

Evaluation

STRENGTHENING  
COOPERATION ON WATER  
QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN  
CENTRAL ASIA

Final report

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## Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AWP	Annual Work Plan
CA	Central Asia
CAEWDP	Central Asia Energy-Water Development Program
CAREC	Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia
CAHMP	Central Asia Hydrometeorology Modernization Project
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
ICSD	Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development of Central Asia
ICWC	Interstate Coordination Water Commission of the Central Asia
IFAS	International Fund for the Saving of the Aral Sea
IFI	International Financial Institution
EC	Executive Committee
NPD	National Policy Dialogues
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RSE "Kazhydromet"	Hydrometeorology Centre at Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan
RWG	Regional Working Group
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIC	Scientific-Information Center
SPECA	UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia
SYKE	Finnish Environment Institute
UCA	University of Central Asia
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
“Uzhydromet”	Centre of Hydrometeorological Service at Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Uzbekistan
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization

## Executive summary

Declining water quality is known to be a serious problem in Central Asia. Poor water quality has possible consequences associated with loss of life and health risks, higher poverty, and loss of ecosystem integrity in shared rivers such as Syr Darya and Amu Darya. Improved transboundary cooperation on this issue between countries could make it easier to define the magnitude of the problem, to efficiently address it and to find possible solutions<sup>1</sup>.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has been supporting five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) in the development of institutions, legislation, capacity building and regional cooperation on reducing the deterioration of water quality since 2009. One of the initiatives was the “Strengthening cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia” project (hereinafter – the Project).

The Project was implemented from September 2015 to December 2018, building on the results of the UNECE-CAREC project on Water Quality in 2009-2012 that initiated regional cooperation on water quality. 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 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 in and *impact* on strengthening cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia. 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 together with the UNECE.

According to the Logical Framework of the Project Document, the Project’s *development objective* was to reduce the deterioration of water quality through improved basin-wide, regional cooperation on water quality. The Project *purpose* was to institutionalize water quality cooperation in the Aral Sea basin. The expected *results* were formulated as follows:

1. Strengthened framework established for water quality cooperation in Central Asia.
2. Substantive information on water quality in Central Asia jointly produced and made publicly 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. One of the key outcomes achieved by the Project was the formal establishment of the Regional Working Group (RWG) on Water Quality. The Project supported two RWG meetings and a Regional session as a part of a study visit to the Centre of Hydrometeorological Service at Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Uzhydromet), annual work plans development, drafting of the Mandate of the RWG, training seminars, development of five national reports with needs assessment of water quality monitoring systems, and a joint synthesis report on water quality issues in Central Asia. However, as some expected results of the Project related to information exchange were not fully achieved (see the detailed analysis in Annex I below), it is concluded that the Project was *moderately effective*.

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<sup>1</sup> Rethinking water in Central Asia. The costs of inaction and benefits of water cooperation (2017). [adelphi, CAREC]

The Project demonstrated reasonable funds utilization to deliver the outputs. Since there was a delay in the Project initiation due to an extended discussion on regional cooperation with the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development of Central Asia (ICSD), the *efficiency was satisfactory*.

Sustainability is *questionable* without incorporation of the RWG into the existing institutional framework and further donor support. There is evidence of an *interim impact*, and more significant impact would unfold with longer time.

The evaluation assessed how *gender* considerations were included in the Project's design, execution and results. According to the Project documents, interviews and the survey results, there was a balanced participation of men and women in the Project (the average share of female event participants was 61%). Women have actively taken part in the project implementation, drafting of national reports, consideration of the annual work plans and decision-making within the RWG.

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's programs and the Swiss Blue Peace initiative provides evidence of the UNECE's aspiration to continue the Project beyond 2018.

#### Key Recommendations:

- It is recommended that the UNECE continues efforts in improving transboundary water quality cooperation in Central Asia, capacity building of relevant authorities, and supporting the RWG as one of the most successful platforms for regional cooperation.
- It is recommended that the UNECE ensures that the Mandate for the RWG is approved by all five Central Asia countries as soon as possible by the means of both working on the policy level and supporting local experts involved in coordination with authorities. The UNECE should put further efforts into the "incorporation" of the RWG into an officially existing and reputable interstate structure. The UNECE could also consider re-assessing the needs for establishing a separate database for water quality issues and, if the result is positive, identify a politically acceptable and technically feasible solution.
- For similar projects of the UNECE, the furniture and equipment class of expenditure ("Investments" budget component) can be regarded as not appropriate. It is recommended to the UNECE to ensure that the project starts without delay or, should it be impossible, that the Project term is extended proportionally.
- The UNECE is recommended to explore the possibility of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) support for meetings of the RWG in the future via its Blue Peace initiative. The UNECE could also approach other donors to request funding for more specific activities, including joint monitoring of water.
- The UNECE should continue working with the Governments of the five Central Asia countries on the problem of quality of water. Provided the donor funding is secured, the UNECE could design similar projects not to lose the momentum and to have a long-lasting impact.
- If the UNECE secures funding and decides to continue supporting the RWG and the "quality of water" theme in Central Asia in general, it could consider doing this in close cooperation with other development partners.
- The practice of involvement of women in the project activities, especially participation in the capacity building, expert and Regional Work Group, should be continued. Giving a special notice on equal participation of women to respective ministries should be continued as a good practice for similar projects. It is recommended to explore opportunities to cooperate with the UCA or with UN Women on gender aspects in Tajikistan within similar kind of projects in the future.

## Introduction

### A. Purpose

The purpose of the present 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 water quality management in Central Asia. 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, outcomes, activities and indicators of achievement established in the logical framework of the Project document. The evaluation considered to what extent the Project a) strengthened framework for water quality cooperation in Central Asia, and b) substantive information on water quality in Central Asia was jointly produced and made publicly available.

The evaluation covered the full period of implementation from September 2015 to December 2018 with no exclusions. The evaluation assessed how gender considerations were included in the Project's design, execution and results, and recommendations were made on how gender can be included in the design of the future projects of the 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-December 2018. It included a desk study of relevant documents, interviews (by telephone, Skype and face-to-face) of 19 Project participants, and a survey of 11 key stakeholders. Travel to Almaty, Kazakhstan and Dushanbe, Tajikistan was executed on October 21-27, 2018 to conduct face-to-face interviews with the key participants of the Project.

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 evaluator by the UNECE Project Manager, other information sources.
2. Interview with project stakeholders (face-to face, via telephone and Skype), including CAREC head office in Almaty; the Swiss Government Blue Peace Central Asia initiative; EC IFAS in Almaty, World Bank's Central Asia Energy Water Development Program, US AID's Smart Waters project, GIZ Almaty, CAREC Tajik Office etc. (the full list of interviewees is attached as Annex V).

3. Travel to Almaty, Kazakhstan, and Dushanbe, Tajikistan on October 21-27, 2018 to conduct face-to-face interviews with key participants of the Project.
4. Analysis of the electronic survey of internal and external stakeholders, conducted in both English and Russian (see key survey results in Annex IV). The questionnaire (attached as Annex III) has been developed by the Consultant.

## Findings

### Relevance

The Project was declared as a Phase II<sup>2</sup> and built on the results of the UNECE-CAREC project on Water quality in 2009-2012<sup>3</sup>. The 2009-2012 phase initiated regional cooperation on water quality, and its major achievements were identifying the needs and further cooperation options<sup>4</sup>, carrying out a pilot programme on transboundary monitoring of surface waters, strengthening capacities of the experts via three seminars, producing five national “Water Quality Standards and Norms” reports, and establishing a Regional Working Group by requesting nominations from relevant national agencies<sup>5</sup>.

The need to ensure continuity and sustainability of the results achieved and to take the developments forward was highlighted in the Evaluation report on the 2009-2012 phase stating the lasting need “to improve national policies and regional cooperation, including water quality monitoring networks with the ultimate aim to improve water quality.”

Water quality and the underlying water protection will remain crucial issues for the Central Asia countries in the foreseeable future. The persistence of the water quality issues in Central Asia related to the water demand increasing with the population and economic growth, and water quality deterioration calling for joint action of all countries in the Region, was also evidenced by publications beyond the Project<sup>6</sup>. It has been reported<sup>2a</sup> that in Central Asia the possible consequences of the poor water quality could imply the increased costs associated with loss of life and health risks, higher poverty, and loss of ecosystem integrity; and that improved cooperation on addressing the water-related issues could significantly reduce these costs. Certain tension and the lack of cooperation in the water sector between the upstream and the downstream countries is a particularly important factor reported by many sources including the European Parliament Think Tank<sup>7</sup> and mass media<sup>8</sup> and confirmed in interviews by experts from both upstream and downstream countries.

The surveyed Project participants confirmed that the 2015-2018 Project was relevant (75% of responses – “highly relevant”, 25% - “relevant”, see the key survey results summary in Annex IV) to the priorities and needs of the member countries, in line with the Diagnostic report prepared on the basis of the national reports in Phase I, and that without this Project the situation in the field of the

<sup>2</sup> Draft progress report September 2015 – 30 June 2018 provided by the UNECE Project Manager

<sup>3</sup> Programme for Finland’s Water Sector support to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan 2014-2017, FinWaterWEI II. Strengthening cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia (2015). [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe]

<sup>4</sup> Diagnostic Report and Cooperative Development Plan "Development of the Regional Cooperation to Ensure Water Quality in Central Asia" (not dated). [Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe]

<sup>5</sup> a) Evaluation Report. UNDA Project "Water Quality in Central Asia" (2012). [Ari Mäkelä, UN Assigned Evaluator, Contract No.: 35846], b) Terminal Report of the UNDA 6th tranche project 08/09V “Water Quality in Central Asia” (2008-2012) (not dated). [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe]

<sup>6</sup> E.g. a) Rethinking water in Central Asia. The costs of inaction and benefits of water cooperation (2017). [adelphi, Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Programme], b) Water Related Health Problems in Central Asia—A Review (2016). [Bekturganov, Z., et al., Water (ISSN 2073-4441), MDPI]

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS\\_BRI\(2015\)571303](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2015)571303)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-37755985>

water quality management cooperation in Central Asia would have been worse (75% of survey respondents). The Regional expert highlighted that the Project had a particular importance as a unique regional platform for discussion and for harmonization of the monitoring systems, and the representatives of the UNECE Office in Almaty, Hydrometeorological Research Institute of Uzhydromet (Uzbekistan), expressed their appreciation of the multilateral relations established and strengthened due to the Project's Regional Working Group.

The relevance of the Project to the national needs is further demonstrated by its compliance with the stated aspirations of the Heads of States. On August 24, 2018, the Heads of States-founders International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) Summit took place in Turkmenistan<sup>9</sup> and resulted in a Joint statement (communiqué) that highlighted “*the necessity to undertake coordinated measures aimed at reducing water pollution*”. According to the communiqué, “*the parties reaffirmed their commitment to earlier decisions on joint and integrated management and rational use of water resources and environmental protection in the Aral Sea basin, taking into account the interests of all countries in the region*” and “*the Presidents stressed the need to further develop and strengthen relations of equal and mutually beneficial cooperation in the use and protection of interstate watercourses.*”<sup>10</sup>

In terms of relevance to other initiatives, according to the desk study and the information provided by the representatives in their interviews, the Project can be regarded as of particular relevance to the GIZ programme “Transboundary water management in Central Asia” (total financing €37,000,000<sup>11</sup>, overall term 2009-2019<sup>12</sup>) as addressing water management issues in the region, and to the Swiss initiative Blue Peace Central Asia as both operate on transboundary level and cover the major aspect – clear drinking water. Representatives of the WB indicated that the Project appeared to be mostly relevant to the Water Productivity pillar of CAEWDP and to have some complementarity (though not well explored) with CAHMP that focuses on hydromet services in Central Asia, in particular in the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Tajikistan. The USAID “Smart Waters”<sup>13</sup> can also be regarded relevant to the Project due to its focus on the regional cooperation on shared water resources, and as CAREC indicated, the “Smart Waters” supported the Regional Working Group meetings between Phases 1 and 2 of the UNECE Project “Strengthening cooperation on water quality in Central Asia”. Sixty-two percent of the surveyed Project participants confirmed that they observed complementarity of the Project to other initiatives in the region, 25% mentioned the Project being in line with the GIZ programme and with CAWATER<sup>14</sup>.

The Project design and development interventions were rated by the surveyed participants as relevant (37% - “highly relevant”, 63% - “relevant”) for meeting the Project objective. Fifty percent of the survey respondents gave prominence to importance of the discussions that took place in the course of the Project for further development of water quality management cooperation.

The Project can be regarded as a relevant 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

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.mfa.gov.tm/en/articles/307>

<sup>10</sup> In Russian: <http://tdh.gov.tm/news/articles.aspx&article14225&cat11>

<sup>11</sup> Information shared by Mr. Alexandr Nikolaenko, Regional Advisor, Transboundary Water Management in Central Asia Programme, GIZ, Almaty, Kazakhstan

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/15176.html>

<sup>13</sup> Total financing \$9,500,000, overall duration 2015-2020, <https://www.usaid.gov/kyrgyz-republic/fact-sheets/smart-waters>

<sup>14</sup> Portal of Knowledge for Water and Environmental Issues in Central Asia supported by SIC ICWC and EC IFAS: <http://www.cawater-info.net/>

2016-2017<sup>15</sup> and to paras. 17.9 – 17.12 of the Subprogramme 1 Environment of the Biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2018-2019<sup>16</sup>.

