



**UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA
(SPECA)**

SPECA WORK PLAN FOR 2020-2021

**(Ongoing, planned and possible UNECE and ESCAP activities in support of
the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA))**

The activities to be carried out by the SPECA Thematic Working Groups are demand-driven, focused on a limited number of priority topics and matched with available resources.

WATER, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Representatives of the SPECA participating countries agree on importance of the SPECA as a platform to address water, energy and environment in the SPECA region. The Programme is particularly important as it provides an opportunity for the SPECA countries to coherently address the water, energy and environment challenges, issues that are highly interrelated and interdependent in the region. The Declaration adopted at the 10th session of the SPECA Governing Council in 2015 highlighted the role of SPECA as a platform to support progress towards achieving the SDGs through, among others, capacity-building, implementation of regional projects, sharing of best practices and experience. The areas of water, energy and environment are addressed through the Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment that meet annually.

During the 2018 Astana meeting the SPECA Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment requested to explore opportunities to develop a new SPECA Strategy (or a strategic study) on water, energy and environment mainstreaming SDGs and reflecting new development challenges. A Strategy Concept has been drafted and the development of a new Strategy is part of the SPECA Work Plan for 2020-2021.

The 3rd phase of the UNECE Project on capacity-building for cooperation on dam safety aim at strengthening national and regional capacities of the Central Asian countries for development and implementation of the institutional, regulatory and technical frameworks for dam safety. This work builds on previous phases of the project and contributes to: improving legislation, conducting training sessions, strengthening transboundary cooperation and safer operations of individual dams. Discussions will also continue on the development of a subregional agreement on dam safety cooperation.

The European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues in Central Asia project (2019 - 2022), to be implemented by UNECE with the involvement of OECD, aims to ensure continuation and enhancement of the National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and Water Supply and Sanitation under the EU Water Initiative and will be implemented as part of the European Union–Central Asia Water, Environment and Climate Change Cooperation (WECOOP) programme. The objective of the planned activities is to support the

WECOOP programme by enhancing the inter-sectoral coordination for water security primarily at the national level in the Central Asian countries. NPDs are an instrument facilitated jointly by UNECE and OECD since 2006 in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. In Central Asia, the NPD processes were launched in Kazakhstan (2013), Kyrgyzstan (2008), Tajikistan (2009) and Turkmenistan (2010). The project will aim to launch an NPD platform also in Uzbekistan. Support at the national level will be provided through substantive “policy packages” on selected themes in the water domain identified as priorities by countries.

Within the foreseen perspective, fossil fuels in several SPECA countries will continue to dominate energy balances, while other countries will remain reliant on hydropower. At the same time, the necessity to accelerate a move towards a more sustainable energy system based on diversified energy mix is widely acknowledged. Widespread adoption of clean coal technologies, broader use of renewable sources of energy, increase energy efficiency, and hydropower capacities’ upgrades can make a significant contribution towards increasing sustainability.

The project “Integrated energy and water resource management in support of sustainable development in South-East Europe and Central Asia” will assist the beneficiary countries – Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan - to identify and develop best practices and measures to apply a cross-cutting approach to energy and water resource management. More specifically, the proposed project will bring together UNECE internationally applicable framework for the classification, management and reporting of energy and mineral reserves and resources – the United Nations Framework Classification for Fossil Energy and Mineral Reserves and Resources 2009 (UNFC).

The project “Improving national capacities of Central Asian countries to harmonize and implement an internationally applicable system of classification and sustainable management of energy and mineral resources” will improve national capacities of the Central Asian countries to harmonize and implement an internationally applicable system of classification and management of energy and mineral resources. UNECE has developed the United Nations Framework Classification for Resources (UNFC) for the sustainable management of national energy and mineral resource endowments. UNFC is an international best practice that provides the most efficient tool for resource management by identifying interrelations among the social, economic, technological and physical aspects of a resource base. The Central Asian countries are well endowed with natural resources such as petroleum and minerals, as well as uranium and have a significant growth potential for renewable energies. The adoption and use of UNFC is expected to enable better management of natural resources with full considerations for social and environmental impacts.

