperation Office and the EC have agreed to share between themselves the four major river basins in Tajikistan to avoid overlaps and competition. ADB has taken full responsibility for the Pyanj River basin; the Swiss – for Syrdarya in the North of Tajikistan; the EC (via the WB as an implementing agency) – for Vakhsh, and the WB – for Kafirnigan river.

Conclusions and recommendations

The **overall conclusion** of the evaluation is that the Project was very relevant, moderately effective, and demonstrated satisfactory efficiency. The Project results are unlikely to be sustainable without further support. The Project has had a limited impact, though it has initiated processes for the improvement of the legal frameworks, information exchange and decision making. There were neither overlaps, nor direct cooperation (despite the efforts of the UNECE) with other programs, development agencies or banks beyond information sharing.

Conclusions on relevance. The Project was highly relevant to the needs of both countries. It played an important connecting role and served as a principle vehicle for the cross-border collaboration on environment and hydrology issues, served as a logical continuation of the previous stage and provided consistent support to the gradual progress of the political and technical dialogue between Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

Recommendations: Future UNECE projects on strengthening cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan on hydrology and environment, if any, should address further development of political dialogue (by means of supporting high-level and expert meetings, capacity building events, joint expeditions along the Pyanj River) and technical dialogue. This can include transboundary climate change adaptation strategy which however requires more funding.

Conclusions on effectiveness: As the expected outcomes of the Project were partially achieved (the Memorandum of Understanding on environment has been developed, but it has not been approved by the Governments; web-based platforms for information exchange have not been developed; and the Cooperation Atlas has not been upgraded and translated to local languages) and the exchange between the stakeholders was limited, the Project was rated as moderately effective.

Recommendations: For any future UNECE activities in this area, the UNECE could support increasing the number of specific meetings between the representatives of Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan and GBAO of Tajikistan. Communications/events/meetings with video conferences (by means of Skype, WhatsApp, Viber etc.) during the year would be a positive addition to keep the discussion going. The UNECE may wish to design future projects taking into consideration the limited local IT capacities.

Conclusions on efficiency: Human resources were used in an efficient manner, and there were no delays in the project implementation. The Project demonstrated efficient funds utilization to deliver the outputs, but some of the planned outputs were not delivered, and the allocated resources can be regarded as partially appropriate to the scale of the Project and the needs. It can be concluded that the Project efficiency was satisfactory.

Recommendations: The UNECE should give preference to local sub-contractors over the international ones, where possible and appropriate, to potentially enhance the efficiency. The Investments (furniture & equipment) budget line can be regarded as not appropriate for similar projects.

Conclusions on sustainability: The preparation of the MoU on environmental protection is regarded as a good measure to enhance sustainability of the Project results, though at the moment it is not clear whether it will be implemented even in case of approval. The exchange of hydrological data was interrupted, and neither web-based platforms nor periodical printed publications have been established. The Project results are unlikely to be sustained without further external support.

Recommendations: The UNECE should continue supporting the political and technical dialogue between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, with regular financial and organizational assistance to arrange meetings, capacity building events and expeditions on Pyanj which have become a good practice.

Conclusions on impact: The Project initiated processes for the improvement of the legal frameworks to support cooperation on the environmental issues (MoU on environmental protection has been prepared and submitted, but not approved yet), information exchange and decision making, but did not achieve tangible results in all of these areas. The conclusion is that by the date of the present evaluation, the Project has had a limited impact, but achieving such a high standing Project objective and purpose is a time- and resource-consuming process with a strong potential for further development in this case.

Recommendations: Approval of the environmental MoU may significantly increase the impact of the Project, though this factor is currently beyond the direct control of the UNECE and can be subject to monitoring only. It is recommended to the UNECE to continue exploring cooperation opportunities with the WB, USAID and other international development banks, agencies and governments for increased synergetic impact.

Conclusions on gender: Gender equality and participation is a problem in both countries, especially in Afghanistan. According to the Project documents and the interviews, the share of female participants was 17% of all Project event participants in total, with the majority of women coming from Tajikistan.

Recommendations on how gender can be included in the design of the future projects in UNECE: For future projects, the UNECE may consider adding to the meeting invitations a specific call to the participating organisations to include female experts in the Project. Additional focus on involving groups of female students, educated women, e.g. from the University of Central Asia, and activists from women empowerment organisations in Tajikistan and Afghanistan would be a positive addition. These groups can be invited to attend Project events and expeditions (there is interest to this in Dushanbe). Further advancement could include meetings with local women in villages, encouraging them to discuss problems and assisting development of women-led community projects on the Pyanj River.

Annexes

Annex I. Detailed analysis of the achievement status of the planned Project outcomes

Developed on the basis of the UNECE's Project document "Strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin (Pyanj River). TAP – Tajik-Afghan Pyanj project." (2015) and its Logical Framework.

Table 4. General representation of the state of the Development Objective and the Project Purpose achievement.

Objective and Purpose	Indicators	Status vs Indicators	General status
<p>Development Objective: Improved joint and sustainable transboundary management of water resources and the environment in the upper Amu Darya River basin</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities from both countries participate in the meetings and expeditions • Work programmes developed, approved and implemented • Joint actions implemented • Access to information about the shared basin improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved • Partially achieved • Achieved • Partially achieved 	<p>Partially achieved.</p> <p>The Project has made contribution to improving joint transboundary management of water resources and the environment in the upper Amu Darya River basin, but the process requires further development, and its sustainability causes concern at the moment</p>
<p>Project Purpose: To consolidate political and technical bilateral cooperation between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, including information collection, exchange and dissemination on hydrology and the environment in the upper Amu Darya River basin.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilateral meetings organized with participation of representatives of involved authorities from both countries • Information exchanged and disseminated on the upper Amu Darya 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved • Partially achieved 	<p>Partially achieved.</p> <p>The Project initiated the process of consolidation of political and technical bilateral cooperation between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, including information collection, exchange and dissemination on hydrology and the environment in the upper Amu Darya River basin. Further intervention is required to sustain it and to achieve actual consolidation</p>

Table 5. Detailed analysis of the achievement status of the planned Project outcomes.

Planned Results and Indicators	Planned activities	Planned key outcomes	Status and achievements benchmarked against the outcomes
<p>Result 1: Strengthened institutional framework and expert network for bilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthened mandate for the environmental work of the TTF has been agreed upon 2. Annual bilateral meetings of TTF have become a regular feature of cooperation 3. Work programme(s) for the TTF prepared jointly 	<p>1.1. Organisation of annual bilateral meetings in 2015-2017 in Dushanbe and Kabul (if security situation allows).</p>	<p>Improved bilateral dialogue and shared understanding of the situation in the basin.</p>	<p>Status: achieved.</p> <p>According to the meeting reports, the number of participants in 2015, 2017 and 2018 was 58, 51 and 47 - respectively, with 7 high-level representatives from Afghanistan participating in each meeting. Considering the current situation in Afghanistan and the visa issues, this is regarded as a good result. The representatives of Afghanistan (Ministry of Energy and Water, UN Environment – Afghanistan) noted that it was a good opportunity for relationship building, exchange of ideas and knowledge, identifying opportunities for collaboration, and stocktaking of the existing agreements between both countries.</p> <p>The majority of survey respondents gave this outcome high achievement scores (64% in total, 46% - “fully achieved”, 18% - “achieved”).</p>

Planned Results and Indicators	Planned activities	Planned key outcomes	Status and achievements benchmarked against the outcomes
	1.2. Development, approval and implementation of annual work programme; reporting of the implementation.	Agreed plan for improved access to information and understanding on the situation in the Pyanj basin.	<p>Status: partially achieved.</p> <p>The Report on the Technical meeting and training that took place in May 2018 includes “suggestions and recommendations for consideration and implementation” (par. 33). This listing covers such important points as data exchange, creation of a joint webpage/portal, exploring opportunities for monitoring snow cover and glaciers etc. Also, a Cooperation programme on hydrology for 2018-2020, and prospectively until 2022, has been prepared and shared by the UNECE with the Consultant. The programme includes generic actions and specific hydrology-related actions.</p> <p>“The road map for sharing and distribution of environmental information, including indicator-based assessments on the state of the environment” has been developed. A Draft for consideration and comments by the countries (experts) provided by the UNECE to the Consultant was dated August 15, 2017.</p> <p>The achievement ratings given to this outcome by the survey respondents were shared between “achieved” – 37% and “partially achieved” – 27%.</p>
<p>Result 2: Substantive and policy-relevant information for bilateral cooperation on hydrology and environment between Afghanistan and Tajikistan is available</p> <p>Indicators:</p>	2.1 Preparation of a road-map for improved information and its dissemination.		<p>Status: partially achieved.</p> <p>According to the explanation received from the UNECE, the available resources were insufficient to upgrade and translate the Cooperation Atlas to local languages. However, all reports on the Project events and activities were published at the UNECE’s website, and a Project report produced by a local</p>
	2.2 Upgrade and translation to local languages of Cooperation Atlas.	Improved access to information and understanding on the situation in the Pyanj basin.	