Since the Project was designed and implemented to consistently address essential water management cooperation issues in the region, it can be concluded that its relevance is 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 the survey results, each of the expected outcomes received minimum 50% of high achievement scores (Annex I and Annex IV par.8). Publication of the regional and the five national reports was regarded as a strong achievement, along with establishing the RWG and improving the dialogue, cooperation and understanding with regard to water quality monitoring and management between the countries and agencies.

The major drawbacks were the delayed process of the RWG Mandate endorsement and relatively weak initiation of the process to include information on water quality in a database. However, by the date of the present evaluation the draft Mandate has been finalized and submitted for approval by the RWG. According to the UNECE Project Manager, the process of the draft Mandate approval by the countries is currently nearing completion. As explained by the Project Manager and CAREC, the delay in the Mandate development process was caused by the actual lack of capacity of the initially selected subcontractor (successful bidder in the tender). After the subcontractor failed to prepare the draft Mandate, the task was forwarded to the Regional Expert who successfully finished it in autumn 2018.

Two official annual RWG meetings were held within the Project timeframe, and the third regional meeting was excluded from the Project, stated to be going beyond its timeframe and possible to be implemented in case additional funding opportunities were provided<sup>17</sup>. However, a regional session to discuss the results of the Project and future areas of cooperation was included in the study-tour to Uzhydromet in September 2018.

Seventy-five percent of the surveyed Project participants stated that they had not observed any challenges/obstacles to achieving the Project objective and expected outcomes, and 87% confirmed that the Project had contributed to improving management of transboundary water quality in Central Asia. At the same time, 100% of the surveyed experts agreed that the Project improved capacity of the key stakeholders to strengthen transboundary water quality monitoring and regional cooperation.

Sixty-two percent of the survey respondents suggested that the planned activities were sufficient to achieve the expected accomplishments (outcomes) and the Project objective.

Since the Project contributed to the improved capacity of the national stakeholders to strengthen transboundary water quality monitoring, its implementation is linked with the following expected accomplishment of the UNECE regular programme of work under the Subprogramme 1

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<sup>15</sup> 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]

<sup>16</sup> Biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2018-2019 (2017). [United Nations General Assembly]

<sup>17</sup> Annual Work Plan 2018 - The project "Strengthening cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia" (not dated). [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe]

“Environment”: (c) Strengthened national capacity for environmental monitoring and assessment systems in the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia<sup>18</sup>.

Finally, as the Project supported the development of the basin-wide, regional cooperation on water quality aimed at reducing the deterioration of water quality in the region, it can be considered as corresponding to the Water Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes<sup>19</sup>, as well as to SDG 6 and, in particular, its indicator 6.5.2 – transboundary cooperation<sup>20</sup>. According to the United Nations Treaty Collection<sup>21</sup>, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan are the only of the five participating CA countries that have ratified the Convention but, according to the Project Manager, all the five countries aspire to follow its provisions.

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

## Efficiency

According to the draft final substantive report and funds utilization report<sup>22</sup>, the Project initiation was several months delayed due to cooperation issues with the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development of Central Asia (ICSD) of IFAS that was initially considered as the most appropriate and relevant project platform. However, as reported by at least three project participants, the ICSD had neither interest, nor additional resources to “host” the RWG, and caused a delay to the Project start by being unable to agree on the way forward. Instead CAREC Governing Board agreed on the establishment of a working group and providing a venue for the expert discussions. As a result, according to CAREC, the Project started only in May 2016, and the actual duration was two and a half years instead of over three years.

The UNECE already had cooperation experience with CAREC in Phase I of the Project, and CAREC was mentioned in the Project Document<sup>23</sup> as the potential partner for Phase II, along with the ICSD. The Consultant’s opinion is that the UNECE should have continued working with CAREC which had successfully implemented Phase I<sup>24</sup> at the beginning of the Project. This would have saved the time and efforts.

As the draft final substantive report and funds utilization report states, the project budget 2015-2018 was €175,150.0. The “Initial Project Budget” column in Table 1 below reflects the initial distribution of funds, with more than half of the overall budget (53.7%) allocated to the Sub-contracting component, and €31,000.0 (17.7%) reserved for the Technical Assistance personnel costs. The initial budget also included €14,000.0 (8.0%) for furniture and equipment (the “Investments” line in the

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<sup>18</sup> Proposed strategic framework for the period 2018-2019. Part two: biennial programme plan. Programme 17 Economic development in Europe (2016). [United Nations General Assembly]

<sup>19</sup> In line with Article 2 General Provisions, Article 3 Prevention, Control and Reduction, Article 4 Monitoring, Article 5 Research and Development, Article 6 Exchange of Information, Article 9 Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation, Article 10 Consultations, Article 11 Joint Monitoring and Assessment, Article 12 Common Research and Development, Article 13 Exchange of Information between Riparian Parties, Article 15 Mutual Assistance, Article 16 Public Information of 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]

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.unwater.org/app/uploads/2018/01/SDG6\\_TABLE\\_INDICATORS\\_jan2018-06-02.png](http://www.unwater.org/app/uploads/2018/01/SDG6_TABLE_INDICATORS_jan2018-06-02.png)

<sup>21</sup> [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=XXVII-5&chapter=27&clang=en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXVII-5&chapter=27&clang=en)

<sup>22</sup> Draft progress report September 2015 – 30 June 2018 provided by the UNECE Project Manager

<sup>23</sup> Programme for Finland’s Water Sector support to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan 2014-2017, FinWaterWEI II.

Strengthening cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia (2015). [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe]

<sup>24</sup> Evaluation Report. UNDA Project "Water Quality in Central Asia" (2012). [Ari Mäkelä, UN Assigned Evaluator, Contract No.: 35846]

budget breakdown provided in the draft final substantive report and funds utilization report<sup>11</sup>, Annex I, and cited below in Tables 1 and 2).

However, in 2018 the project budget was amended<sup>25</sup> without change of the total budget amount (Table 1 below), and the main modification was the reallocation of funds from Furniture and equipment (the Investments class of expenditure in the Budget) to the Sub-contracting class of expenditure. In accordance with further information provided by the UNECE Project Manager, 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 Furniture and equipment and Sub-contracting classes of expenditure was made correctly and on time.

**Table 1.** Initial and modified project budgets compared

<b>Budget item</b>	<b>Initial Project Budget (EURO)</b>	<b>Initial Project Budget (%)</b>	<b>Modified Project Budget according to Amendment 1 (EURO)</b>	<b>Modified Project Budget according to Amendment 1 (%)</b>
<b>TA* personnel</b>	31,000.0	17.7%	31,000.0	17.7%
<b>Sub-contracting</b>	94,000.0	53.7%	108,000.0	61.7%
<b>Investments</b>	14,000.0	8.0%	0.0	0.0%
<b>Travel and subsistence</b>	6,000.0	3.4%	6,000.0	3.4%
<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>	10,000.0	5.7%	10,000.0	5.7%
<b>UN Programme Support Costs (13%)</b>	20,150.0	11.5%	20,150.0	11.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>175,150.0</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>175,150.0</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\* Technical Assistance

The most recent details on budget expenditure that have been made available to date are provided in Table 2 below.

By July 1, 2018, 84.6% of the overall project budget had been utilized; the remaining 15.4% were expected to be spent by the end of December 2018 on “Monitoring and evaluation”, “Travel and subsistence”, and on the rest of the TA personnel and UN Programme Support costs.

<sup>25</sup> 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.

**Table 2.** Project budget expenditures

<b>Budget item</b>	<b>Modified Project Budget according to Amendment 1 (EURO)</b>	<b>Expenditures between 1 Sep 2015 and 30 June 2018 (EURO)</b>	<b>Expenditures between 1 Sep 2015 and 30 June 2018 (%)</b>	<b>Estimate expenditures between 1 July and 31 December 2018 (EURO)</b>	<b>Estimate expenditures between 1 July and 31 December 2018 (%)</b>
<b>TA* personnel</b>	31,000.0	23,160.0	74.7%	7,840.0	25.3%
<b>Sub-contracting</b>	108,000.0	108,000.0	100.0%	0.0	0.0%
<b>Investments</b>	0.0	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0%
<b>Travel and subsistence</b>	6,000.0	0.0	0.0%	6,000.0	100.0%
<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>	10,000.0	0.0	0.0%	10,000.0	100.0%
<b>UN Programme Support Costs (13%)</b>	20,150.0	17,050.8	84.6%	3,099.2	15.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>175,150.0</b>	<b>148,210.8</b>	<b>84.6%</b>	<b>26,939.2</b>	<b>15.4%</b>

\* Technical Assistance

As the above analysis shows, the major part of the financial resources allocated to the project (84.6%) had been utilized by July 1, 2018, and the remaining part (15,4%) is expected to be used by the end of the project term.

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

- Development of five national reports with a description, analysis and needs assessment of monitoring systems on water quality (2017-2018).
- Development, publication and dissemination of the survey “Surface waters quality monitoring systems in Central Asia: Needs Assessment” (2018).
- Development and publication of the Annual Work Plan 2017 - the project “Strengthening cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia”.
- Development and publication of the Annual Work Plan 2018 - the project “Strengthening cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia”.
- Organization of the Seminar of the Regional Working Group and the first meeting of the Expert Group in the project «Strengthening cooperation on water quality in Central Asia» on November 24-25, 2016 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Total number of participants: 31, including 15 men (48%) and 16 women (52%).
- Organization of the Training on «Joint planning of the transboundary monitoring network and visualization of data on water quality» on December 4-5, 2017 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Total number of participants: 16, including 6 men (37%) and 10 women (63%).
- Organization of the Second meeting of the Regional Working Group (RWG) on water quality on December 4-5, 2017 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Total number of participants: 22, including 8 men (36%) and 14 women (64%).

- Organization of the Study tour to UzHydromet under «Strengthening cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia» activities 2018 on September 6-7, 2018 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Total number of participants: 16, including 4 men (25%) and 12 women (75%).

Compared to the budget of the Project, the above listed outputs including a regional and five national reports, two Annual Work Plans, and all Project events with 85 participants suggest that funds were utilized in an efficient manner, which was confirmed by the surveyed participants (87%) and CAREC Project Manager.

As explained by the Regional expert, the five national reports were produced in parallel with the regional Needs assessment report, then reviewed and integrated. Provided that the start of the Project was delayed, this can be regarded as a good example of efficient time management for delivery of the major planned outcomes of the Project

All of the surveyed participants (100%) confirmed that the Project resources were commensurate to the Project results, and the majority (75%) stated that the allocated resources were appropriate to the Project design. Half of the survey respondents (50%) agreed that the allocated resources were appropriate to the scale of the Project and the needs identified by the beneficiary countries, while the other half (50%) argued that the resources were insufficient. Individual comments given on this matter included insufficient funds to organise a study-tour on hydrochemical monitoring and experts exchange, too short timeframe.

As stated by CAREC, the resources available for organization of the Project activities were used in a way to achieve the best possible rate of expenditure and outcome.

The Project demonstrated efficient funds utilization, and it was confirmed by 100% of the surveyed Project participants that the Project resources were commensurate to the Project results. Fifty percent of the surveyed participants suggested that the resources allocated to the Project were sufficient, while the other 50% disagreed with this statement. The main expected outcomes of the Project were achieved, in spite of the delay of the project activities. With this regard, the Project efficiency can be rated as satisfactory.

## **Sustainability**

According to the interviews and the survey outcomes, the Project results could to a certain extent sustain without further support (50% of the survey responses). For example, the Regional Working Group (RWG) of the Project was supported from 2013 to 2015, in between the two projects funded by UN ECE (2009-2012 and 2015-2018) by the USAID “Smart Waters” project (total financing \$9,500,000 for the period from October 2015 to September 2020<sup>26</sup>), which is an interesting example of ensuring project sustainability. The funding was secured, and the activities were managed by CAREC.

The main concern indicated in a number of interviews (Regional expert, representatives of CAREC and SYKE) was further functioning of the Regional Working Group. The experts stated that further support was required to provide continuation of the RWG’s activities, to give it a legal status necessary for its empowerment (not only in terms of the Mandate endorsement but, first of all, in terms of its integration or affiliation with a strong international player in the region), and to establish a mechanism for its continued work. The experts made a number of assumptions on where this support could come from, e.g. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation to fund the RWG meetings, Russian Federation for the practical side and joint monitoring, IFAS commissions (Interstate Commission for

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/kyrgyz-republic/fact-sheets/smart-waters>

Sustainable Development or Interstate Commission for Water Coordination) for integration of affiliation. As it is known from the UNECE report<sup>27</sup>, the proposal to form a Regional Working Group under ICSD was already considered and was not approved as it was not supported by the downstream countries, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Following the interview with the IFAS representative in Kazakhstan, in general, IFAS indicated their readiness to cooperate with the UNECE on water quality issues but no specific proposals or ideas regarding the RWG emerged.