The project “Enhancing transboundary energy cooperation through introduction of wind and solar energy into power systems of the CIS countries to meet SDG 7” is assisting Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in development of common and transparent rules for the functioning of power markets and the desire of countries to comply with these rules in practice. In particular, the project will help countries to develop and apply common methodological approaches to assessing the potential of renewable energy sources, building and sharing information, the basics and principles for developing regional programmes for developing wind and solar energy, and will foster confidence among countries by encouraging the exchange of information, knowledge and best practices. The project will also promote synergies with other initiatives, for example within the SPECA activities, in the field of economic cooperation and integration.

WATER, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Name of Project/Activity	Timeframe	Budget
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected. These activities would be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners would expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities.		
Organization of regular sessions of the SPECA WG	One per year	UNECE and ESCAP regular budget and extrabudgetary funds
Development of a SPECA Strategy on Water, Energy and Environment	2020-2021	Fund-raising on-going
Capacity-building for cooperation on dam safety in Central Asia (phase 3)	2017-2020	US\$ 302,000 (Funded by the Russian Federation)
European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues in Central Asia	2019-2022	UNECE EUR 600,000 (Funded by the European Union)
Integrated energy and water resource management in support of sustainable development in South-East Europe and Central Asia	2018-2021	UNECE UNDA project US\$ 490,000
Enhancing transboundary energy cooperation through introduction of wind and solar energy into power systems of the CIS countries to support achievement of SDG 7	2018-2020	UNECE US\$ 147,000 (Funded by the Russian Federation)

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT, TRANSIT AND CONNECTIVITY

The annual sessions of the Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity serve as an effective cooperation mechanism to address the specific problems of transit transport from, in and through SPECA countries. Improvement of international transport infrastructure and services will facilitate further integration of SPECA countries into the world economy.

The 24th session of the SPECA Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity (WG-STTC) was held on 18-19 November 2019 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. During the session, Programme of work for 2020-2021 was adopted, including: assistance to SPECA countries in SDGs achievement; organization of regular sessions of the SPECA WG; implementation of subregional projects of common interest to SPECA countries, identification of transport bottlenecks both physical and non-physical, accession to and efficient implementation of UN transport legal instruments, technical assistance for development of efficient transport system, transport infrastructure development promotion, making more efficient transport corridors through simplification/harmonization of border-crossing procedures (including through ICT), and improvement of road safety in the SPECA countries.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT, TRANSIT AND CONNECTIVITY

Name of Project/Activity	Timeframe	Budget
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected. These activities would be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners would expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities.		
Organization of regular sessions of the SPECA WG	One per year	UNECE and ESCAP regular budget and extrabudgetary funds
Enhancing regional connectivity through geographical information system (GIS) - the project will comprise four different components including establishment of a GIS database, preparation of the list of potential investment projects and their prioritization, and two regional studies on “benchmarking of transport construction and maintenance costs” and “establishment of multi-donor RCI financing facilities”.	2018-2021	US\$ 240,000 (total project cost)
Sustainable transport connectivity and implementation of transport related SDGs in selected landlocked and transit/bridging countries (UNDA 11 Tranche) - the main objective of the project, which is led by the UNECE and implemented with the support of ECLAC and ESCWA, will be to provide a tool for LLDCs/transit developing countries to measure their degree of connectivity: both domestically and bilaterally/subregionally as well as in terms of soft and hard infrastructure. Kazakhstan is one of five beneficiary countries.	2018-2021	US\$ 550,200 (total project cost)
Road Safety Performance Review for Kazakhstan	2019-2020	US\$ 80,000
Strengthening the capacity of the Central Asian countries to develop sustainable urban mobility policy on car sharing and car-pooling initiatives – the project will provide the Central Asian countries with a best practice guide on how to set up and regulate car sharing and car-pooling schemes.	2019-2021	US\$ 247,470
The Development Account (11 tranche) Project on Addressing the Transboundary Dimensions of the 2030 Agenda through Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific. The project targets Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia and is a multi-disciplinary project spanning over four years, from 2018 – 2021. The objective of the project is to strengthen capacity of selected countries to develop sustainable and inclusive policies and mechanisms for trans-boundary infrastructure connectivity within the context of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.	2018-2021	US\$ 800,000
The Development Account (12 tranche) Project on Promoting a Shift Towards Sustainable Freight	2020-2023	US\$ 600,000