Planned Results and Indicators	Planned activities	Planned key outcomes	Status and achievements benchmarked against the outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Road-map for improved information and its dissemination available. 2. Existing/collected information made available in different forms and platforms (printed, web). 3. Jointly prepared/collected data through regular bilateral expert meetings and joint expeditions 4. Training events to facilitate cooperation on selected topics (selection made during project, topics can include hydrology data exchange, joint forecasts and flood warning mechanisms) 5. Local web-based platform(s) for information exchange on hydrology and environment established or existing platforms strengthened 	<p>2.3 Development of web-based platforms.</p>	<p>Improved and shared access to information and data relevant for the situation in the Pyanj basin.</p>	<p>partner NGO “Milal-Inter” was shared at the High Level International Conference on International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” that took place in June 2018 in Dushanbe.</p> <p>The achievement ratings given to this outcome by the survey respondents were shared between “achieved” – 37% and “partially achieved” – 27%.</p> <p>Status: web-based platforms: not achieved; exchange of information and data: partially achieved.</p> <p>According to the Report on the Technical meeting and training that took place in May 2018, representatives of the involved countries expressed their interest in establishing a joint webpage/portal but, as stated in the UNECE, “the lack of formal intergovernmental agreement on information sharing made it difficult to agree on a country to host the website”. In spite of this, the hydrological data exchange between the two countries was restored due to the Project activities after many years of silence, as confirmed by the representatives of the Committee for Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and of the UNECE. The Report on the Technical meeting and training 2018 and the further evidence of the both representatives also provide information on the data exchange interruptions from the Afghan side which occurred in the second half of 2017 and the first half of 2018.</p> <p>The achievement ratings given to this outcome by the survey respondents were shared between “fully achieved” and “achieved” – 27% and “partially achieved” – 27%. This distribution could be related to the firstly restored and then temporarily interrupted</p>

Planned Results and Indicators	Planned activities	Planned key outcomes	Status and achievements benchmarked against the outcomes
			data exchange on one hand, and to the issues with the development of web-based platforms on the other.
	2.4 Organisation of bilateral expert meetings, trainings and expeditions.	Improved joint understanding of the hydrology and environment in the Pyanj basin and conditions for information exchange and joint action established.	<p>Status: achieved.</p> <p>According to the reports, in total, three bilateral meetings (2015, 2017, 2018), two trainings (2016, 2018) and two expeditions (2016, 2017) have been conducted.</p> <p>Good achievement ratings were given to this outcome by 45% of the survey respondents.</p>
	2.5 Dissemination of results including the development of bilateral cooperation through e.g. newsletters and articles as well as various events on local, national, regional (and international) level.	Improved information and understanding on various levels – locally, nationally, regionally as well as internationally with regard to the development of cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan in the Pyanj basin.	<p>Status: partially achieved.</p> <p>All reports on the Project events and activities were published at the UNECE’s website. A Project report produced by a local partner NGO “Milal-Inter” was shared at the High Level International Conference on International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” that took place in June 2018 in Dushanbe.</p> <p>Good achievement ratings were given to this outcome by 45% of the survey respondents, and 18% rated as “partially achieved”.</p>

Annex II. List of reviewed documents

I. Project documents and publications

Draft progress report 1 September 2015 – 30 June 2018 (2018). [Hajiyev, B., United Nations Economic Commission for Europe]

Environment and Hydrology. Cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. A Summary in Cartoons (not dated). [Zoï Environment Network, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe]

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Briefing on the joint Tajik-Afghan expedition to the upper reaches of the Panj/Amu Darya River basin, 1-10 August 2015 [Mr. Anvar Homidov, Committee on Environmental Protection, Republic of Tajikistan]

Cross-border biodiversity action priorities [Mr. Neimatullo Safarov, Head of the National Centre for Biodiversity and Biosecurity, Republic of Tajikistan]

Current and prospective systems of environmental data, indicators, reporting and information systems [Mr. Rahmatullo Khairulloev, Head of Environmental Policy and Monitoring Unit, Committee on Environmental Protection, Republic of Tajikistan]

Draft Concept of the common (shared) environmental indicators and information exchange between Afghanistan and Tajikistan [Mr. Viktor Novikov, Zoï Environment Network]

Environment and hydrology cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Republic of Tajikistan in the Panj / Amu Darya River basin 5 years of signing the Afghan-Tajik Agreement in basin Amu / Panj (2010-2015) [Mr. Alibashov, Khorog Aarhus Centre]

Finland's support to the water sector of Tajikistan, FinWaterWEI II [Ms. Nazokat Isaeva, National Programme Manager, Finland's Water Sector Support to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan]

Focus Humanitarian Assistance [Mr. Zaripov, Focus Humanitarian Assistance]
Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) Report [Mr. Ghulam Hassan Amiry, Head of climate change unit, National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA), Islamic Republic of Afghanistan]

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Support in the development of environmental monitoring system in Tajikistan [Mr. Mirzohaidar Isoev, Project manager, Environmental monitoring and Information Systems Project, UNDP]

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Annex III. Survey questionnaire

EVALUATION: RATING, COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

THE UNECE PROJECT “STRENGTHENING COOPERATION ON HYDROLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT BETWEEN TAJIKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN IN THE UPPER AMU DARYA RIVER BASIN (PYANJ RIVER)”

Dear project participants,

The UNECE are currently conducting evaluation of the project on strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin (Pyanj River)²⁴. We would be very grateful if you could contribute to the project evaluation by completing this questionnaire.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 – 5 (from 1 – “poor” to 5 – “excellent”), or select YES/NO. Further comments and recommendations are welcome.

1. Please rate the relevance of the project to the needs and priorities of your country related to hydrology and environment in the upper part of the Pyanj/Amu Darya River basin

Rate here

Your comments and recommendations:

2. Please rate the extent to which the project design was relevant, in line with the achievements and outcomes of other initiatives, such as ADB project entitled Water Resources Management in Pyanj River Basin, UNECE project on support of Chu-Talas cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and other relevant projects and programmes in the region.

Rate here

Your comments and recommendations:

3. Please rate coordination and cooperation of the project with other programmes in the region.

Rate here

Your comments and recommendations:

4. Have you observed any common approaches, synergies and/or peer learning between the project and other programmes? **YES/NO**

If you answered “YES”, please provide details below.

Your comments and recommendations:

5. Does the project complement with other programmes in the region? **YES/NO**

²⁴<https://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/water/areas-of-work-of-the-convention/envwatercentralasia/strengthening-cooperation-on-hydrology-and-environment-between-afghanistan-and-tajikistan-in-the-upper-amu-darya-river-basin.html>

If you answered “YES”, please provide details below.

Your comments and recommendations:

6. The project objective was to improve joint and sustainable transboundary management of water resources and the environment in the upper Amu Darya River basin. Please rate the extent to which the project design and development interventions were relevant for meeting this objective.

Rate here

Your comments and recommendations:

7. Please rate the extent to which the following expected project outcomes were achieved:

- 1) Improved bilateral dialogue and shared understanding of the situation in the basin.
- 2) Agreed plan for improved access to information and understanding on the situation in the Pyanj basin.
- 3) Improved access to information and understanding on the situation in the Pyanj basin.
- 4) Improved and shared access to information and data relevant for the situation in the Pyanj basin.
- 5) Improved joint understanding of the hydrology and environment in the Pyanj basin and conditions for information exchange and joint action established.
- 6) Improved information and understanding on various levels – locally, nationally, regionally as well as internationally with regard to the development of cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan in the Pyanj basin.

Rate here

Rate here

Rate here

Rate here

Rate here

Rate here

8. Did you observe any challenges or obstacles to achieving the project objectives and expected outcomes?
YES / NO

9. If you observed any challenges or obstacles to achieving the project objectives and expected outcomes, please provide details below.

Your comments and recommendations:

10. Has the project contributed to improving joint and sustainable transboundary management of water resources and the environment in the upper Amu Darya River basin? **YES / NO**

11. Has the project improved capacity of key stakeholders to strengthen transboundary water cooperation? **YES / NO**

12. In your opinion, what would the situation in on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin (Pyanj River) be without this project? Please select:

- a) The situation would be worse
- b) The situation would be the same (no change)
- c) The situation would be better

13. Please rate the extent to which the planned project activities were sufficient to achieve the planned

Rate here

project outcomes (listed above in question №7 as 1-6)

Your comments and recommendations:

14. Please rate the extent to which the planned project activities were sufficient to achieve the project objective to improve joint and sustainable transboundary management of water resources and the environment in the upper Amu Darya River basin.

Rate
here

Your comments and recommendations:

15. Were the available resources appropriate to the scale of the project and the needs identified by beneficiary countries? **YES / NO**
16. In your opinion, were the human and financial resources allocated to the project used efficiently? **YES / NO**
17. In your opinion, were the human and financial resources allocated to the project commensurate to the project results? **YES / NO**
18. In your opinion, were the human and financial resources appropriate to the design of the project? **YES / NO**
19. Could the design of the project have been improved in order to achieve the expected outcomes more efficiently? **YES / NO**
20. What specifically could have been improved to achieve the results more efficiently (with fewer resources, less time/effort invested etc.)?

Your comments and recommendations:

21. Please rate the extent to which, in your opinion, the project results will continue after completion of the project in your country. Please rate on a 1-5 scale, where 1 is “the project results will not continue” and 5 is “all of the project results will fully continue”.

Rate
here

Your comments and recommendations:

22. Do each of the two countries have a plan for further cooperation to support strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin? **YES / NO**

Your comments and recommendations:

23. In your opinion, were the measures to enhance sustainability of project results given sufficient attention during the project preparation and implementation phases? **YES / NO**

24. Do policy contradictions affect implementation and prevent the sustainable achievement of the developmental objectives? **YES/NO**

If you answered "YES", please provide details below.

Your comments and recommendations:

25. Please rate the extent to which the project impacted on the legal framework challenge of transboundary water and environment cooperation between the riparian states.

Rate here

Your comments and recommendations:

26. Please rate the extent to which the project impacted effective decision-making and information exchange between Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

Rate here

Your comments and recommendations:

27. Do you think the project could be continued under the relevant national and regional initiatives, like United Nations Water Action Decade, SDGs processes, National policy dialogues? If so, please describe.

Your comments and recommendations:

28. In your opinion, has implementation under FinWaterWEI has brought some synergies to the related projects in the region? **YES/NO**

If you answered "YES", please provide details below.

Your comments and recommendations:

29. In your opinion, are there any other possible windows/opportunities to continue works in this direction, that Finland could cover by providing expert support and consultations to promote sustainable development in the region? **YES/NO**

If you answered "YES", please provide details below.