The vast majority (87%) of the surveyed Project participants and CAREC stated that the political context and decision making would be supportive to continuation or similar projects in the future. The Communique of Heads of States-founders IFAS cited above in the “Relevance” section suggests that this could be the case, and also that effectual involvement of the IFAS might increase in the future.

Sixty-two percent of the surveyed participants noted that the influence of the Project on the policies of their countries to further pursue cooperation to improve the quality of shared water resources was moderate (see Annex IV par. 23). The most positive assessment was given by the RWG member from Turkmenistan who reported that the Project covered the priority issues included in the environmental programmes, and that it would be a good “material” for solving the water quality related problems. The RWG members from Uzbekistan were less optimistic and noticed that the lack of interaction between the Heads of state agencies in the countries diminished the influence of the Project. The RWG member from Kazakhstan commented that it was too early to discuss this point as the intervention had been short and the issue was complex. The RWG member from Tajikistan pointed out that the influence had taken place only at the level of information provided and not of decisions made, but expressed his hope that this was yet to come. The Regional expert suggested that most likely the Project had made an influence on the countries understanding of technical policy.

Sixty-two percent of the surveyed participants noted that policy contradictions did not affect the implementation and prevent the sustainable achievement of the developmental objectives. The Regional expert made a remark that though in general the contradictions did not have an effect, it was necessary to consider them and to compare with the Project benefits.

Seventy-five percent of the survey respondents agreed that the Project could be continued under the National Policy Dialogues (NPDs), supporting attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals as part of the Water Action Decade. The Project may facilitate achievement of SDG 6 through the improved transboundary water quality cooperation<sup>28</sup>. A representative of the Blue Peace initiative commented in his interview: “The Switzerland’s movement operates having SDGs and Water Convention as guidelines. This is a solid ground for discussing concrete cooperation including on the ground basis.” As regards the NPDs, though they are national level projects within the EU Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues programme, and not all of the Central Asian countries<sup>29</sup> have joined it, the Regional expert commented that NPDs could cover some individual issues including the dialogue on water resources management principles, transition to the basin-wide and planned water management, involvement of the interested parties.

As the Project influenced the policies of the five countries to further pursue cooperation to improve the quality of shared water resources to a limited extent, and ensuring sustainability of further activities of the RWG still requires strengthening its position via a legal status or integration/affiliation with a strong regional player, it can be concluded that the Project results are unlikely to be sustainable without further support.

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<sup>27</sup> Draft progress report September 2015 – 30 June 2018 provided by the UNECE Project Manager

<sup>28</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg6>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.unece.org/env/water/npd/countrydialogues.html>

## Impact

Thirty-seven percent of the surveyed participants considered the impact of the Project on the legal, institutional and technical capacity challenges at the national and regional levels to efficiently address regional water quality problems as limited (Annex IV, par. 26). Fifty percent of the surveyed respondents gave the same assessment to the impact of the Project on effective decision-making and information exchange between the countries (Annex IV, par. 27).

The surveyed RWG member from Turkmenistan stated that the Project would support decision-making regarding the legal, institutional and technical capacity challenges to efficiently address water quality problems at the national level in Turkmenistan. The surveyed experts from the other countries gave less positive estimates, the RWG member from Kyrgyzstan argued that the cooperation of the countries on the water quality of shared watercourses was still not effective enough, and that many points of the Diagnostic report were still to be considered. The surveyed RWG members from Tajikistan and Kazakhstan suggested that the Project was the early stage of addressing the issues and not supposed to immediately solve the problems. As a preparatory stage, it was rated by these experts as highly valuable but not having a direct impact on the above-mentioned challenges and decision-making processes. The Regional expert commented that the impact of the Project on the legal, institutional and technical capacity challenges was of a “theoretical” nature as further development following the priorities identified in this Phase was required for increased impact.

The interviewed CAREC Project Manager, Regional expert and Representative of the UNECE Office in Almaty highlighted that one interim impact was the improvement of professional connections in the water quality management sector between the countries due to communication between the RWG members and the dialogue strengthened within the Project framework. The Regional expert further commented that the Project created a unique regional platform on water quality issues, and the CAREC Project Manager suggested that more significant impact would unfold with time due to the initiated RWG activities.

The Project contributed to the capacity building of the relevant agencies and Ministries of the countries at the levels from leading technical staff members to top management. According to the Project documents<sup>30</sup>, capacity building events included the training on joint planning of the transboundary monitoring network and visualization of data on water quality (2017) and the study tour to Uzhydromet which included sessions on the aspects of hydrobiological monitoring (2018). The Regional expert stated in the interview that the training was “the first of its kind”. The surveyed RWG member from Kyrgyzstan commented on the study tour that hydrobiological monitoring was a highly relevant topic due to the lack of capacity and experience in this area in Kyrgyzstan.

Taking into account that the Project initiated preparations for improvement of the legal, institutional and technical capacity challenges at the national and regional levels to efficiently address regional water quality problems, as well as of effective decision-making and information exchange, but has not had a direct impact on these processes yet, it can be said that to date there is evidence of an interim impact, but more significant impact would unfold with longer time.

## Gender aspects

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<sup>30</sup> Report on Training on «Joint planning of the transboundary monitoring network and visualization of data on water quality» and the Second meeting of the Regional Working Group (RWG) on water quality, December 4-5, 2017, Almaty, Kazakhstan (not dated). [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe], Report on Study Tour to Uzhydromet under «Strengthening Cooperation on Water Quality Management in Central Asia, Activities 2018 », September 6-7, 2018, Tashkent, Uzbekistan (not dated). [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe]

In the Project design the gender aspect was taken into account by stating that the work would address the mainstreaming of gender into water sector policies and regulations at the state level, and that work in this area improves health and well-being of the population, and women in particular, through improved conditions for and equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation. The cross-cutting objective of gender equality was also taken into consideration by stating the intention to make efforts to balance, to the extent possible, participation in meetings and training events of men and women, and to inform and involve stakeholders in the process to reflect opportunities to reduce inequality<sup>31</sup>.

As reported by the Project Manager<sup>32</sup> and evidenced by the data obtained from the meeting reports and provided in Table 3 below, there was a balanced participation of men and women in the Project. Women have actively taken part in the project implementation, drafting of national reports, consideration and approval of the annual work plans, and decision-making within the RWG.

Table 3 represents the share of male and female participants in each Project event, as well as in the totality of Project event participants in 2016-2018. The average share of female participants in the events was 63%, while the share of all women among all Project events participants in 2016-2018 was 61%. The highest share of female participants (75%) was observed at the Study tour to UzHydromet on September 6-7, 2018, and the lowest ratio (52%) was for the Seminar of the Regional Working Group and the first meeting of the Expert Group, November 24-25, 2016. As indicated in the Project documents<sup>33</sup>, in 2016 equal participation of women required a special notice to respective ministries, but later the situation improved which is reflected by the gradual increase of the ratio of female participants after 2016 (Table 3).

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

<b>№</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Men %</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Women %</b>	<b>Total number of participants</b>
<b>1</b>	Seminar of the Regional Working Group and the first meeting of the Expert Group, November 24-25, 2016 in Almaty, Kazakhstan	15	48%	16	52%	31
<b>2</b>	Training on «Joint planning of the transboundary monitoring network and visualization of data on water quality», December 4-5, 2017 in Almaty, Kazakhstan	6	38%	10	62%	16

<sup>31</sup> Programme for Finland's Water Sector support to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan 2014-2017, FinWaterWEI II. Strengthening cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia (2015). [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe]

<sup>32</sup> Draft progress report September 2015 – 30 June 2018 provided by the UNECE Project Manager

<sup>33</sup> Report on Training on «Joint planning of the transboundary monitoring network and visualization of data on water quality» and the Second meeting of the Regional Working Group (RWG) on water quality, December 4-5, 2017, Almaty, Kazakhstan (not dated). [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe], Report on Study Tour to Uzhydromet under «Strengthening Cooperation on Water Quality Management in Central Asia, Activities 2018 », September 6-7, 2018, Tashkent, Uzbekistan (not dated). [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe]

№	Event	Men	Men %	Women	Women %	Total number of participants
3	Second meeting of the RWG on December 4-5, 2017 in Almaty, Kazakhstan	8	36%	14	64%	22
4	Study tour to UzHydromet on September 6-7, 2018 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan	4	25%	12	75%	16
Average number and share of participants		8	37%	13	63%	21
Total number and share of participants in all events		33	39%	52	61%	85

The only country that did not show the involvement of female experts as national representatives was Tajikistan, though the surveyed RWG member from this country noticed that the Project was supportive to women empowerment and that improved water quality would directly impact the health of women. According to the UN Women<sup>34</sup>, women in Tajikistan are generally under-represented in decision-making. Khorog in GBAO, Tajikistan, hosts the University of Central Asia (UCA) which enrolls both female and male students, corresponding to the principle of equal rights to education. According to the information provided at the University website, about 46% of all students are women<sup>35</sup>.

According to the meeting reports, 83% of CAREC staff who participated in the Project events 2016-2018 were women. CAREC is a stated equal opportunity employer<sup>36</sup> that encourages women to respond to job advertisements, and had previously included women empowerment issues in its activities<sup>37</sup>.

The conclusion is that the gender aspects were included in the Project design and that the participation of women in the Project events was satisfactory. The only exclusion was Tajikistan which did not ensure the involvement of female experts in the Project events, presumably due to the general under-representation of women in decision-making in this country.

### **Coordination, complementarity and coherence with other donor-funded programs**

Coordination with other organizations, including development agencies and banks, took the shape of meetings with relevant authorities in the countries, exchange of information about the relevant projects with the donors, invitation of their representatives to attend the Project's events and participation in

<sup>34</sup> <http://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/tajikistan>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.ucentralasia.org/Schools/ArtsAndSciences>

<sup>36</sup> [https://www.carecprogram.org/?page\\_id=13712](https://www.carecprogram.org/?page_id=13712)

<sup>37</sup> E.g., eCommerce potential benefits for women entrepreneurs (<https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=trade-facilitation-learning-opportunity-oct-2015>), a community and gender action plan for maximizing new opportunities for women in the project areas included in an investment program (<https://www.carecprogram.org/?feature=carec-corridor-2-road-investment-program-project-1>)

their events, and negotiations on possible cooperation in the future. Sixty-two percent of the surveyed Project participants confirmed that they observed complementarity of the Project to other initiatives in the region. There were neither overlaps, nor close cooperation with other programs, development agencies or banks beyond information sharing.

The documents reviewed, and a number of interviews, confirm that the possible cooperation in Central Asia has been actively discussed by the UNECE Environment Division and the WB's ongoing and planned programs.

According to the WB's CAEWDP Program Manager, "The World Bank and the 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". Another Program Manager of the WB indicated that the Project "had some complementarity (though not well explored)" with CAHMP that focuses on hydromet services in Central Asia, in particular in the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Tajikistan.

There was no evidence of coordination between the UNECE and ESCAP or UNCT.

The fact that the opportunities for cooperation with other donors have been explored provides evidence of the UNECE's aspiration to continue the developments for improved sustainability of the Project results. The Consultant's opinion is that the Project design does not matter much: sustainability of almost every donor-funded project results appears to depend on the support from donor agencies.

CAREC will be an excellent regional partner, as it has both the expertise and experience of managing such projects, as well as coordinating different donors funding for mid-scale and large initiatives, keeping the donors interests balanced, responsibilities for activities and funds separated. The most promising partners in the water quality area for the UNECE are the WB's Central Asia Energy-Water Development Program (Task Manager Ms. Christina Lebb), and the Swiss Blue Peace initiative (Regional Advisor Dr. Andre Wehrli).

Working closely together with other donor agencies and IFIs on the "water quality" theme in CA could have the following objectives: to increase the scale and scope of the activities, to increase the synergetic effect of co-funding, and to avoid possible duplication of efforts.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The **overall conclusion** of the evaluation is that the Project was very relevant, moderately effective, and demonstrated satisfactory efficiency. Sustainability of the RWG is questionable without further donor support and incorporation into the existing institutional framework. There is evidence of an interim impact, but more significant impact would unfold with longer time. There were neither overlaps, nor close cooperation with other programs, development agencies or banks beyond information sharing.

**Conclusions on relevance:** Since the Project was designed and implemented to consistently address essential water management cooperation issues in the region, as confirmed by the desk study and the stakeholders survey, and was designed in response from member states, it can be concluded that its relevance was high.

**Recommendations:** It is recommended that the UNECE continues efforts in improving transboundary water quality cooperation in Central Asia, capacity building of relevant authorities, and supporting the RWG as one of the most successful platforms for regional cooperation.

**Conclusions on effectiveness:** The results received positive assessment from the surveyed experts, but not all expected outcomes of the Project were achieved in full. The establishment of the RWG and improving the dialogue, cooperation and understanding with regard to water quality monitoring and management between the countries and agencies, publication of the joint regional and five national reports, along with the study-tour to Uzhydromet are strong achievements. No “official” status of the RWG, the delayed process of the RWG’s Mandate development and endorsement, relatively weak initiation of the process to include information on water quality in a database were the drawbacks. It is concluded that the Project was moderately effective.