<p>Transport in the Asia-Pacific Region.</p> <p>The project will assess national transport policies to promote more sustainable transport in selected ESCAP member countries, considering, among others, the existing modal split of freight transport operations between air, maritime, rail, inland waterways and road transport. Based on the national assessments, the project will support the selected member countries in designing and implementing policies to promote sustainable freight transport by: (a) mobilizing political support and strengthening regional cooperation to foster sustainable freight transport and (b) enhancing capacity of stakeholders, particularly, of the transport policymakers to formulate and implement such policies.</p>		
<p>As decided at the Expert Group Meeting on Enhancing Efficiency (Bangkok, 26-27 June 2019) in 2020, the project “Enhancing efficiency of intermodal transport operations in Asia through developing coordination arrangements in support of balanced economic, social and environmental impacts” will focus on International North-South Transport Corridor.</p>	2020	US\$ 197,980
<p>Project on Facilitating the Deployment of Highly and Fully Automated Vehicles in Road Traffic along the Asian Highway Network. The project aims to assist countries in increasing the common understanding the awareness of the use of highly or fully automated vehicles along the international road corridors, as formalized in the Intergovernmental Agreement on Asian Highway Network. The project will identify current technologies, policies and lessons learned from member countries of the Asian Highway Agreement, conduct feasibility study and data analysis to identify the economic, social and environmental benefits of deployment of highly or fully automated vehicles and develop policy recommendations and guidelines on the use of highly or fully automated vehicles along the Asian Highway Network.</p>	2019-2022	US\$ 152,550
<p>Project on strengthening capacity for operationalizing effective transport connectivity along China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridors to achieve the 2030 Agenda</p>	2020	US\$ 249,956
<p>Capacity development on UN Regulations on vehicle safety and on periodical technical inspection of vehicles in view of accession of the SPECA countries to UNECE Agreements (1997 Agreement and 1958 Agreement)</p>	2020-2021	US\$ 30,000
<p>Meetings of the ITC Working Parties will be organized to discuss development of sustainable transport system, connectivity, border-crossing facilitation, road safety, etc.</p>	2020-2021	NA

Meetings of the Working Groups on the Asian Highway, Trans-Asian railway and Dry Ports networks will be organized to discuss issues related to the development of these networks.	2021	N/A
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TRADE DEVELOPMENT

At its thirteenth session (Geneva, 4 July 2019) and fourteenth session (Ashgabat, 19 November 2019), the SPECA Working Group on Trade (WG on Trade) continued working on the following areas of trade: SPECA trade facilitation strategy and implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA); trade and sustainable development in the SPECA subregion; non-tariff measures and barriers to trade; integration into the international rules-based trading system (SDG 17.10); the economic impact of WTO membership, and trade with major partners outside the region; and cooperation among trade negotiators from the SPECA countries. These activities are in compliance with the updated ToR of the SPECA WG on Trade.

The Programme of Work of the WG on Trade for the next two years concentrates on follow-up to the programmatic that the WG on Trade elaborated in 2018-2019: the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy; the Principles for Sustainable Trade; and the research and projects on non-tariff measures and barriers in the SPECA subregion, namely:

1. Develop a Roadmap for implementation of the SPECA Strategy on Trade Facilitation. The countries, with support from the United Nations, to start activities on the implementation of the Strategy. Identify which development partners can be involved (e.g. OSCE, GIZ, ADB, etc.) and engage them in this work.
2. Organize activities on the promotion of the Principles for Sustainable Trade. Draft projects to boost work on sustainable trade in the subregion. In collaboration between UNECE and the countries, continue raising funds for the project proposal “Building Cross-border Cooperation for Sustainable Trade in the SPECA Subregion: Using innovative approaches for the advancement of regional trade” and other projects on the subject.
3. Raise funds and draft studies on non-tariff measures and barriers. Upon approval by the SPECA Governing Council of a SPECA study on non-tariff barriers to trade, raise funds, develop a methodology and prepare the study.
4. Strengthen the network of WTO negotiators from the SPECA countries.
5. Promote the implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of the 2019 SPECA Economic Forum on *Connectivity: Sustainable Trade and Transport Facilitation in the SPECA Subregion*, 20-21 November 2019.
6. Cooperation with other organizations working on trade facilitation: OSCE, CAREC, GIZ, EAEU, etc. For example, there was a proposal to jointly establish expert/working groups with the relevant CAREC expert working groups.