Your comments and recommendations:

30. In your opinion, will the political context and decision making be supportive to similar projects in the future? **YES/NO**

31. Please rate the extent to which gender quality and women's empowerment were advanced as a result of this project.

Rate here

Your comments and recommendations:

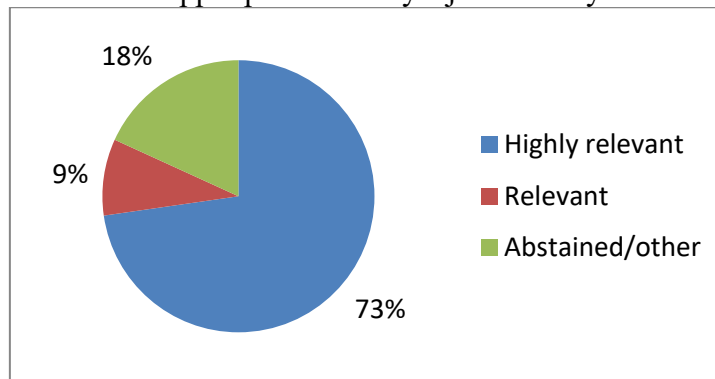
Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Your comments and recommendations:

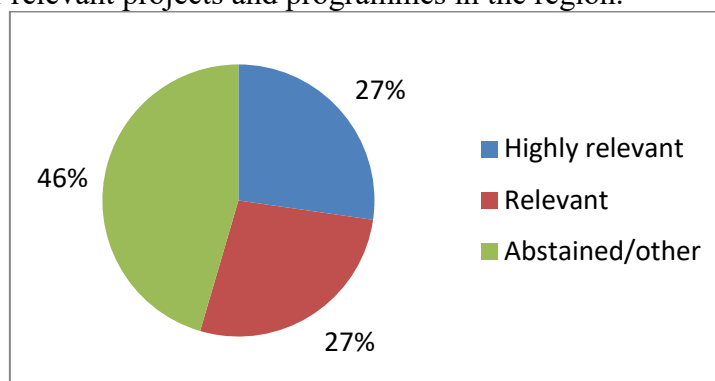
THANK YOU!
PLEASE RETURN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE TO KONSTANTIN KARABANOV AT
K.KARABANOV@GMAIL.COM

Annex IV. Key survey results summary

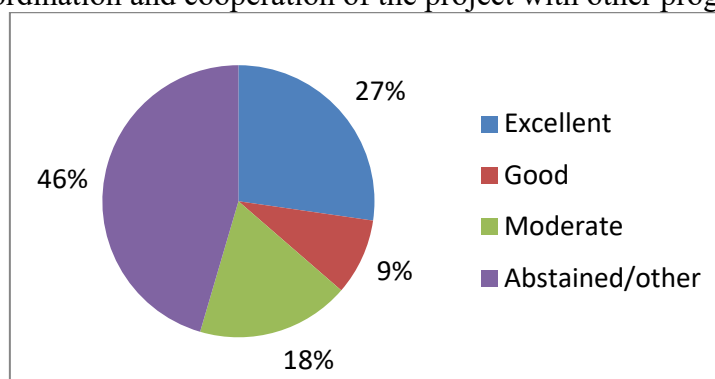
1. Please rate the relevance of the project to the needs and priorities of your country related to hydrology and environment in the upper part of the Pyanj/Amu Darya River basin.



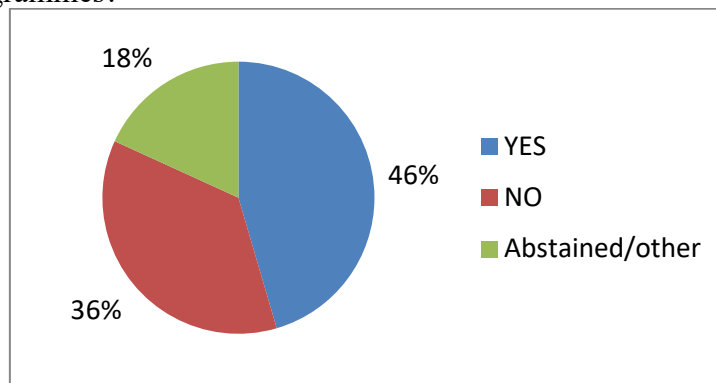
2. Please rate the extent to which the project design was relevant, in line with the achievements and outcomes of other initiatives, such as ADB project entitled Water Resources Management in Pyanj River Basin, UNECE project on support of Chu-Talas cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and other relevant projects and programmes in the region.



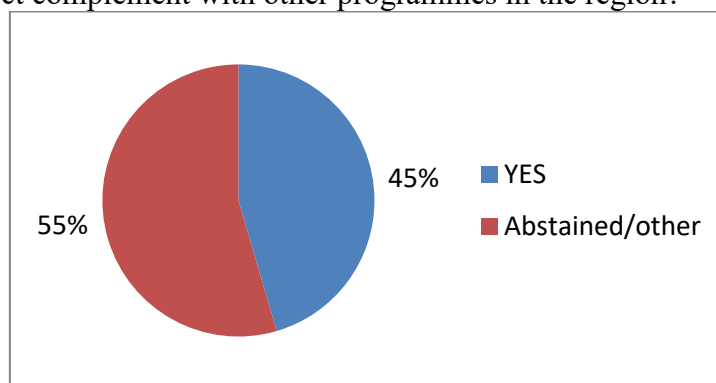
3. Please rate coordination and cooperation of the project with other programmes in the region.



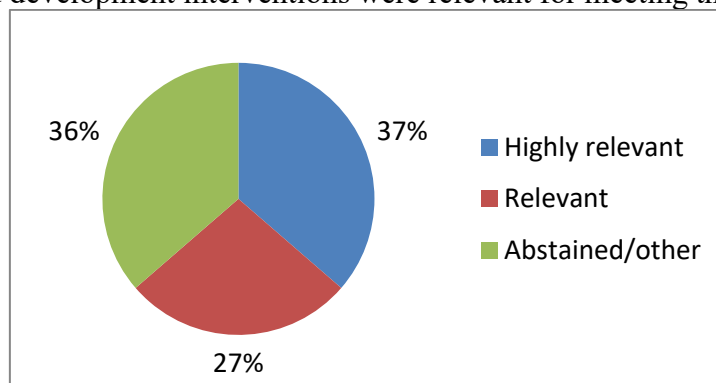
4. Have you observed any common approaches, synergies and/or peer learning between the project and other programmes?



5. Does the project complement with other programmes in the region?

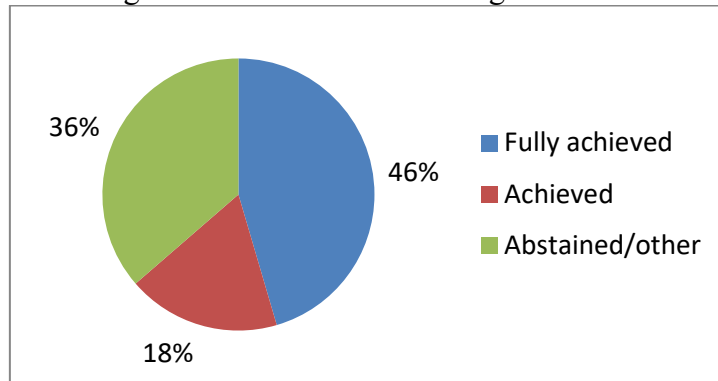


6. The project objective was to improve joint and sustainable transboundary management of water resources and the environment in the upper Amu Darya River basin. Please rate the extent to which the project design and development interventions were relevant for meeting this objective.

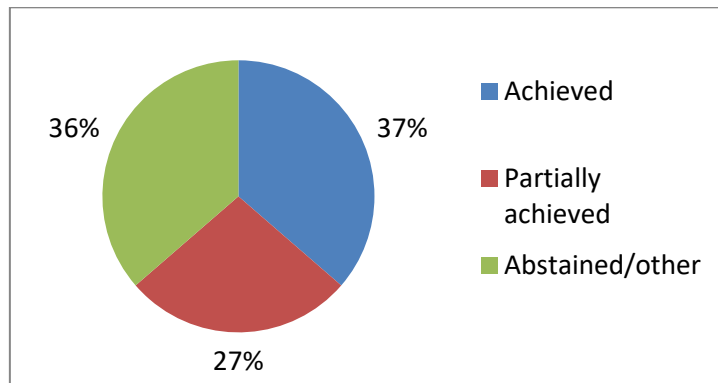


7. Please rate the extent to which the following expected project outcomes were achieved:

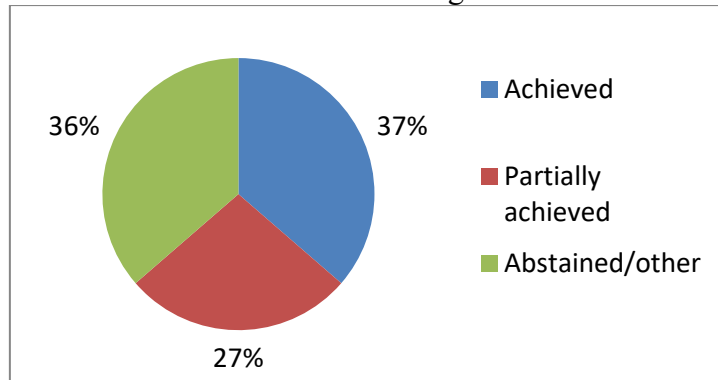
1) Improved bilateral dialogue and shared understanding of the situation in the basin.



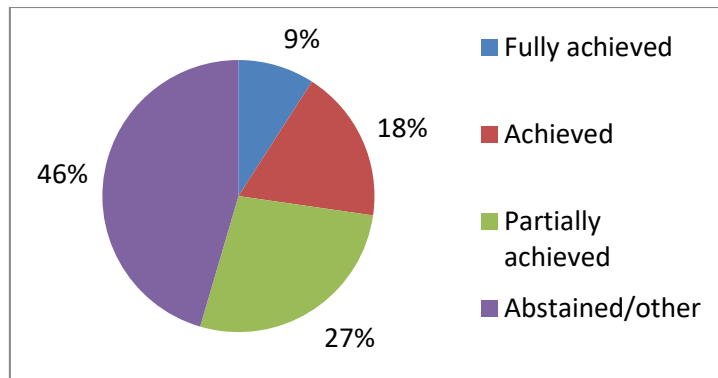
2) Agreed plan for improved access to information and understanding on the situation in the Pyanj basin.