**Recommendations:** It is recommended that the UNECE ensures that the Mandate for the RWG is approved by all five Central Asia countries as soon as possible by the means of both working on the policy level and supporting local experts involved in coordination with authorities. The UNECE should put further efforts into the “incorporation” of the RWG into an officially existing and reputable interstate structure. The UNECE could also consider re-assessing the needs for establishing a separate database for water quality issues and, if the result is positive, identify a politically acceptable and technically feasible solution.

**Conclusions on efficiency:** The Project demonstrated efficient funds utilization. Reallocation of funds from Furniture and equipment (the Investments class of expenditure in the Budget) to the Sub-contracting has been done correctly and on time. It was confirmed by all the surveyed Project participants that the Project resources were commensurate to the Project results. The main expected outcomes of the Project were achieved, in spite of the delay in the project activities. With this regard, the Project efficiency can be rated as satisfactory.

**Recommendations:** For similar projects of the UNECE, the furniture and equipment class of expenditure (“Investments” budget component) can be regarded as not appropriate. It is recommended to the UNECE to ensure that the project starts without delay or, should it be impossible, that the Project term is extended proportionally.

**Conclusions on sustainability:** Sustainability of the RWG, being the main Project result, is a question mark and it depends on two factors. The first one is whether the RWG would be taken on board by any existing corporate body, e.g. ICSD which is considered by experts as the most relevant organization, but which has neither interest, nor additional resources to “host” the RWG. The second factor for sustainability is whether donor funding is secured. The draft Mandate for the RWG increases the chances for obtaining donors’ support, if it is going to be approved and signed by the countries.

**Recommendations:** The UNECE is recommended to explore the possibility of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) support for meetings of the RWG in the future via its Blue Peace initiative.

**Conclusions on impact:** The Project initiated preparations for improvement of the legal, institutional and technical frameworks at the national and regional levels to efficiently address regional water quality problems, as well as of effective decision-making and information exchange. The most significant interim impact is that the experts from five Central Asia countries have established and strengthened connections between each other, regularly meet and discuss the water sector problems, including those related to water quality. The long-lasting impact is deferred, and it might take some time to see it in the future.

**Recommendations:** The UNECE should continue working with the Governments of the five Central Asia countries on the problem of quality of water. Provided the donor funding is secured, the UNECE could design similar projects not to lose the momentum and to increase the possibility of making the impact to last in a long-term perspective.

**Conclusions on coordination, complementarity and coherence:** Coordination with other development agencies and banks took the shape of regular exchange of information about the relevant projects, invitations to attend the Project events and mutual participation in their events, and negotiations on possible cooperation in the future. There were neither overlaps, nor close cooperation with other programs, development agencies or banks beyond information sharing.

**Recommendations:** If the UNECE secures funding and decides to continue supporting the RWG and the “quality of water” theme in Central Asia in general, it could consider doing this in close cooperation with other development partners.

**Conclusions on gender aspects:** The share of female event participants in the Project was more than 60%, and the gender balance can be generally regarded as satisfactory.

**Recommendations on how gender can be included in the design of the future project in UNECE:** The practice of involvement of women in the project activities, especially participation in the capacity building, expert and Regional Work Group, should be continued. Giving a special notice on equal participation of women to respective ministries should be continued as a good practice for similar projects. It is recommended to explore opportunities to cooperate with the UCA or with UN Women on gender aspects in Tajikistan within similar kind of projects in the future.

## Annexes

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

Developed on the basis of the UNECE's Project document "Programme for Finland's Water Sector support to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan 2014-2017, FinWaterWEI II. Strengthening cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia" (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><b>Development Objective:</b> To reduce the deterioration of water quality through improved basin-wide, regional cooperation on water quality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutionalised cooperation established between national authorities of the five/several Central Asian countries responsible for water quality issues.</li> <li>• Results of national/transboundary monitoring programmes reflecting improved water quality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieved</li> <li>• Not achieved</li> </ul>	<p><b>Status:</b> partially achieved.</p> <p>The Project supported the establishment of institutionalised cooperation between national authorities of the five Central Asian countries responsible for water quality issues. The Project has also contributed to the process of moving towards the water quality improvement in the region, however, it is far too early for results of national/transboundary monitoring programmes to reflect water quality improved due to the Project activities.</p>
<p><b>Project Purpose:</b> To institutionalize water quality cooperation in the Aral Sea basin.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional/Project Working Group on Water Quality formally established.</li> <li>• Continuous cooperation on water quality management with the involvement of one or several regional Central Asian bodies, such as IFAS, ICWC, ICSD and CAREC as well as with national environmental, health and water authorities in countries of Central Asia.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partially achieved</li> <li>• Achieved</li> </ul>	<p><b>Status:</b> partially achieved.</p> <p>The RWG has been established but neither backed by an approved Mandate nor integrated into/affiliated with a corporate body within the institutional framework, which weakens its position and makes its sustainability questionable. Continuous cooperation on water quality management with the involvement of CAREC and national authorities has been established.</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><b>Result 1:</b> Strengthened framework established for water quality cooperation in Central Asia</p> <p><b>Indicators:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The countries have agreed on the mandate of the Regional/Project Working Group on Water Quality.</li> <li>2. The countries have agreed on the work plan of the Regional/Project Working Group on Water Quality and progressed in implementation.</li> <li>3. The Regional/Project Working Group on Water Quality has been established and is convening.</li> <li>4. Cooperation on water quality monitoring and data exchange as well as information exchange on national policies exists between the countries of Central Asia.</li> </ol>	<p>1.1. Organisation of three annual meetings and capacity building of the Regional Working Group on Water Quality</p>	<p>Approval of work done and decisions on further joint work. Increased capacity in water quality management.</p>	<p><b>Status:</b> partially achieved.</p> <p>Two RWG meetings were held in 2016 and 2017, and a Regional session was held in 2018 as a part of the tour study to Uzhydromet. According to the AWP 2018, “the 3rd meeting expand beyond the project timeframe and will be implemented in case of additional external funding opportunities.” As evidenced by the reports, the RWG meetings included discussions of the work in progress and planning of further activities (AWPs). Fifty percent of the surveyed Project participants gave high achievement scores to this outcome (25% - “fully achieved”, 25% - “achieved”). The Regional expert pointed out that the theoretical background had been improved, along with the understanding of good practices of management based on the principles of planning and basin-wide approach.</p>
	<p>1.2. Preparation and implementation of annual work programmes (AWPs)</p>	<p>Improved dialogue and cooperation on water quality management between countries and agencies</p>	<p><b>Status:</b> achieved.</p> <p>Two AWPs were prepared and implemented in the course of the Project. Eighty-seven percent of the survey respondents gave high achievement scores to this outcome (25% - “fully achieved”, 62% - “achieved”). The Communique from the Summit of the Heads of States-founders IFAS cited above in the “Relevance” section suggests that in the future the Project can see more engagement from the side of the Governments.</p>

Planned Results and Indicators	Planned activities	Planned key outcomes	Status and achievements benchmarked against the outcomes
	1.3 Preparing the mandate (or ToR) for the Regional/Project Working Group on Water Quality	A mandate for the joint work that is accepted by countries and involved agencies.	<p><b>Status:</b> partially achieved.</p> <p>To date, the Mandate has been prepared as a draft and submitted to the countries for approval. It has been reported by the Project Managers of UNECE and CAREC that the preparation of the Mandate was delayed due to lack of capacity of the initially selected subcontractor (successful bidder). The task was forwarded to and finished by the Regional expert.</p> <p>This outcome received high achievement scores from 50% of the surveyed Project participants (12% - “fully achieved”, 38% - “achieved”). The UNECE Project Manager further commented that at the date of the present evaluation the process of the Mandate approval by the countries was nearing the end.</p>
	1.4 Information exchange on national monitoring and policies in the meetings of the Regional/Project Working Group on Water Quality	Improved understanding with regard to water quality monitoring and management between countries and agencies.	<p><b>Status:</b> achieved.</p> <p>The Meeting and the study-tour reports confirm that the information exchange took place.</p> <p>In the survey responses this outcome received high achievement scores (87% in total: 25% - “fully achieved”, 62% - “achieved”). The CAREC Project Manager stated that in the Regional report the countries started sharing water related data which was an important step forward in the exchange and improved understanding.</p>
<p><b>Result 2:</b> 2.Substantive information on water quality in Central Asia jointly produced and made publicly available</p> <p><b>Indicators:</b></p>	2.1. Preparation of a publication on water quality and water quality cooperation in Central Asia	A joint publication that will function as a baseline for future cooperation.	<p><b>Status:</b> achieved.</p> <p>The regional report “Surface waters quality monitoring systems in Central Asia: Needs Assessment” has been prepared and published<sup>38</sup>, as</p>

<sup>38</sup>[https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/Projects\\_in\\_Central\\_Asia/SURFACE\\_WATERS\\_QUALITY\\_MONITORING\\_SYSTEMS\\_IN\\_CENTRAL\\_ASIA\\_NEEDS\\_ASSESSMENT.pdf](https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/Projects_in_Central_Asia/SURFACE_WATERS_QUALITY_MONITORING_SYSTEMS_IN_CENTRAL_ASIA_NEEDS_ASSESSMENT.pdf)

Planned Results and Indicators	Planned activities	Planned key outcomes	Status and achievements benchmarked against the outcomes
<p>1. Available information on water quality and water quality cooperation in Central Asia, including information developed under the project, has been synthesized</p> <p>2. Process to include information on water quality in a database has been initiated by countries</p>	<p>2.2 Initiating a process for information exchange related to water quality</p>	<p>Process to include information on water quality in a database has been initiated by participating countries.</p>	<p>well as the five national reports<sup>39</sup>. Confirmed by high scores given to this outcome by 74% of the surveyed respondents.</p> <p><b>Status:</b> partially achieved.</p> <p>According to the UNECE Project Manager, the process to identify and establish links to national sources of water quality information has been initiated, though no database has been established. It was indicated by the Regional expert in his survey responses that the member countries were not ready to start sharing data as it could potentially escalate water-related conflicts, and as the quality of data varied greatly across the countries. The Regional expert further commented that at an RWG meeting it was decided to start with collecting the information on monitoring points, sampling frequency, water quality parameters etc. but not with the actual water quality monitoring data. The UNECE “Draft progress report September 2015 – 30 June 2018” states that no participating country had enough capacity to host an individual database, and that “the respective data on water quality would be presented in the regional e-library at CAREC Knowledge Hub. All regional publications on water quality are accessed through a specific <a href="#">«Water quality» filter</a> at the e-library.” The report also provides links to the websites of KazHydromet and KyrgyzHydromet where environmental bulletins and water quality monitoring data (respectively) are published.</p>

<sup>39</sup><http://www.riverbp.net/library/publications/issledovanie-potrebnoyey-sistem-monitoringa-kachestva-poverkhnostnykh-vod-v-tsentralnoy-azii/>

Planned Results and Indicators	Planned activities	Planned key outcomes	Status and achievements benchmarked against the outcomes
			<p>Finally, CAREC shared a link to the Eurasian River Basin Portal where all related documents were uploaded to:  <a href="http://www.riverbp.net/eng/library/publications/">www.riverbp.net/eng/library/publications/</a>  The surveyed Project participants recognized these efforts by the UNECE and CAREC by giving 74% of high achievement scores to this outcome.</p>

## **Annex II. List of reviewed documents**

### **I. Project documents and publications**

Annual Work Plan 2017 - the project “Strengthening cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia” (not dated). [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe]

Annual Work Plan 2018 - The project “Strengthening cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia” (not dated). [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe]

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## Annex III. Survey questionnaire

### EVALUATION: RATING, COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### THE UNECE PROJECT “STRENGTHENING COOPERATION ON WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN CENTRAL ASIA”

Dear project participants,

The UNECE are currently conducting evaluation of the project on strengthening cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia (2015-2018). 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 water quality management needs and priorities of your country. Rate here

*Your comments and recommendations:*

2. Was the project design relevant, in line with the achievements and outcomes of other initiatives, projects and programmes in the region? **YES/NO**  
If you select “YES”, please specify the relevant initiatives/projects/programmes below (e.g. the Swiss Initiative on Blue Peace Central Asia, the World Bank Central Asia Energy and Water Development Program (CAEWDP), USAID project Smart Waters etc.)

*Your comments and recommendations:*

3. Please rate the extent to which the project design was relevant, in line with the achievements and outcomes of other initiatives, projects and programmes in the region that you mentioned above (if any). Rate here

*Your comments and recommendations:*

4. Please rate coordination and cooperation of the project with other programmes in the region. Rate here

*Your comments and recommendations:*

5. 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:*

6. Does the project complement with other programmes in the region? **YES/NO**  
If you answered “YES”, please provide details below.

*Your comments and recommendations:*

7. The project objective was to reduce the deterioration of water quality through improved basin-wide, regional cooperation on water quality. Please rate the extent to which the project design and development interventions were relevant for meeting this objective.

Rate here

*Your comments and recommendations:*

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

1) Increased water quality management capacity of the participating countries.

Rate here

2) Improved dialogue and cooperation on water quality management between countries and agencies.

Rate here

3) A mandate for the Regional/Project Working Group on Water Quality is accepted by countries and involved agencies.

Rate here

4) Improved understanding with regard to water quality monitoring and management between countries and agencies.

Rate here

5) A joint publication on water quality and water quality cooperation in Central Asia that will function as a baseline for future cooperation.

Rate here

6) Process to include information on water quality in a database has been initiated by participating countries.

Rate here

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

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

*Your comments and recommendations:*

11. Has the project contributed to improving management of transboundary water quality in Central Asia? **YES / NO**

12. Has the project improved capacity of key stakeholders to strengthen transboundary water quality monitoring and regional cooperation? **YES / NO**

13. In your opinion, what would the situation in cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia 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

14. Please rate the extent to which the planned project activities were sufficient to achieve the planned project outcomes (listed above in question №8 as 1-6) Rate here

*Your comments and recommendations:*

15. Please rate the extent to which the planned project activities were sufficient to achieve the project objective to reduce the deterioration of water quality through improved basin-wide, regional cooperation on water quality. Rate here

*Your comments and recommendations:*

16. Were the available resources appropriate to the scale of the project and the needs identified by beneficiary countries? **YES / NO**

17. In your opinion, were the human and financial resources allocated to the project used efficiently? **YES / NO**

18. In your opinion, were the human and financial resources allocated to the project commensurate to the project results? **YES / NO**

19. In your opinion, were the human and financial resources appropriate to the design of the project? **YES / NO**

20. Could the design of the project have been improved in order to achieve the expected outcomes more efficiently? **YES / NO**

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

*Your comments and recommendations:*

22. 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:*

23. Please rate the degree to which the project influenced the policies of your country to further pursue cooperation to improve the quality of shared water resources. Rate here

*Your comments and recommendations:*

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

25. 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:*

26. Please rate the extent to which the project impacted on the legal, institutional and technical capacity challenges at the national and regional levels to efficiently address regional water quality problems.

**Rate here**

*Your comments and recommendations:*

27. Please rate the extent to which the project impacted effective decision-making and information exchange between the countries on water quality.

**Rate here**

*Your comments and recommendations:*

28. 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:*

29. 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:*

30. 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:*

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

32. 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?

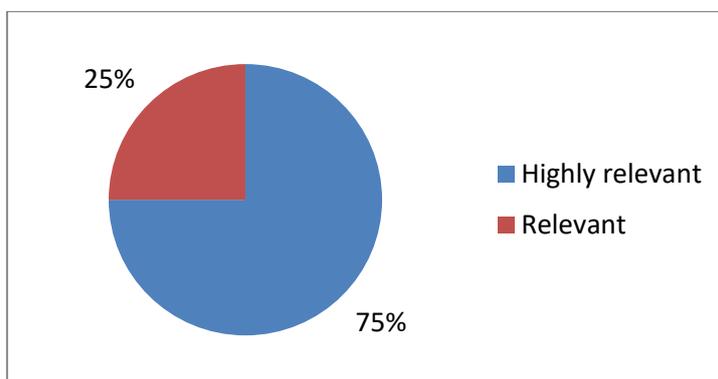
*Your comments and recommendations:*

**THANK YOU!**

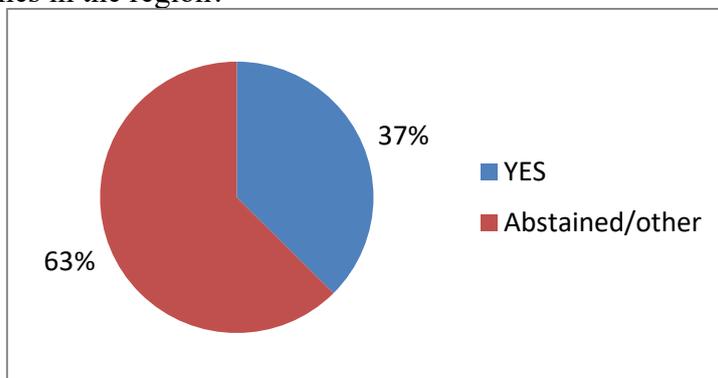
**PLEASE RETURN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE TO KONSTANTIN KARABANOV AT [K.KARABANOV@GMAIL.COM](mailto:K.KARABANOV@GMAIL.COM)**

## Annex IV. Key survey results

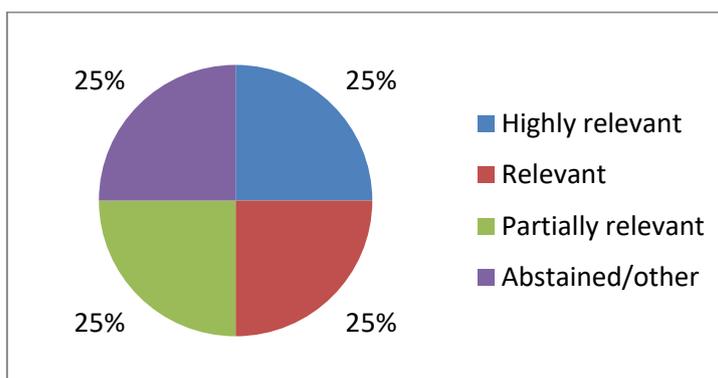
1. Please rate the relevance of the project to the water quality management needs and priorities of your country.



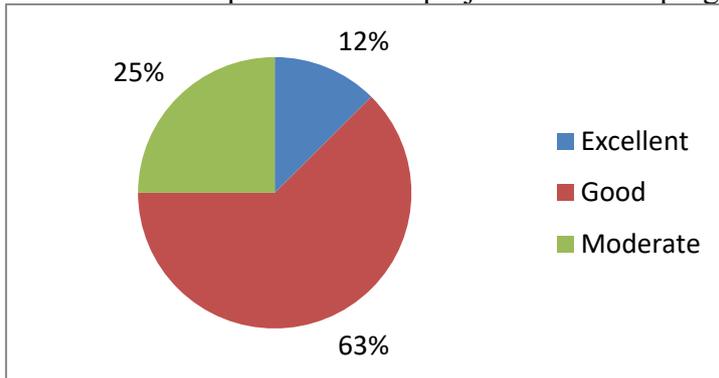
2. Was the project design relevant, in line with the achievements and outcomes of other initiatives, projects and programmes in the region?



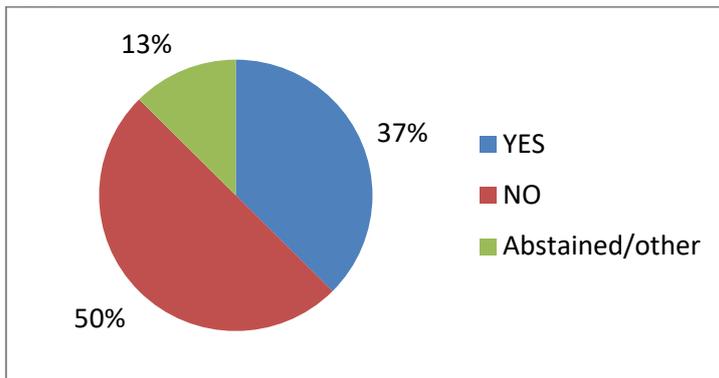
3. Please rate the extent to which the project design was relevant, in line with the achievements and outcomes of other initiatives, projects and programmes in the region that you mentioned above (if any).



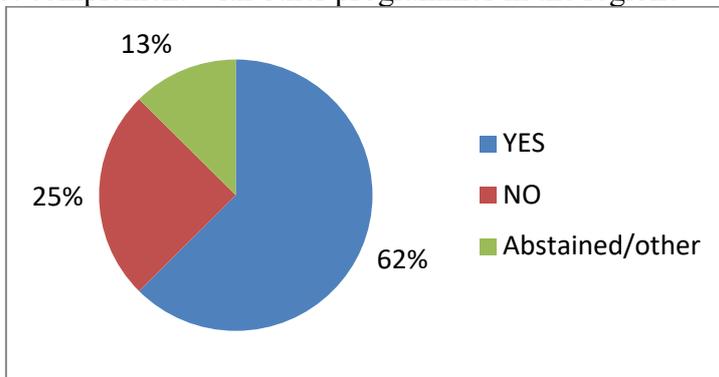
4. Please rate coordination and cooperation of the project with other programmes in the region.



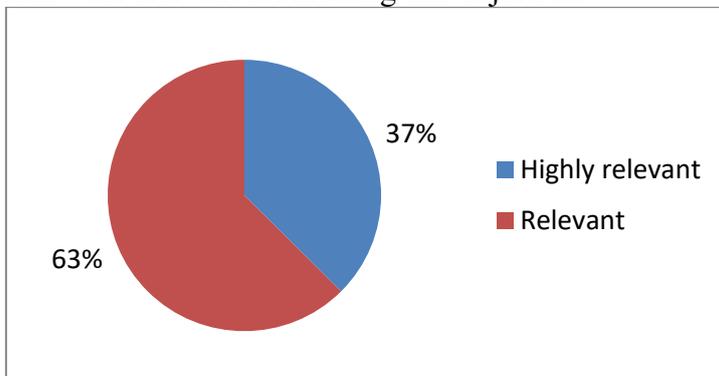
5. Have you observed any common approaches, synergies and/or peer learning between the project and other programmes?



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

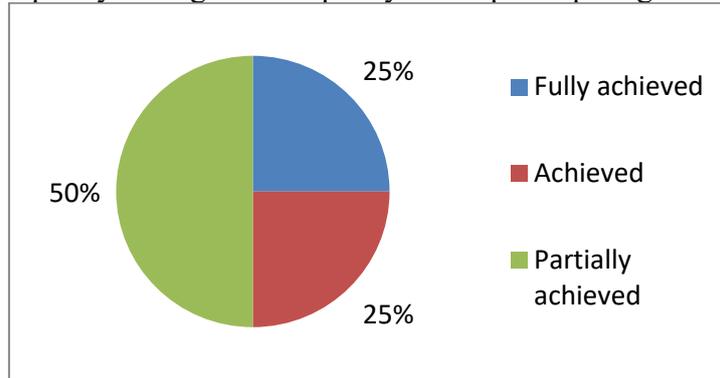


7. The project objective was to reduce the deterioration of water quality through improved basin-wide, regional cooperation on water quality. Please rate the extent to which the project design and development interventions were relevant for meeting this objective.

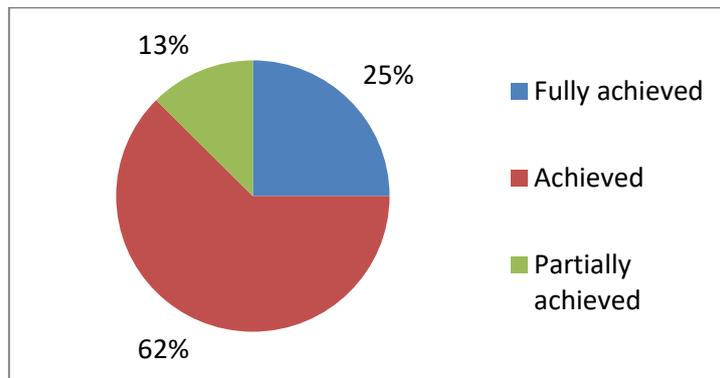


8. Please rate the extent to which the following expected project outcomes were achieved:

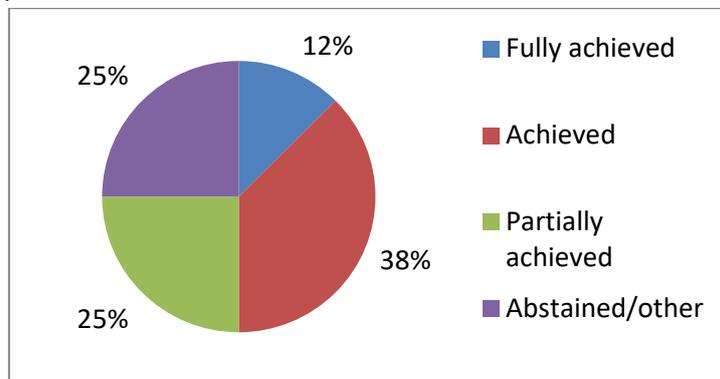
1) Increased water quality management capacity of the participating countries.



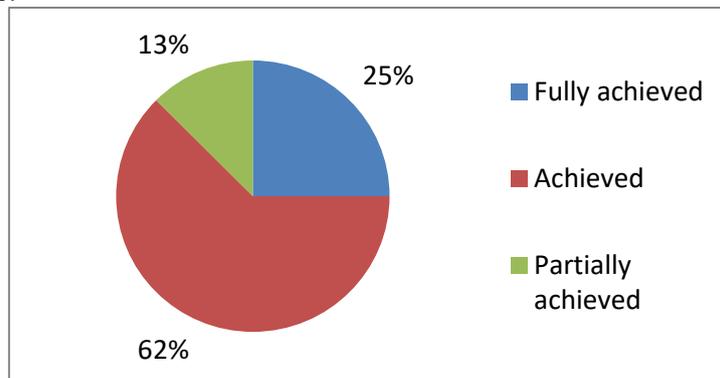
2) Improved dialogue and cooperation on water quality management between countries and agencies.