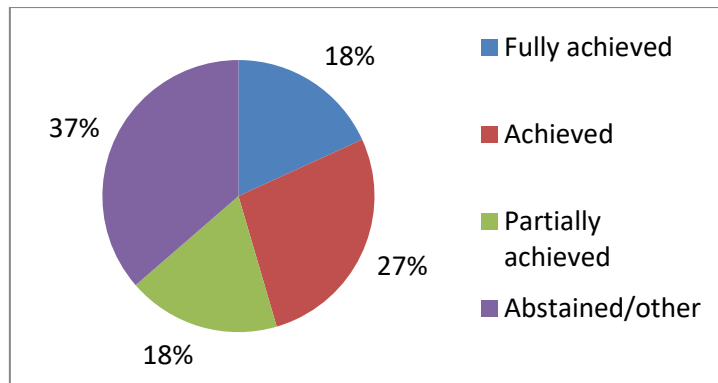
3) Improved access to information and understanding on the situation in the Pyanj basin.



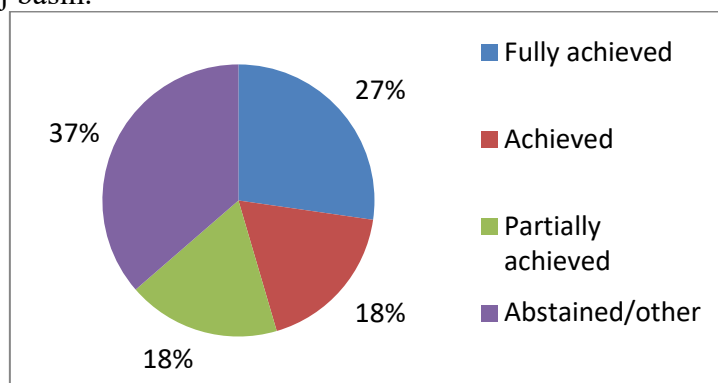
4) Improved and shared access to information and data relevant for the situation in the Pyanj basin.



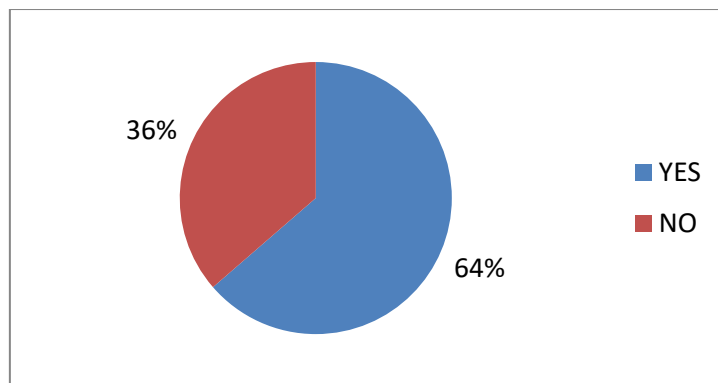
5) Improved joint understanding of the hydrology and environment in the Pyanj basin and conditions for information exchange and joint action established.



6) Improved information and understanding on various levels – locally, nationally, regionally as well as internationally with regard to the development of cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan in the Pyanj basin.



8. Did you observe any challenges or obstacles to achieving the project objectives and expected outcomes?



9. If you observed any challenges or obstacles to achieving the project objectives and expected outcomes, please provide details below.

“The obstacle was primarily the problem of ensuring the participation of representatives of Afghanistan at the project events, which was associated with some indifference of the leadership of the Afghan services and ministries, as well as problems of obtaining a Tajik visa for participants. In the future, it is advisable that according to these projects CAREC should send letters to the ministries of foreign affairs and other relevant ministries and agencies of the two countries.”

“A temporary but serious obstacle was the state of security on the Afghan side, which was overcome with the support of the leaders of the local authorities of the Afghan volusvolstvos (districts).”

"Insufficiently relevant agreement between Tajikistan and Afghanistan (2010) in the field of water management and environmental cooperation."

"Low level of understanding of the importance of cooperation at different levels."

"Lack of political will for the cooperation between the two countries."

"Information sharing: At least I have observed that the Tajik side was a bit hesitant in sharing information with its neighbor. This was explained as the water resources being a politically sensitive issue and that not all the information can be shared."

"The project activities involving the Tajik side could be arranged rather quickly. However, the process is always slow in regard to the Afghan side. These are the versatility of the members of the working group, Tajik visa procedures, etc."

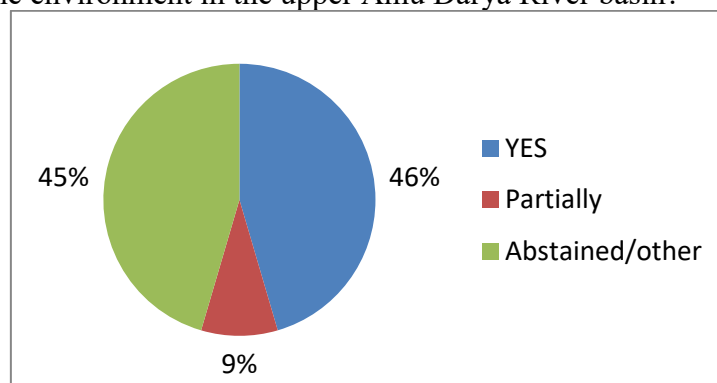
"Numerous challenges and obstacles: border insecurity, long permission process, much higher budget (several USD millions at least) is needed for long-term and broader impacts."

"Cooperation with Afghanistan is always subject to volatile and changing security and geopolitical situation. Project activities has to fit the current situation and realities and adjusted as required."

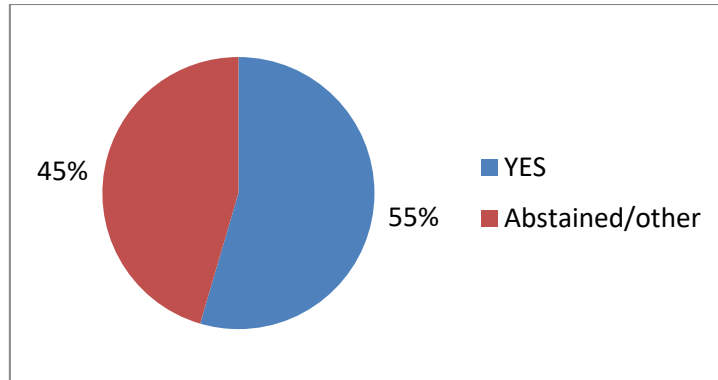
"Volatile political situation is often a challenge for effective project work."

"Though a simultaneous translation service was provided language was a barrier for participants."

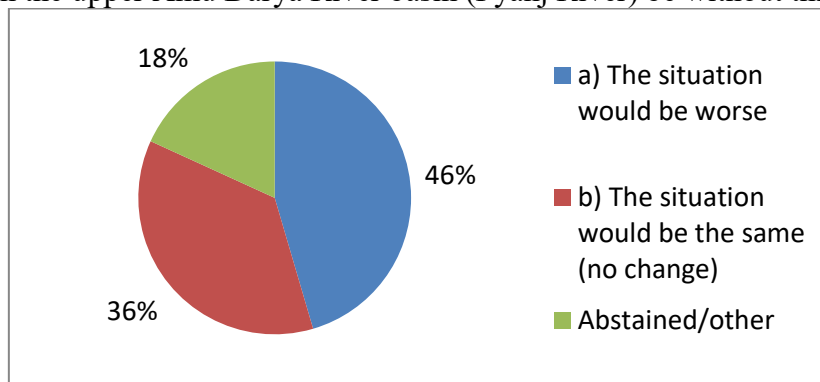
10. Has the project contributed to improving joint and sustainable transboundary management of water resources and the environment in the upper Amu Darya River basin?



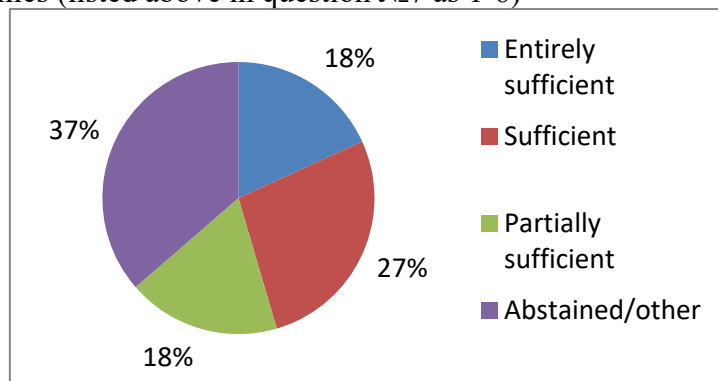
11. Has the project improved capacity of key stakeholders to strengthen transboundary water cooperation?



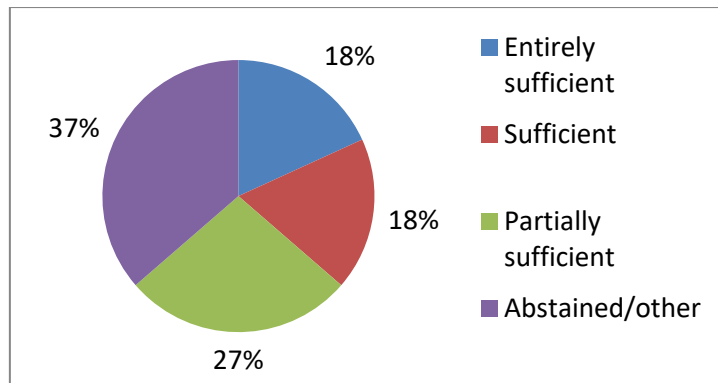
12. In your opinion, what would the situation in on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin (Pyanj River) be without this project?