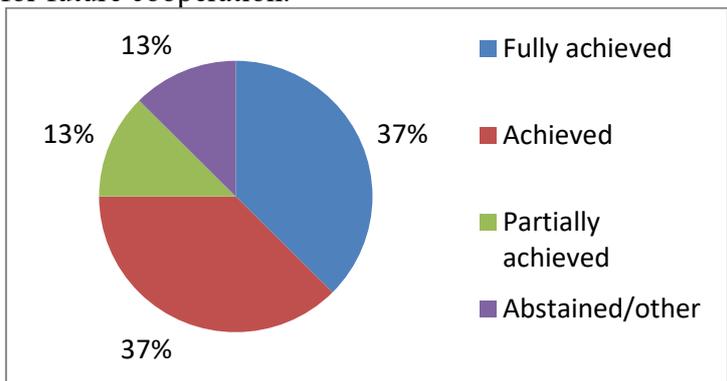
3) A mandate for the Regional/Project Working Group on Water Quality is accepted by countries and involved agencies.



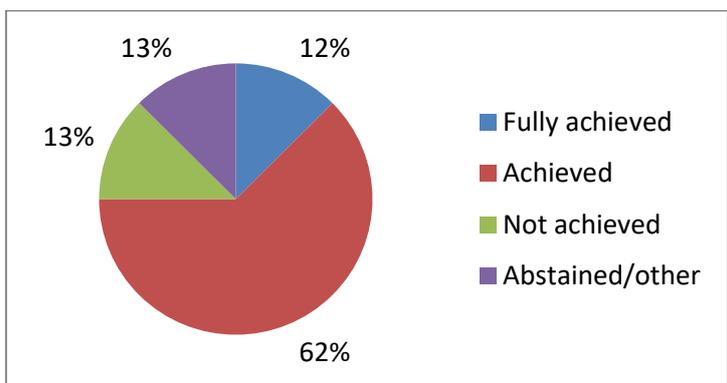
4) Improved understanding with regard to water quality monitoring and management between countries and agencies.



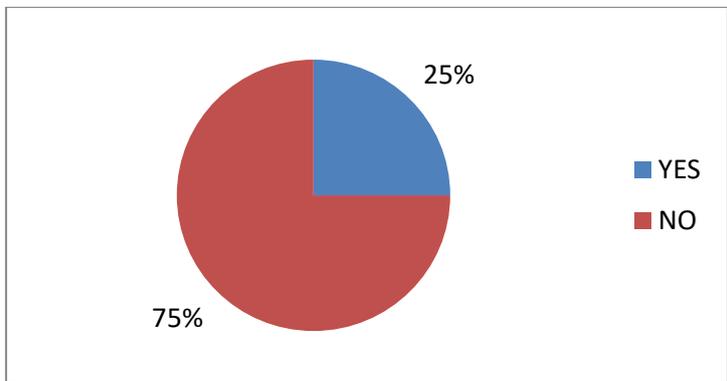
5) A joint publication on water quality and water quality cooperation in Central Asia that will function as a baseline for future cooperation.



6) Process to include information on water quality in a database has been initiated by participating countries.



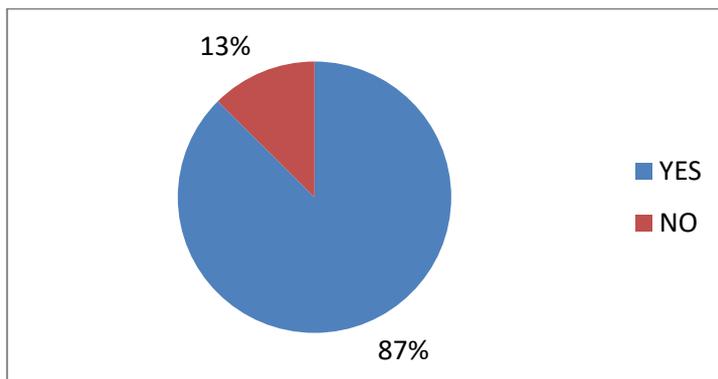
9. Did you observe any challenges or obstacles to achieving the project objectives and expected outcomes?



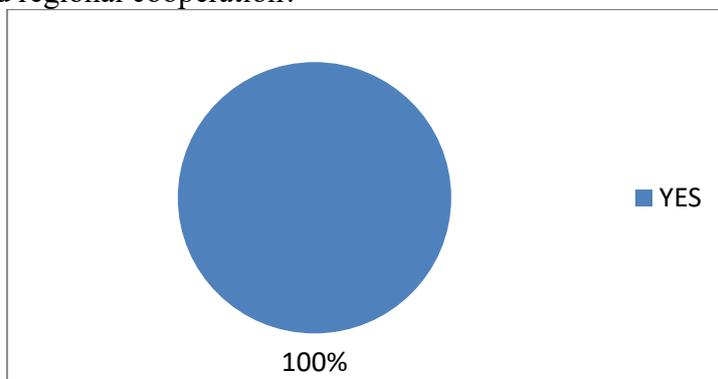
10. If you observed any challenges or obstacles to achieving the project objectives and expected outcomes, please provide details below.

No comments provided.

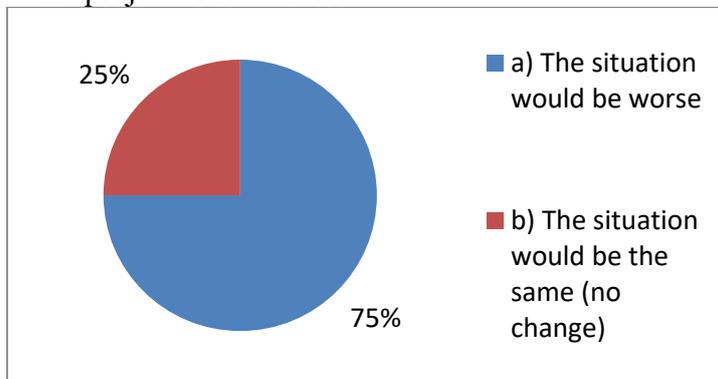
11. Has the project contributed to improving management of transboundary water quality in Central Asia?



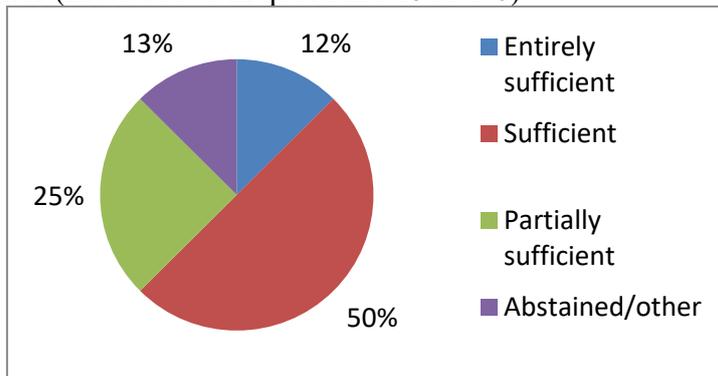
12. Has the project improved capacity of key stakeholders to strengthen transboundary water quality monitoring and regional cooperation?



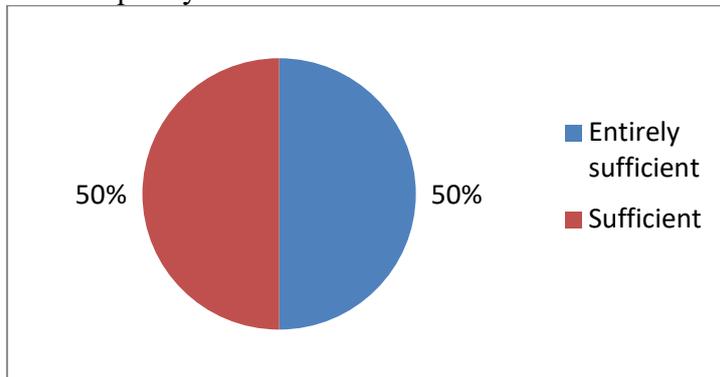
13. In your opinion, what would the situation in cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia be without this project? Please select:



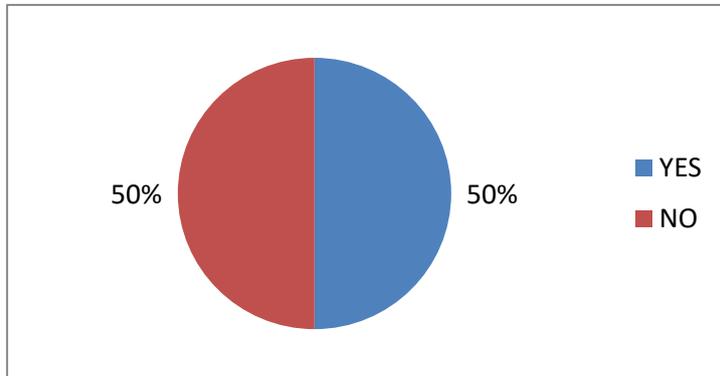
14. Please rate the extent to which the planned project activities were sufficient to achieve the planned project outcomes (listed above in question №8 as 1-6)



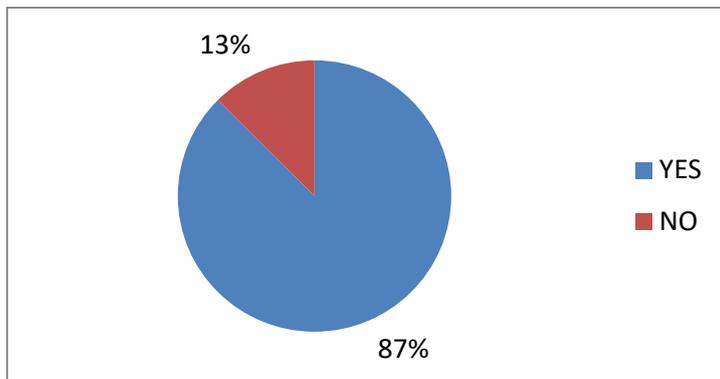
15. Please rate the extent to which the planned project activities were sufficient to achieve the project objective to reduce the deterioration of water quality through improved basin-wide, regional cooperation on water quality.



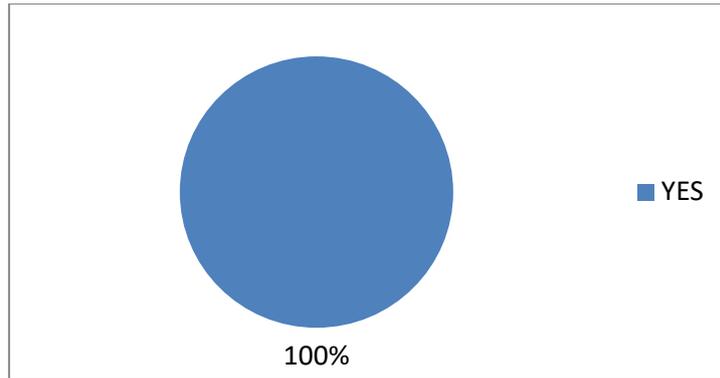
16. Were the available resources appropriate to the scale of the project and the needs identified by beneficiary countries?



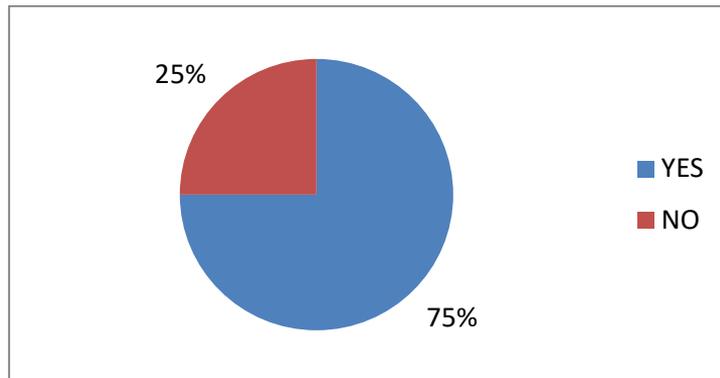
17. In your opinion, were the human and financial resources allocated to the project used efficiently?



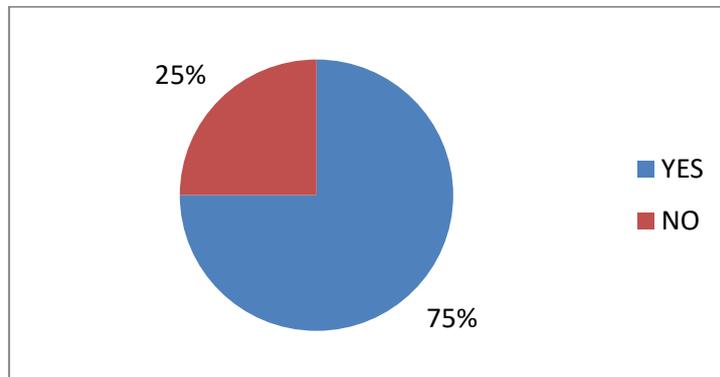
18. In your opinion, were the human and financial resources allocated to the project commensurate to the project results?



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



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



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

"Financial resources were not sufficient to implement study tours on hydrochemical monitoring and experts experience exchange"

"Financial resources were not sufficient to pay for the expert work"

"Longer timeframe of the Project"

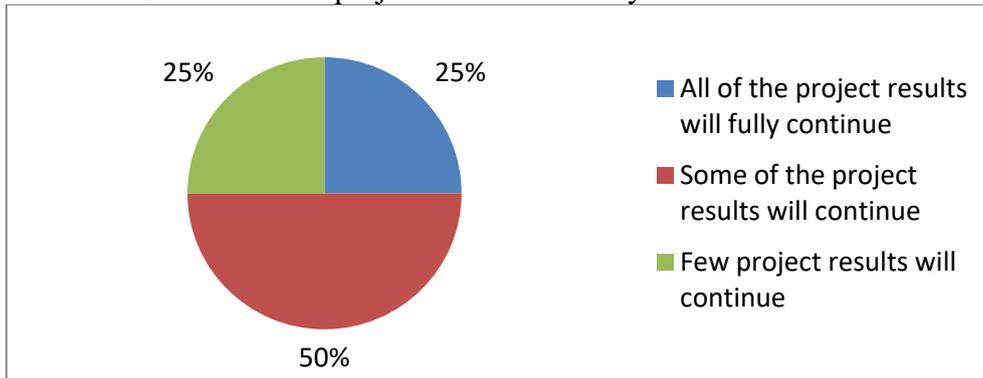
"Less time spent"

"Greater involvement of national departments in the work at the country level and for better coordination between departments within the country. In addition, increasing the role of experts and members of the RWG as advocates and promoters of innovative approaches to water quality"

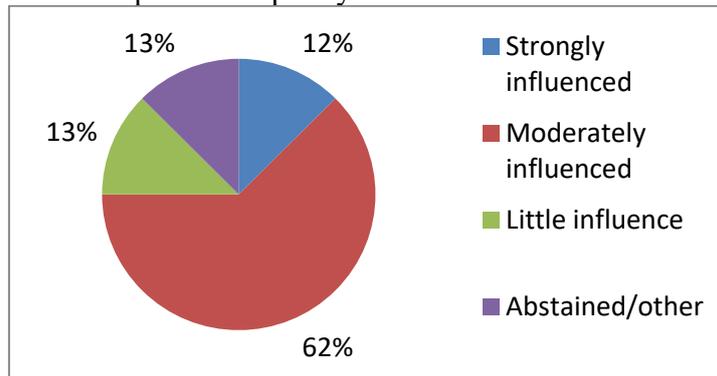
management. Enhancing the role and responsibility of governments for addressing water quality transboundary watercourses related issues."

"Teaching the population to preserve the natural reserves of fresh water and methods of efficient use for industrial, agricultural and domestic purposes, and the use of modern techniques for the protection of natural waters."

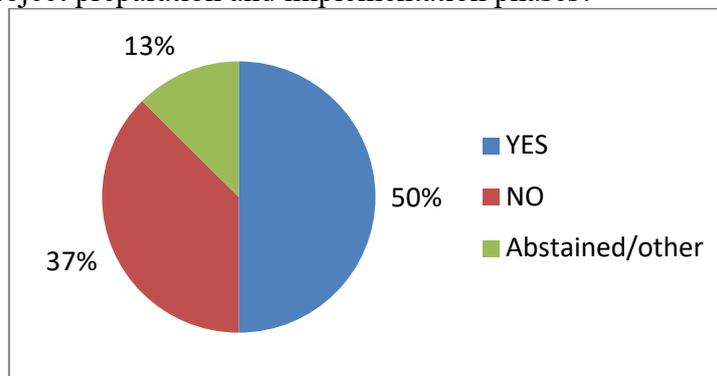
22. Please rate the extent to which, in your opinion, the project results will continue after completion of the project in your country. Please rate on a 1-5 scale, where 1 is "the project results will not continue" and 5 is "all of the project results will fully continue".



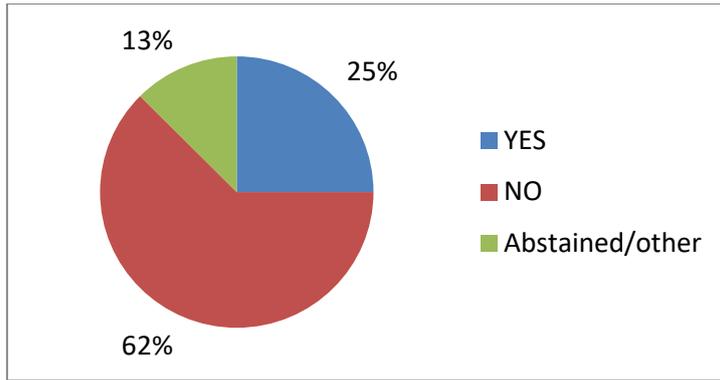
23. Please rate the degree to which the project influenced the policies of your country to further pursue cooperation to improve the quality of shared water resources.



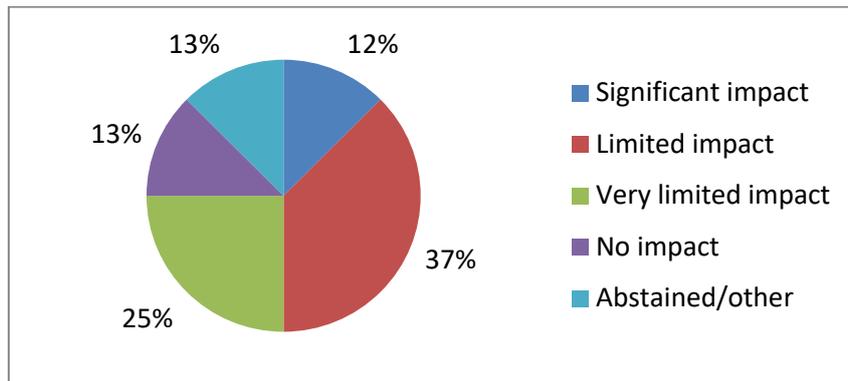
24. In your opinion, were the measures to enhance sustainability of project results given sufficient attention during the project preparation and implementation phases?



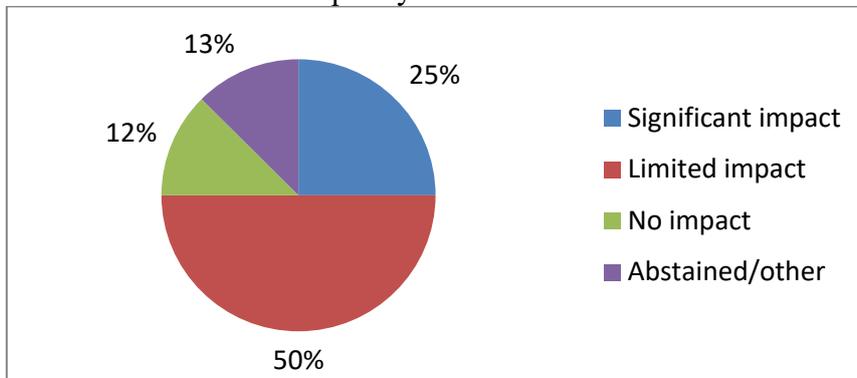
25. Do policy contradictions affect implementation and prevent the sustainable achievement of the developmental objectives?



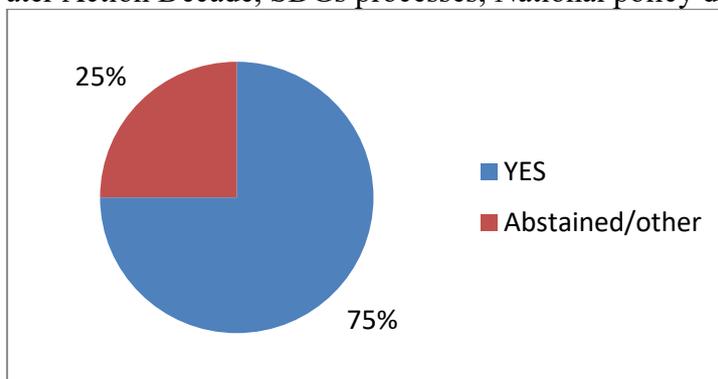
26. Please rate the extent to which the project impacted on the legal, institutional and technical capacity challenges at the national and regional levels to efficiently address regional water quality problems.



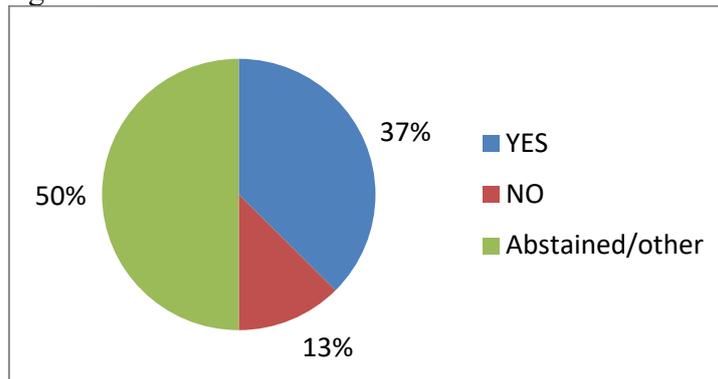
27. Please rate the extent to which the project impacted effective decision-making and information exchange between the countries on water quality.



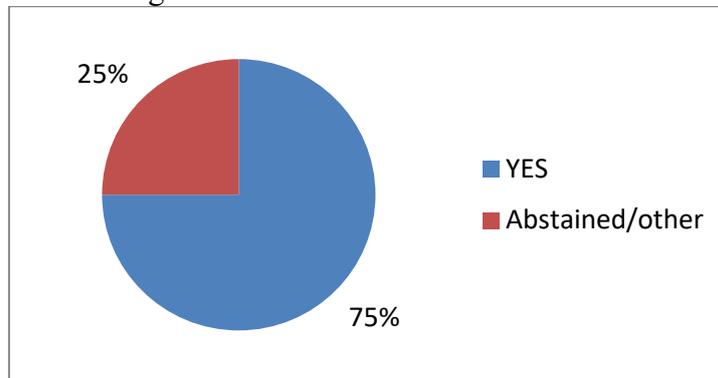
28. Do you think the project could be continued under the relevant national and regional initiatives, like United Nations Water Action Decade, SDGs processes, National policy dialogues?



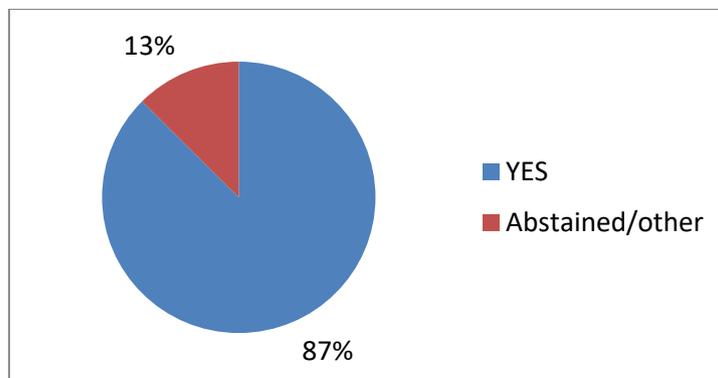
29. In your opinion, has implementation under FinWaterWEI has brought some synergies to the related projects in the region?



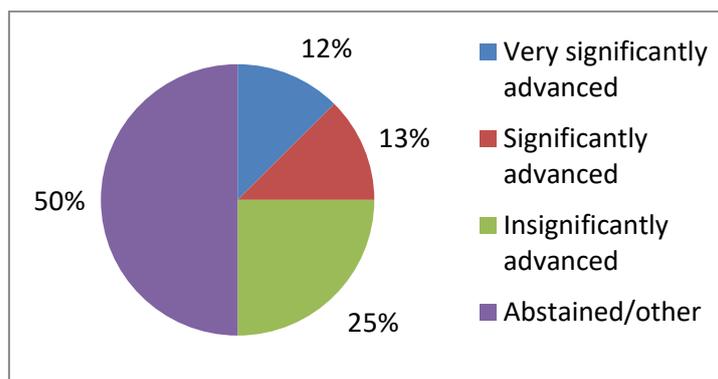
30. In your opinion, are there any other possible windows/opportunities to continue works in this direction, that Finland could cover by providing expert support and consultations to promote sustainable development in the region?



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



32. 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?

"Is there the necessary capacity in the countries to ensure that water quality monitoring is carried out at the proper level? Currently, the potential is at the level of 2, a lot needs to be done!"

"The issues of improving water quality management, especially in transboundary watercourses, are extremely important. In order to work effectively in the future, it is necessary to extend the project (by 2-3 years), to create a working group consisting of specialists from the interested countries. In addition, in the future, the project should include funds for technical support of monitoring centers, laboratories of the participating countries. "

## **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 the five countries representing the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Kyrgyz Republic, Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Republic of Tajikistan, independent experts from the Republic of Turkmenistan and the Republic of Tajikistan. Interviewees also included staff, programme and project managers from CAREC, IFAS, GIZ, Chu-Talas Commission, World Bank etc.