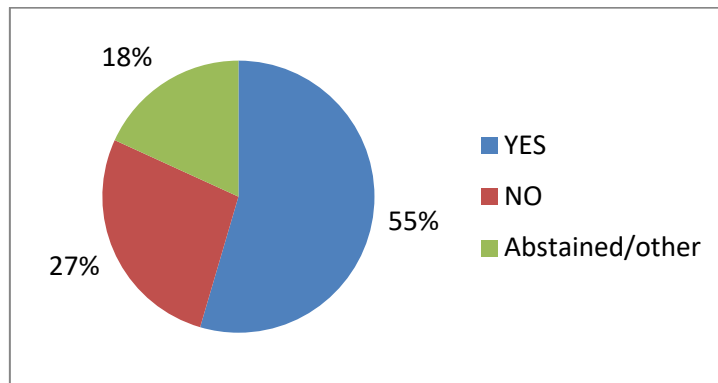
13. Please rate the extent to which the planned project activities were sufficient to achieve the planned project outcomes (listed above in question №7 as 1-6)



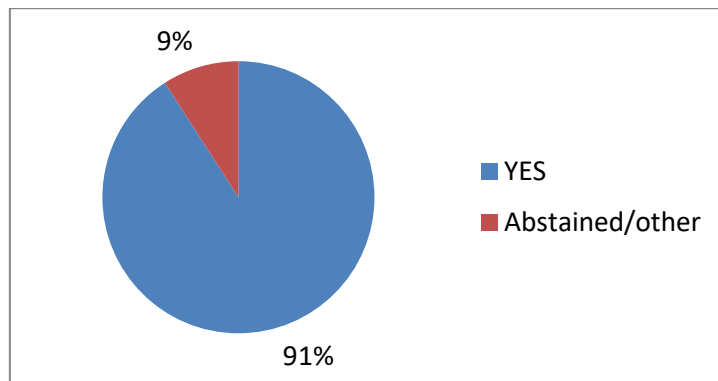
14. Please rate the extent to which the planned project activities were sufficient to achieve the project objective to improve joint and sustainable transboundary management of water resources and the environment in the upper Amu Darya River basin.



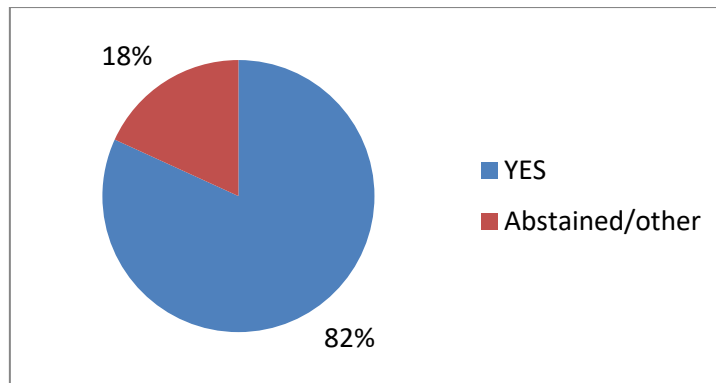
15. Were the available resources appropriate to the scale of the project and the needs identified by beneficiary countries?



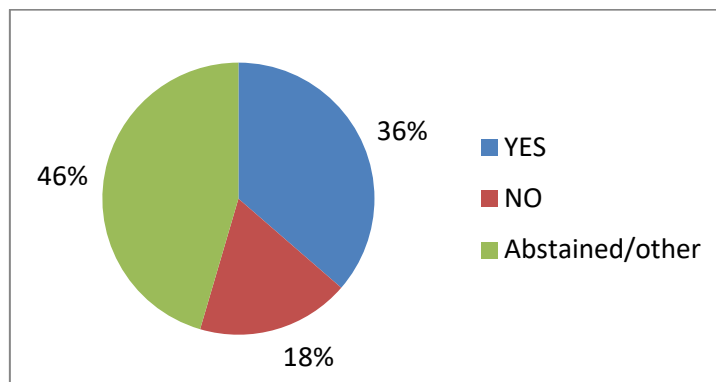
16. In your opinion, were the human and financial resources allocated to the project used efficiently?



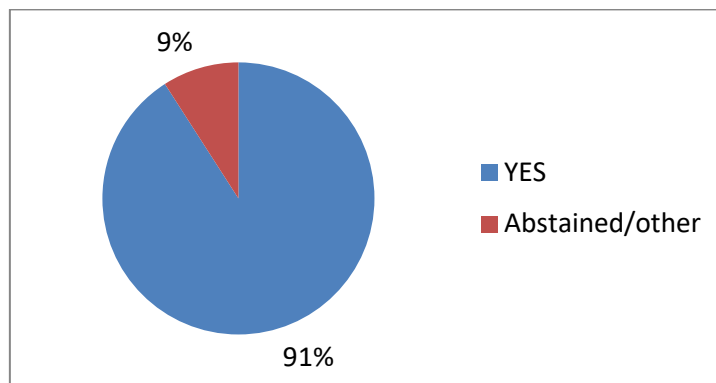
17. In your opinion, were the human and financial resources allocated to the project commensurate to the project results?



18. In your opinion, were the human and financial resources appropriate to the design of the project?



19. Could the design of the project have been improved in order to achieve the expected outcomes more efficiently?



20. What specifically could have been improved to achieve the results more efficiently (with fewer resources, less time/effort invested etc.)?

«It is possible to improve the planning of activities and better utilize the capabilities of the relevant organizations and services of the two countries in researching and developing cooperation on hydrology and the environment at the regional transboundary level. The project managed, for the first time, to bring together representatives of regional authorities and services of the two countries and it is necessary to continue this work precisely at the regional level. At the same time, it is possible to set more specific goals aimed at achieving high practical achievements for the region, including improving the well-being of the residents of the border areas of the two countries. It is desirable to implement at the regional level more weighty and in terms of time and financial support in order to determine and ensure favorable conditions for creating sustainability of ongoing projects and programs on the basis of more significant work».

"Sign a memorandum on environmental monitoring."

"The situation related to Afghanistan, visa procedures etc."

"Leaders in the working groups should be somehow rewarded as to maintain their interest in the work. I saw what a colossal work has been carried out by the leader of the Tajik group. Once such people leave the group, the work will die out."

"More simple financial/grant mechanism at UNECE would reduce administrative burden and increase flexibility in project management in line with changing situation."

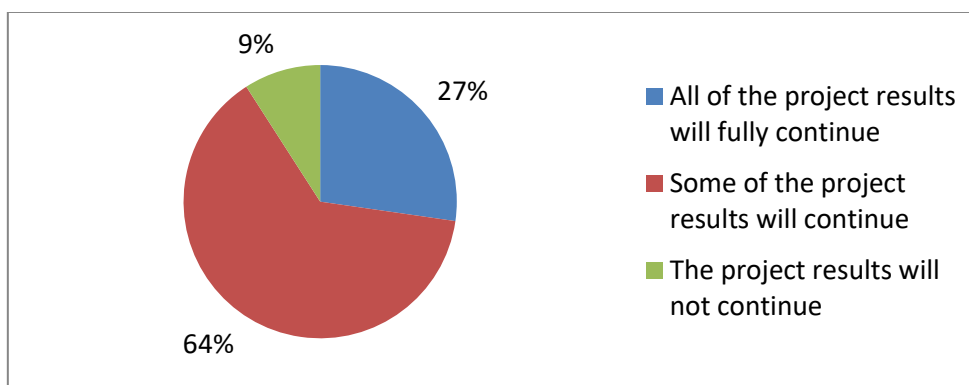
"More effective coordination with local authorities, communities and other projects."

"More resources and time was required."

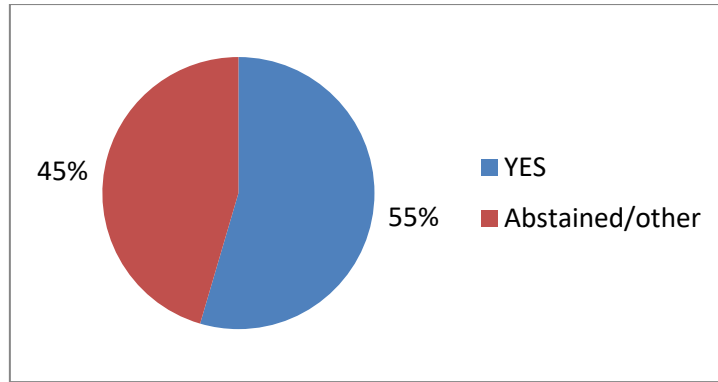
"Hydrological Data sharing to use for hydro-environment analysis and also joint research need to be conducted on glaciers and hydro-met statues and conditions."

"Continuous and numerous similar type of communications/events can be conducted through video conferences and skype during the year. This will keep the discussions ongoing and it will be a good follow up. In addition, when the subject of the meetings includes environment, the project should also consider of supporting at least one person from the National Environmental Protection Agency of both countries to participate."

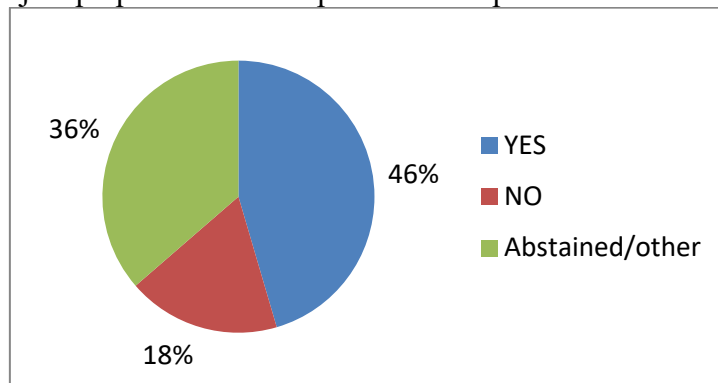
21. Please rate the extent to which, in your opinion, the project results will continue after completion of the project in your country. Please rate on a 1-5 scale, where 1 is "the project results will not continue" and 5 is "all of the project results will fully continue".