### **Interviewed by telephone/Skype/face-to-face**

1. Akbozova, Indira, Head of the Kazakhstan Part, Secretariat of the Chu-Talas Water Commission, Republic of Kazakhstan
2. Akhmedov, Mustakim, Analyst/Water, UNDP Tajikistan
3. Berdiyev, Arslan, Independent expert, Turkmenistan
4. Cassara, Manon Pascale, Consultant, World Bank, Almaty, Kazakhstan
5. Gutnik, Valeriy, Head of division, Water Management Department, Kyrgyz Republic
6. Hajiyev, Batyr, Economic Affairs Officer, UNECE, Geneva, Switzerland
7. Kenshimov, Amirkhan, Director, Department of Water Resources, Executive Board of IFAS in Kazakhstan
8. Kull, Daniel Werner, Task Team Leader (Project Manager), Central Asia Hydrometeorology Modernization Project, Senior Disaster Risk Management Specialist, The World Bank
9. Lebb, Christina, Manager, Central Asia Energy-Water Development Program (CAEWDP), The World Bank
10. Bo Libert, Independent expert, Uppsala, Sweden
11. Makeev, Talaipek, Economic Affairs Officer, Office in Almaty, UNECE
12. Mäkelä, Ari, Senior Research Scientist, Water Center / Global Water Issues, Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE), Helsinki, Finland
13. Meliyan, Ruslan, Scientific Coordinator, Center for Strategic Environmental Research "ECOS" – Regional Expert
14. Nikolaenko, Alexandr, Regional Advisor, Transboundary Water Management in Central Asia Programme, GIZ, Almaty, Kazakhstan
15. Satymkulova, Gulmira, Head of the Kyrgyzstan Part, Secretariat of the Chu-Talas Commission, the Kyrgyz Republic

16. Strikeleva, Ekaterina, Project Manager “Water, Education and Cooperation”, CAREC, Almaty, Kazakhstan – key project partner
17. Törnroos, Tea, Head of Unit, International Affairs Unit, Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE), Coordinator of FinWaterWEI II Programme, Helsinki, Finland
18. Wehrli, André, Switzerland’s Regional Water Advisor for Central Asia, Embassy of Switzerland in Kazakhstan, Almaty, Switzerland
19. Zhumaniyazov, Kamiljan, Sanitary doctor of the Department of communal hygiene, Republican Center of State Sanitary and Epidemiological Surveillance under the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Republic of Uzbekistan

### **Surveyed and interviewed by email**

1. Aganov, Stanislav, Independent expert, Turkmenistan – RWG Member
2. Alimbayeva, Danara, Deputy General Director, RSE "Kazhydromet", Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Kazakhstan – RWG Member
3. Bondareva, Vera, Head of the Department of Surface Waters Monitoring, Agency of hydrometeorology under the Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Kyrgyz Republic, Kyrgyz Republic – RWG Member
4. Burlibaev, Malik, Deputy Director General on Science, Kazakhstan Agency Of Applied Ecology, Republic of Kazakhstan
5. Dauletkulova, Aigul, Engineer, Branch of RSE "Kazhydromet" in Zhambyl region, Republic of Kazakhstan
6. Mamadaliev, Bahrom, Independent expert, Republic of Tajikistan – RWG Member
7. Meliyan, Ruslan, Scientific Coordinator, Center for Strategic Environmental Research "ECOS" – Regional Expert
8. Mirkhashimov, Iskandar, Deputy Executive Director, Kazakhstan Agency of Applied Ecology (“KAPE”, LLC), Republic of Kazakhstan
9. Myagkov, Sergei, Deputy Director, NIGMI-Hydrometeorological Research Institute of Uzhydromet, Republic of Uzbekistan – RWG Member
10. Plotsen, Marina, Chief of Environmental Monitoring Service, Centre of Hydrometeorological Service under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Republic of Uzbekistan – RWG Member
11. Shodmonov, Pirnazar, Head of Radiological Laboratory at the State Sanitary Epidemiological Surveillance Service, Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Tajikistan – RWG Member

## Annex VI. Terms of Reference of the evaluation

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### Evaluation of the project

#### “Strengthening cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia”

#### 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 water quality management in Central Asia project (hereinafter “Project”) was achieved. The evaluation will assess the *relevance* of the projects for the beneficiary countries, *coordination*, *synergies* and *complementarities* with other programmes, *effectiveness* in reaching relevant outcomes, *efficiency* in the use of human and staff resources in reaching project objectives, *sustainability* of the project and *impact* on strengthening cooperation on water quality management in Central Asia. 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 original and revised project document. The evaluation will consider to what extent the project (a) strengthened framework for water quality cooperation in Central Asia, and (b) substantive information on water quality in Central Asia jointly produced and made publicly available. 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

There is a concern in Central Asia over declining water quality with implications for human health in shared rivers such as Syr Darya and Amu Darya. However, there is no formal transboundary cooperation on this issue established in Central Asia which makes it difficult to define the magnitude of the problem as well as to efficiently address it.

There is an understanding among the experts of the importance for regional cooperation in water quality. However, weak institutional and human capacity remain the key obstacle to efficiently address water quality management policies in the region.

Based on previous activities the project aimed to reduce the deterioration of water quality through improved basin-wide cooperation on water quality by:

- Establishing and institutionalized cooperation between national authorities of the five/several Central Asian countries responsible for water quality issues;
- and,
- Producing substantive information on water quality in Central Asia and its sharing

To this end the project focused to: establish a Regional Working Group on Water Quality; strengthen cooperation on water quality management with the involvement of regional Central Asian bodies, such as IFAS, ICWC, ICSD and CAREC as well as with national environmental, health and water authorities in countries of Central Asia; and, strengthen information sharing on water quality in the region.

One of the key outcomes achieved by the project is related to the formal establishment of a Regional Working Group (RWG) on Water Quality based on the decision of the CAREC Governing Board. The project supported annual meetings of the RWG, development its annual work plans, drafting the Terms of Reference of the RWG. The project has also facilitated capacity building events, improvement of water quality management processes at the national level and regional levels thereby strengthening transboundary cooperation. Another milestone achieved by the project is the development of 5 national reports on needs assessment and monitoring systems on water quality. The reports provide a deepened analysis of existing national systems on water quality management in 5 countries, assessment of the needs and recommendations for improvement. Based on the national reports a synthesis report will be developed that will provide a regional prospective in addressing water quality issues in the Central Asia.

### **Result 1: Strengthened framework established for water quality cooperation in Central Asia**

Indicator 1 in the Logframe: *The countries have agreed on the mandate of the Regional/Project Working Group on Water Quality*

In December 2017, the Working Group members discussed and drafted the main points to be included in the Terms of Reference of the RWG. The mandate of the RWG, including its mission and circle of responsibilities (ToR) has been drafted and submitted for consideration to the respective institutions of five Central Asian countries. The ToR planned to be endorse at the final RWG meeting scheduled to place in Tashkent in September 2018.

Indicator 2 in the Logframe: *The countries have agreed on the work plan of the Regional/Project Working Group on Water Quality and progressed in implementation*

The November 2016 meeting of RWG prioritized a list of activities on addressing water quality issues as part of the Annual Work Plan of the project. It also included enhancing capacity of professionals responsible for water quality assurance and control in Central Asia. Thus, the project supported a training session on Joint Planning of Transboundary Monitoring Network and Visualization of Data on Water Quality. The 2017 activities plan also included the assessment of needs of national hydrometeorological services on water quality monitoring issues with respect to national and regional interests (information and data, lab-capacities, transboundary cooperation). On the basis of this assessment, five national reports and the synthesis of regional report on water quality and monitoring systems of CA were prepared. Building on the progress of the project in 2017, the RWG members prioritized the following activities that were implemented in the final phase of the project:

- Translation and dissemination of the regional report on needs assessment of water quality monitoring systems in Central Asia;
- Elaboration and endorsement of the mandate of the Regional Working Group on Water Quality in Central Asian countries;
- Organization of a demo-tour to UzHydromet for representatives of respective agencies in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to learn about their methodology of hydrobiological monitoring and its application in Uzbekistan.

Indicator 3 in the Logframe: *The Regional/Project Working Group on Water Quality has been established and is convening*

Following the decision by the Board of CAREC in 2015 the Regional Group on Surface Water Quality was established. In November 2016 the meeting of the water quality experts under the project discussed and agreed upon the need on establishing a permanent body to address the water quality issues at the regional level – a Regional

Working Group on Water Quality in Central Asia. The request has been forwarded to the national agencies in 5 Central Asian countries to nominate their members to the group. At the same meeting the participants prioritized and selected priority activities to address water quality issues to be included in the Annual Work Plan (AWP) of the project. One of the key areas identified was the need to conduct assessment of national water quality management systems in countries including the proposals for improving transboundary cooperation and improving information and data management. The two meetings of the group in 2017 discussed the structure of the national reports, the group's Terms of Reference, the regional synthesis report and the work plan for 2018.

Indicator 4 in the Logframe: *Cooperation on water quality monitoring and data exchange as well as information exchange on national policies exists between the countries of Central Asia*

The seminar on «Strengthening cooperation on water quality in Central Asia» took place back-to-back with the meeting of the Regional Working Group on water quality in November 2016. It was focused on enhancing the capacity of specialists from national agencies of five CA countries through exploring the best practices on water quality monitoring and management in both Central Asia and Eastern Europe. Participants were acquainted with the national monitoring systems in CA countries. During the last 20 years a gradual degradation of water quality systems in the countries was revealed. A poor performance of laboratories is explained by lack of funding and equipment, bottle-necks in the sharing of information and, in some cases, insufficient qualification of lab tech experts. Some positive developments can be observed in the evolving cooperation on water quality between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan building on previous results of the UNECE-CAREC project on Water quality in 2009-2012. The RWG members suggested to focus project activities on transboundary water quality monitoring. Thus, it was decided to conduct another training on joint planning of the transboundary monitoring and visualization of data on water quality. The training took place in December 2017 for representatives of hydrometeorological and environmental agencies of 5 CA countries. Participants learned about international experience in creating goal-oriented transboundary monitoring programs and developed skills in the joint design of monitoring networks. They also learned about the GIS instruments of visualization of water quality data, which help to optimize the analysis of monitoring information and simplify its perception among decision-makers. The final set of activities included: finalization of the ToR of the Regional Working Group; dissemination of the reports on needs assessment of water quality monitoring in Central Asian countries, and a study tour for experience exchange and knowledge sharing.

## **Result 2: Substantive information on water quality in Central Asia jointly produced and made publicly available**

Indicator 2.1 in the Logframe: *Available information on water quality and water quality cooperation in Central Asia, including information developed under the project, has been synthesized*

The project supported the development of assessment of needs of national water quality management systems including the elements of transboundary cooperation in the region. Based on this assessment, the project developed five national reports and a joint regional report on water quality and monitoring systems of Central Asia. In addition to the needs assessment, the reports provide an up-to-date analysis of legal and policy framework for water quality management in the countries of Central Asia. This data is complemented by recommendations to the regional strategy on transboundary monitoring of water quality from the Diagnostic Report, elaborated within the previous UNECE-CAREC project on Water Quality in 2009-2012. The reports were presented and approved at the RWG meeting on December 5, 2017. The reports were also presented at side-events of the Central Asian International Environmental Forum 2018 (CAIEF) in Tashkent.

Indicator 2.2 in the Logframe: *Process to include information on water quality in a database has been initiated by countries*

The project helped to identify and establish links to national sources of water quality information. Establishing a separate database on water quality issues was not feasible since none of the CA countries had the capacity to properly host it. Hence, the respective data on water quality would be presented in the regional e-library at CAREC Knowledge Hub. All regional publications on water quality are accessed through a specific «Water quality» at the e-library.

## **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 with particular focus on Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan?
2. How relevant was the design of the projects, in line with the achievements and outcomes of other initiatives, such as the Swiss Initiative on Blue Peace Central Asia, the World Bank Central Asia Energy and Water Development Program (CAEWDP), USAID project Smart Waters 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 management of transboundary water quality in Central Asia?
4. Has the project improved capacity of key stakeholders to strengthen transboundary water quality monitoring and regional 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 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. To what degree the project influenced the practices of beneficiary countries to further pursue cooperation to improve the quality of water shared water resources?
3. Were the measures to enhance sustainability of project results given sufficient attention during the preparation and implementation phases?
4. Based on the analysis of the other projects and initiatives, such as the Regional Dialogue and Cooperation on Water Resources Management in Central Asia, Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028 initiative, what are the options to further strengthen the cooperation among the Central Asian countries in the water quality management

### **Impact**

1. To what extent have the project impacted on the institutional and technical capacity challenges at the national and regional levels to effectively address regional water quality problems?
2. To what extent the project impacted effective decision-making and information exchange between the countries on water quality?

## **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: the Central Asian Regional Environment Center in Almaty; Blue Peace Central Asia; ED IFAS in Almaty.
3. Some of the interviews, particular with representatives of water management authorities from Central Asian countries, will be conducted by the evaluator at the FIN Water Regional Conference planned for 26-27 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. If the mission to Issyk-kul will not be feasible to arrange the consultant shall undertake another mission (to be defined in consultation with FinWaterWei) to meet and discuss the project and its results with the national and/or regional beneficiaries and experts that were involved in project implementation.
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*