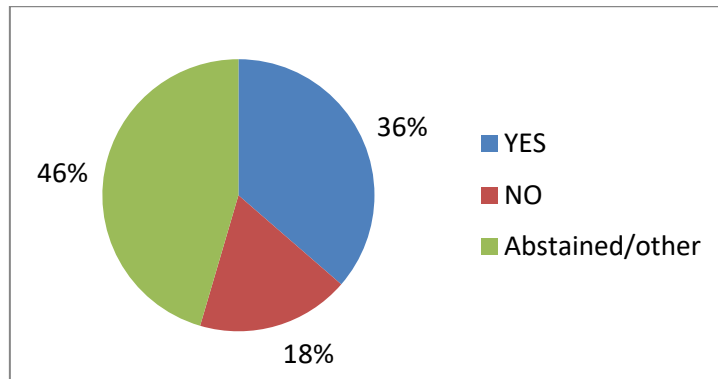
22. Do each of the two countries have a plan for further cooperation to support strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin?



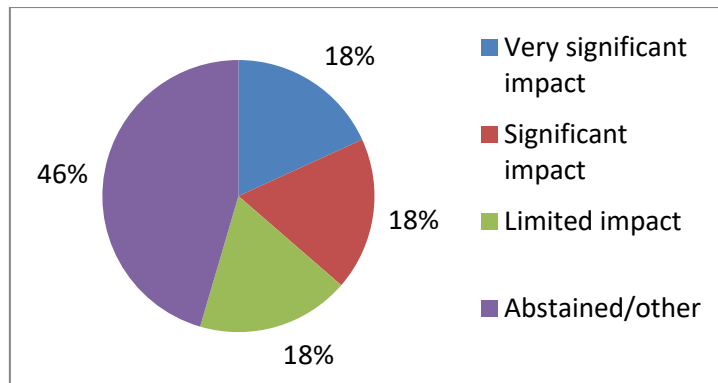
23. In your opinion, were the measures to enhance sustainability of project results given sufficient attention during the project preparation and implementation phases?



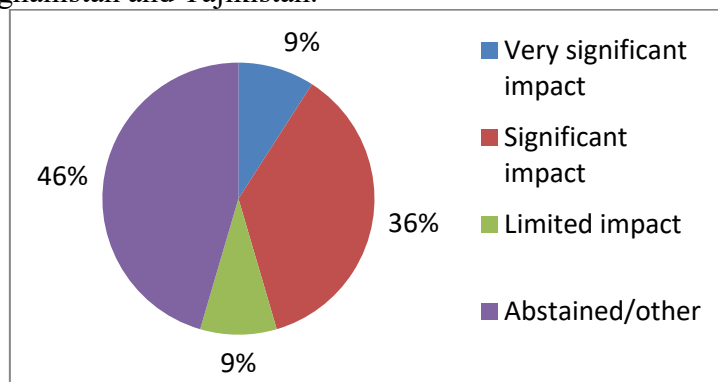
24. Do policy contradictions affect implementation and prevent the sustainable achievement of the developmental objectives?



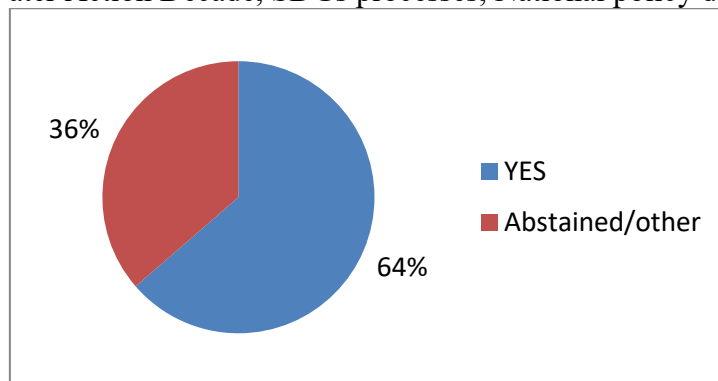
25. Please rate the extent to which the project impacted on the legal framework challenge of transboundary water and environment cooperation between the riparian states.



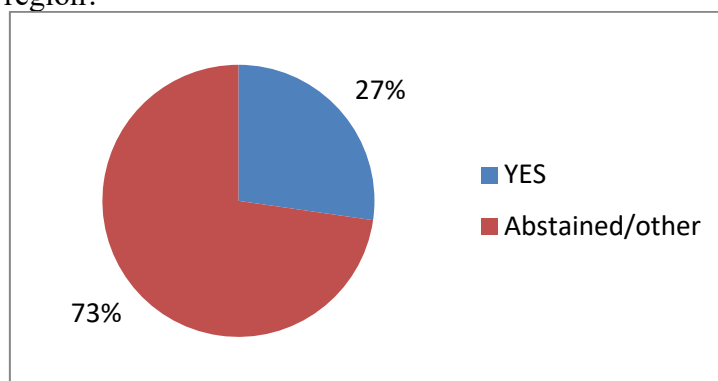
26. Please rate the extent to which the project impacted effective decision-making and information exchange between Afghanistan and Tajikistan.



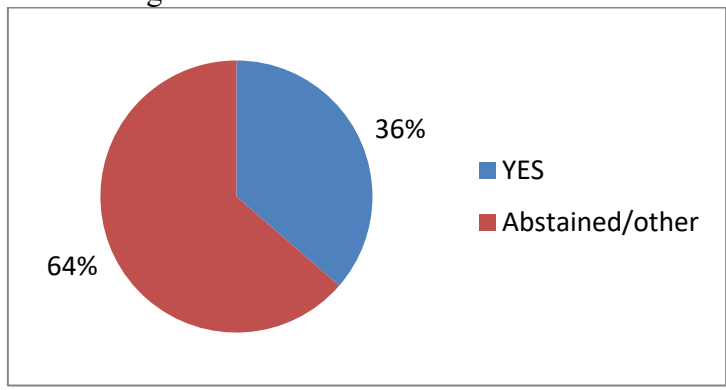
27. Do you think the project could be continued under the relevant national and regional initiatives, like United Nations Water Action Decade, SDGs processes, National policy dialogues?



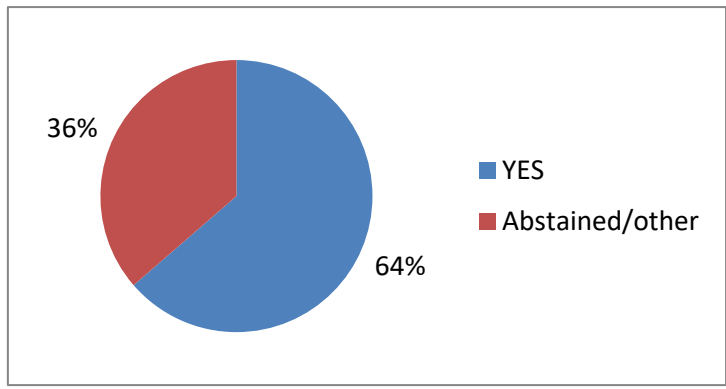
28. In your opinion, has implementation under FinWaterWEI has brought some synergies to the related projects in the region?



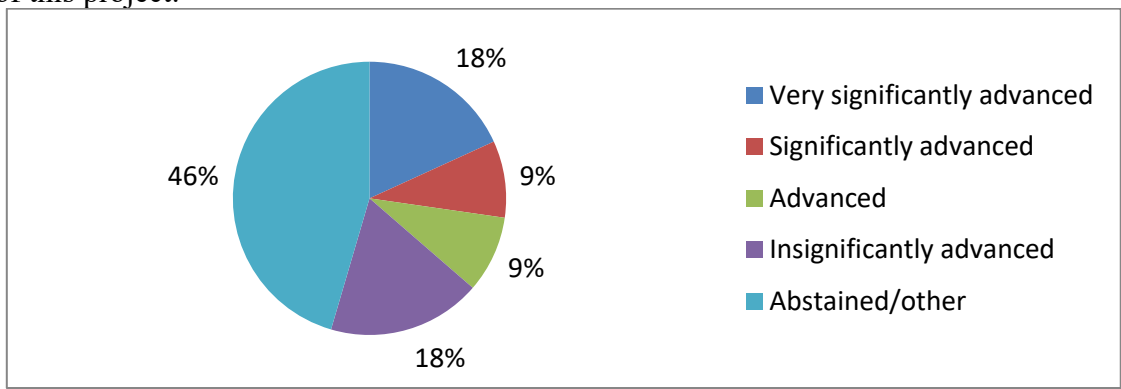
29. In your opinion, are there any other possible windows/opportunities to continue works in this direction, that Finland could cover by providing expert support and consultations to promote sustainable development in the region?



30. In your opinion, will the political context and decision making be supportive to similar projects in the future?



31. Please rate the extent to which gender quality and women’s empowerment were advanced as a result of this project.



Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

“In general, this regional project needs further support and continuation. This is important to enhance the results of the implemented project by monitoring and evaluating its results, as well as for implementing new projects related to further improving water management and protecting the environment, and for implementing recommendations to improve the well-being of the population through the development of ecotourism, and associated with the efficient use of hot and mineral springs located in the upper basin of the Amu Darya on the bank of the Pyanj River.”

"Yes, there is a need in both processes and project-based cooperation vehicles, which are part of the governmental processes and agreements (such as UNECE project) and project-specific mechanisms –

such as ADB project on water management that deal with water sector reforms, create new entities etc."

"I think that's all, of course there are many aspects that one needs to consider while implementing such transboundary projects. I would like to specifically point out to the issues of biodiversity in the Pyanj river basin with which I work directly with <...>."

"In such projects the Political Commitment of both countries are vital."

"Expansion Hydrological Stations, Climate change adaptation and mitigation counter-measurements especially in the field of Lakes assessment and GLOF (Glacier outburst flood) management and water resources availability. Thanks for UNECE to support us in the field of Hydrology and environment we need their future support as well."

"For better implementation of projects and programmes, it is necessary that the responsible persons pay more attention to the project service, for the improved project implementation to yield more benefits. There is a hope that this project will be implemented in a more transparent manner."

"It is necessary to increase the number of meetings (in the form of consultations) between the responsible persons of the Afghanistan's Badakhshan Province and of the Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, as a part of each implemented project, and in particular of the project in the field of hydrology and environmental protection."

"Thank you very much for the efforts and supporting this type of important events."

Annex V. List of interviewees and surveyed participants

The level of stakeholder participation of the interviewees varied from technical staff of the relevant ministries and agencies to policy level officials from both countries representing the Committee of Environment Protection of Tajikistan, NEPA Afghanistan, Ministry of Water and Energy of Tajikistan, Ministry of Energy and Water of Afghanistan. Interviewees also included staff, programme and project managers from Zoi Environment Network, WB, ADB, CAREC, GIZ, JICA etc.

Interviewed by telephone/Skype/face-to-face

1. Abdualimov, Karimjon, Deputy Director, Agency for Hydrometeorology, Member of the WG of the Agreement Panj / Amudaria rivers, Member of TWG for hydrology from the Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Tajikistan
2. Abdulnazarzoda, Abdulnazar, Deputy-Chairman of Administration of GBAO, Republic of Tajikistan
3. Akbozova, Indira, Head of the Kazakhstan part, Secretariat of the Chu-Talas Water Commission, Republic of Kazakhstan
4. Akhmedov, Mustakim, Analyst/Water, UNDP Tajikistan
5. Alibakhshev, Boimamad, Director, NGO «Milal-Inter», Khorog, Republic of Tajikistan
6. Gharibmamadov, Masrur, Head of Khorog-based Affiliation of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), GBAO, Republic of Tajikistan
7. Hajiyev, Batyr, Economic Affairs Officer, UNECE, Geneva, Switzerland
8. Haller, Claudia, GIZ Country Coordinator (Tajikistan)
9. Isaeva, Nazokat, National Programme Manager, Finland's Water Sector Support to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan
10. Jumabaeva, Tahmina, Water Management and Energy Security Programme Assistant, OSCE Tajikistan
11. Kamalov, Djamshed, Committee on Emergency Situations and Civil Defense under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Member of the WG of the Agreement Pyanj / Amudaria rivers, Republic of Tajikistan
12. Kirgizbekova, Roziya, Adviser, GIZ Tajikistan / Regional Programme for Sustainable and Climate Sensitive Land Use for Economic Development in Central Asia
13. Libert, Bo, Independent Consultant, Sweden
14. Mahmudov, Shokirjon, Program Officer, JICA, Tajikistan Office
15. Makeev, Talaipek, Economic Affairs Officer, Office in Almaty, UNECE
16. Mäkelä, Ari, Senior Research Scientist, Water Center / Global Water Issues, SYKE, Finland

17. Makhmadulloev, Khabibullo, Agency for Land Reclamation and Irrigation under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Tajikistan
18. Mamadnazarbekov, Farhod, Head of department of protection of environment of Khorog, GBAO, Republic of Tajikistan
19. Nazirova, Niluvar, Specialist, International Relations Department, Committee for Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Tajikistan
20. Nikolayenko Alexandr, Regional Advisor, Transboundary Water Management in Central Asia Programme, Almaty, Kazakhstan
21. Nishikawa, Naoko, Project Formulation Advisor, JICA, Tajikistan Office
22. Novikov, Viktor, Project Manager, Central Asia, Zoi Environment Network, Geneva, Switzerland
23. Sadykov, Ruslan, Senior National Programme Officer, Infrastructure, Swiss Cooperation Office and Consular Agency, Tajikistan
24. Saidov, Vaysidin, Director, CAREC Tajik branch
25. Sattorov, Azizbek, Program Officer, JICA, Tajikistan Office
26. Strikeleva Ekaterina, Project Manager “Water, Education and Cooperation”, CAREC, Almaty, Kazakhstan
27. Törnroos, Tea, Head of Unit, International Affairs Unit, SYKE, Finland
28. Yamashita, Yumiko, Project Formulation Advisor, JICA Tajikistan Office

Surveyed and interviewed by email

1. Abdulnazarzoda, Abdulnazar, Deputy-Chairman of Administration of GBAO, Republic of Tajikistan
2. Alibakhshev, Boimamad, Director, NGO «Milal-Inter», Khorog, Republic of Tajikistan
3. Bakhtari, Fazulhaq, Director Water Resource, Ministry of Energy and Water, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
4. Baloch, Zolfaqar Karimi, Director of International Environmental Relations and MEAs, National Environmental Protection Agency, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
5. Basir, Qanet Abdul, Head of services on the Pyanj river basin on the territory of the Badakhshan Province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
6. Jumabaeva, Tahmina, Water Management and Energy Security Programme Assistant, OSCE Tajikistan

7. Bozakov, Plamen, Team Leader ADB-funded Water Resources Management in Pyanj River Basin project, Lahmeyer International GMBH
8. Homidov, Anvar, Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR), Republic of Tajikistan
9. Kull, Daniel Werner, Task Team Leader (Project Manager), Central Asia Hydrometeorology Modernization Project, Senior Disaster Risk Management Specialist, The World Bank
10. Nabi, Sarfaraz Gulam, Provincial Director in Badakhshan, National Environmental Protection Agency, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
11. Novikov, Viktor, Project Manager, Central Asia, Zoi Environment Network
12. Odilbekov, Kuvvatbek, Deputy-Director of the Pamir Biological Institute, GBAO, Republic of Tajikistan
13. Sherzad, Mohammad Haris, National Climate Change Specialist & Unit Head Metrics and Physical Science Unit Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch, UN Environment – Afghanistan (UNEP), Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
14. Shimasaki, Akihiro, Project Officer, Central and West Asia Department, Asian Development Bank
15. Yuldashev, Sipar, NGO «Nature protection team»

Annex VI. Terms of Reference of the evaluation

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Evaluation of the project

“Strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin” funded by the Government of Finland

I. Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is to review the implementation and assess the extent to which the objective of “Strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin” project (hereinafter “Project”) was achieved. The evaluation will assess the *relevance* of the projects for the beneficiary countries, *effectiveness* in reaching relevant outcomes, *efficiency* in the use of human and staff resources in reaching project objectives, *sustainability* of UNECE’s work in and *impact* on strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin. The results of the evaluation will support improvement of the future technical cooperation projects and activities implemented by UNECE. The results of the evaluation will be important for the discussion with donors and partner organizations for any future work by UNECE in the Central Asia region and beyond

II. Scope

The evaluation will be guided by the objective, outcomes, activities and indicators of achievement established in the logical framework of the project document. The evaluation will consider to what extent the project (a) strengthened institutional framework and expert network for bilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and (b) provided substantive and policy-relevant information for bilateral cooperation on hydrology and environment between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The evaluation will cover the full period of implementation from September 2015 to December 2018.

The evaluation will assess how gender considerations were included the projects’ design, execution and results. It will make recommendations on how gender can be included in the design of future projects in UNECE.

The full project documentation includes project design, monitoring reports, progress reports to donors, partnership arrangements with relevant actors. All relevant information will be made available, including documentation and interviews, activities of partner organizations, any previous relevant reviews or evaluations conducted, and any other information which pertains to UNECE efforts in the successful execution of the project will be included in the evaluation.

III. Background

Amu Darya is the largest river of Central Asia with a total length of nearly 2500 km and the drainage basin covering 0.5 million sq.km. Most of the river flow comes from the mountains of Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Environmental conditions of the Amu Darya upstream watershed, including state of glaciers and snow, vegetation, soil cover and human activities are important determinants of water flow and its quality. Growing population, agricultural, infrastructural and industrial development projects as well as global environmental challenges - such as climate change - are among the key factors influencing environmental conditions in the upper Amu Darya basin. The adequate knowledge and sharing of

information about natural resources and hazards are important for the sustainable development of both countries. In the case of the upper part of Amu Darya there is a lack of intergovernmental framework between the riparian states to facilitate proper governance of the river basin. As a consequence, the transboundary water management policies of the countries are lacking any formal agreement and are promoted without sufficient knowledge of the state, availability and quality of water resources, including flow forecast and flood control.

The project enabled the environment for wider transboundary natural resources cooperation in the upper Amudarya basin between riparian states. It has strengthened cooperation between Tajikistan and Afghanistan for the collection, exchange and dissemination of information on hydrology and environment in the basin and thus improving understanding of the need to better manage shared water and natural resources. Further, the two countries established a working group for hydrology cooperation. Through bilateral meetings countries agreed on initial activities in the area of hydrology that were reflected in the joint work plans and included: hydrological monitoring, disaster preparedness and risk reduction, biodiversity protection, glacier lakes monitoring and capacity building needs assessment. Bilateral trainings focused on good practices for soil and water management, climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation. Highly important to note activities on strengthening cooperation between the local communities residing in both sides of the river. Thus, two expeditions were organized with Afghan and Tajik participation in the shared basin.

Through the course of project implementation, the security situation in Afghanistan deteriorated which caused delays in the implementation. The final bilateral expert meeting on hydrology and environment cooperation and a training session was planned for November 2017. However, upon request by Tajikistan the meeting took place in May 2018. Therefore, the duration of the project was extended till December 2018 to allow disseminate the results of the project and conduct the project evaluation.

Result 1: Strengthened institutional framework and expert network for bilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan

Indicator 1 in the Logframe: *Strengthened mandate for the environmental work of the TTF has been agreed upon*

The draft MoU on environmental cooperation was developed in consultation with relevant national stakeholders in both countries including the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of both countries. The MoU provides legal basis for the states to strengthen cooperation in the area through: information exchange; conducting regular meetings; development and implementing joint projects; conducting joint monitoring activities; raising public awareness of the issues pertaining to the basin. The signing of MoU was planned to take place in November 2017 during a high-level meeting official of Afghanistan and Tajikistan. However, on the request by Tajikistan the meeting was cancelled. As of July 2018, Tajikistan is still undergoing internal procedures that are required to get governmental endorsement to sign the MoU. As it was pointed out above this is maybe due to a higher-level concern for broadening the formal cooperation with Afghanistan.

Indicator 2 in the Logframe: *Annual bilateral meetings of TTF have become a regular feature of cooperation*

Bilateral meetings played important role providing venue for maintaining the dialogue, setting the scene, identifying common concerns and emerging issues. Experts from the countries considered issues like: reviewing the progress on implementation of bilateral agreement on hydrology cooperation; problems related to hydrology information exchange; jointly developing the cooperation programme; etc. The project also supported bilateral meetings between the local communities settled along the river banks.

Indicator 3 in the Logframe: *Work programme(s) for the TTF prepared jointly*

Thus, the technical working group on information sharing (TWG) was established in 2014. It included representatives from the ministries and agencies from both countries. During the period from 2014 to 2018 three meetings of the TWG were held. The Tajik Hydromet Agency data on hydrology is shared regularly with Afghan counterparts while the information flow from Afghanistan to Tajikistan is less regular. In June 2018 the bilateral meeting reviewed the progress of the MoU on hydrology and updated the Work Plan for 2018-2020. The revised Work Plan includes areas: research and monitoring of glaciers and snow cover, early warning and disaster preparedness; developing of a platform for information and data sharing.

Result 2: Substantive and policy-relevant information for bilateral cooperation on hydrology and environment between Afghanistan and Tajikistan available

Indicator 1 in the Logframe: *Road-map for improved information and its dissemination available*

The road map for sharing and distribution of environmental information, including indicator-based assessments on the state of the environment and a concept note for the establishment and development of an online platforms for the exchange of information on environment and water were developed. Both documents lay down a solid base for future activities to improve bilateral information management over the Pyanj River basin.

Indicator 2 in the Logframe: *Existing/collected information made available in different forms and platforms (printed, web)*

A bulletin on a joint expedition conducted in 2017 was produced and published by Khorog based NGO – Milal-Inter. In addition, the organization developed and published a report entitled Strengthening Cooperation in the Field of Hydrology and Environment Between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the Basin of Amu Darya/Panj. The report provides an overview of the cooperation between the countries in the Pyanj basin, achieved milestones under the project and recommendations for future actions. The report was shared at the High Level International Conference on International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” that took place in June 2018 in Dushanbe.

Indicator 3 in the Logframe: *Jointly prepared/collected data through regular bilateral expert meetings and joint expeditions*

In October 2017 hydrology and environment specialists from both countries conducted a hands-on study to identify and discuss issues related to the efficient use of water resources, land use, irrigation practices and biodiversity in the Pyanj river basin. Particularly experts explored the possibility of strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment by installing hydro-posts (water gauging stations) on both sides of the Pyanj River. The expedition visited adjacent settlements and studied how changes to environment (including the effects of global warming) affect the local population’s lives and provided relevant recommendations. An ensuing seminar contributed to the development and finalization of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Afghanistan and Tajikistan cooperation on environment and sustainable management of shared natural resource

Indicator 4 in the Logframe: *Training events to facilitate cooperation on selected topics (selection made during project, topics can include hydrology data exchange, joint forecasts and flood warning mechanisms)*

There were 3 capacity building events conducted on the subjects: experience exchange on improvement of hydrology monitoring systems and water quality and quantity (October 2016), expedition and a seminar on dialogue and partnership on issues of protection of environment and sustainable use of water resources on the upper Amudarya basin (September 2017); training session on issues of hydrology and environmental monitoring in the upper Amudarya basin (May 2018). A short field visit to two hydro posts (Aivadj and Lower Pyandj) in the Tajikistan territory was organized in October 2016. The field visit focused on identifying technical parameters of measuring equipment needed for both sites. The field visit

was attended by the specialists from the Russian Federation who shared their experience in hydrology monitoring, data and information exchange.

Indicator 5 in the Logframe: *Local web-based platform(s) for information exchange on hydrology and environment established or existing platforms strengthened*

Countries indicated their interest to improve public access and sharing of environmental information accumulated nationally. However, the lack of formal intergovernmental agreement on information sharing made it difficult to agree on a country to host the website.

IV. Issues

The evaluation will answer the following questions:

Relevance

1. How relevant was the project to the national needs and priorities of beneficiary countries?
2. How relevant was the design of the projects, in line with the achievements and outcomes of other initiatives, such as ADB project entitled Water Resources Management in Pyanj River Basin, UNECE project on support of Chu-Talas cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and other relevant projects and programmes in the region?
3. To what extent was the project design and development interventions relevant for meeting the project objective?
4. To what extent the project was relevant to the UNECE regular programme of work?

Effectiveness

1. To what extent were the expected accomplishments (outcomes) of the projects achieved?
2. What were the challenges/obstacles to achieving the project objective and expected accomplishments (outcomes)?
3. Has the project contributed to improving joint and sustainable transboundary management of water resources and the environment in the upper Amu Darya River basin?
4. Has the project improved capacity of key stakeholders to strengthen transboundary water cooperation?
5. To what extent were the planned activities sufficient to achieve the expected accomplishments (outcomes) and project objective?
6. To what extent implementation of the project supported the expected accomplishments of theof the UNECE regular programme of work under the Subprogramme 1 “Environment”?
7. To what extent the implementation of the project contributed to the overall objective of the Water Convention?

Efficiency

1. Were the available resources appropriate to the scale of the project and the needs identified by beneficiary countries?
2. Were the human and financial resources allocated to the project used efficiently and commensurate to the project results?
3. Were the resources (financial and human) appropriate to the design of the project?
4. Were the activities implemented according to the planned timeframe?

Sustainability

1. To what extent will the results of the project continue after completion of the project in the beneficiary countries?

2. Do each of the two countries have a plan for further cooperation to support strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin?
3. Were the measures to enhance sustainability of project results given sufficient attention during the preparation and implementation phases?

Impact

1. To what extent have the project impacted on the legal framework challenge of transboundary water and environment cooperation between the riparian states?
2. To what extent the project impacted effective decision-making and information exchange between Afghanistan and Tajikistan?

I. Methodology

The methodology for the evaluation will include the following:

1. Desk study of project materials: all relevant project documents, including project descriptions, reports, publications, etc. and other information will be provided to the evaluator.
2. Interview with key stakeholders (face-to-face, via telephone and skype) including: Committee of Environment Protection of Tajikistan and its Hyrdoromet Agency, Ministry of Energy and Water Resources of Afghanistan, OSCE Center in Dushanbe, UNDP Tajikistan Country Office, Zoi International Network
3. Some of the interviews, particular with representatives of water management authorities from Tajikistan and Afghanistan, will be conducted by the evaluator at the FIN Water Regional Conference planned for 28-29 September 2018 (Issyk-Kul). In addition, the event will provide an opportunity to meet and discuss the project implementation and results with donor and partner organizations dealing with the water management issues in the region.
4. Interviews with key stakeholders to take place during the workshop, via skype/telephone (list of contacts to be provided).
5. An electronic survey of internal and external stakeholders, conducted in both English and Russian.

UNECE will provide all documentation, support and guidance to the evaluation consultant as needed throughout the timeline of the evaluation. The consultant shall be provided with the UNECE Evaluation Policy, evaluation report templates and checklists as guidance for the requirements for evaluation reports in UNECE.

The evaluation report of maximum 15-20 pages will summarize the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation. An executive summary (max. 2 pages) will summarize the methodology of the evaluation, key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the UNECE Evaluation Policy. The consultant shall be provided the evaluation report templates and guidance for the requirements for evaluation reports in UNECE. The evaluation will comply with the UNEG Norms and Standards, including due consideration of the gender aspects of the project's design and implementation. UNECE will provide all documentation as needed throughout the timeline of the evaluation. UNECE will provide support and further explanation to the evaluator as needed.

Based on these terms of reference the evaluation consultant will write a report of maximum 15 pages (plus possible annexes such as interview summaries) with a 2-page self-standing executive summary of the evaluation results.

II. Evaluation Schedule

The evaluation schedule follows:

1. Desk review of all documents provided by UNECE to the Consultant 1-15 September 2018
2. Developing and preparing interviews 15-24 September 2018
3. Participation in Issyk-Kul workshop, interviews 28-29 September 2018
4. Follow-up skype interviews and studies 1-15 October 2018
5. Delivery of Draft Report 30 October 2018
6. Comments back to the evaluator after review by project manager and selected project participants 20 November 2018
7. Delivery Final Report 20 December 2018

III. Resources

Resources available for the evaluation is \$10,000 inclusive of all costs.

The Project Manager (Batyr Hajiyev) will manage and provide guidance during the course of the evaluation. The Programme Management Unit (PMU) will provide guidance to the Project Manager and evaluator as needed on the evaluation design, methodology and quality assurance of the final draft report.

IV. Intended Use/Next Steps

The evaluation will be consistent with the UNECE Evaluation Policy. Following the receipt of the final report, UNECE will develop a management response, and action plan for addressing recommendations made by the consultant. The results of the evaluation shall be considered, together with other project evaluations conducted during 2018, by senior management in UNECE to address systemic inefficiencies or challenges to effective project implementation in UNECE.

V. Criteria for Evaluators

Evaluators should have:

- An advanced university degree or equivalent background in relevant to the projects disciplines;
- Minimum 10 years of relevant experience. Working experience related to projects or issues in water management in Central Asia is highly desirable;
- Specialized training in areas such as evaluation, project management, social statistics, advanced statistical research and analysis;
- Demonstrated relevant professional experience in design, management and conduct of evaluation processes with multiple stakeholders, survey design and implementation, and project planning, monitoring and management;
- Demonstrated methodological knowledge of evaluations, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for end-of-cycle project evaluations;
- Fluent in written and spoken English and Russian.
- Good computer skills (especially Microsoft office applications).

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

Annex: Project documents