The Programme of Work of the WG on Trade includes the following projects:

TRADE DEVELOPMENT

Name of Project/Activity	Timeframe	Budget
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected. These activities will be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners could expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities		
Strengthening the capacity of SPECA countries for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals <i>(proposal for continuation of this project submitted, waiting for approval by the donor)</i>	2016-2019	US\$ 547,000
Evidence-based trade facilitation measures for economies in transition (UNDA project), in the SPECA countries: support the Government of Kazakhstan in implementing 4 items of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement	2018-2021	US\$ 490,000
Strengthening the capacity of the Central Asian countries to implement trade facilitation measures and better integrate into the international rules-based trading system	2018-2020	US\$ 351,900
Supporting the removal of regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the SPECA countries (project proposal)	2020-2022	US\$ 190,000 - US\$ 400,000

KNOWLEDGE-BASED DEVELOPMENT

Capacity-building on policy options and practical instruments to promote knowledge-based development

Objectives: To strengthen the national capacity of the SPECA countries to advance knowledge-based development by developing relevant substantive skills, increasing the organizational capacity of the institutions involved, promoting regional cooperation and fostering investment in modern infrastructure.

Rationale: The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on KBD as specified in its updated Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of UNECE extrabudgetary funds.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Organization of a regional/subregional capacity-building event on knowledge-based development, possibly in conjunction with the annual session of the WG on KBD (tentatively envisaged for 2021);

- (ii) Participation of experts from the SPECA countries in UNECE policy-oriented meetings and capacity-building events on promoting knowledge-based development for policymakers and practitioners; and
- (iii) Policy advisory services and other events promoting knowledge-based development at the request of Governments of the SPECA countries.

Implementation of the UNECE project on Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews of selected countries

Objectives: To increase the role of innovation in promoting further economic development of the SPECA countries.

Rationale: The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on KBD as specified in its updated Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of UNECE extrabudgetary funds.

Proposed activities: Undertaking Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews and supporting implementation of policy recommendations in selected countries of the SPECA region (envisaged for 2020 and 2021).

Support to SPECA countries to foster innovation to deliver the SDGs

Objectives: Policy advisory support to the SPECA countries to stimulate the private and public sector innovation required to deliver the SDGs.

Rationale: The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on KBD as specified in its updated Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of UNECE extrabudgetary funds.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Capacity-building activities upon request from SPECA countries, for example on integrating innovation policies into national strategies for sustainable development and supporting participation of the SPECA countries in wider UN initiatives in support of the 2030 Agenda; and
- (ii) Development of a SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development, identifying innovative joint initiatives between SPECA countries with potential to support delivery of 2030 Agenda within the subregion.

Implementation of the ESCAP activities in support to the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Initiative

Objectives: To enhance regional cooperation and strengthen connectivity through implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Initiative.

Rationale: The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on KBD as specified in its updated Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of ESCAP extrabudgetary funds.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Participation of stakeholders (policymakers, senior officials and private sector) from the SPECA countries in the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Committee meetings;
- (ii) Participation of stakeholders (policymakers, senior officials and private sector) from the SPECA countries in subregional Steering Group meeting(s) of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway;
- (iii) Participation of stakeholders (policymakers, senior officials and private sector) from the SPECA countries to the Expert Group Meetings and Subregional Capacity Development Workshop (planned in Kazakhstan) and National workshops (planned in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan);
- (iv) Subregional and national reports on Fibre-optic cable co-deployment to explore fibre-optic route diversification capitalizing on opportunities created by infrastructure sharing and co-deployment; and
- (v) Study on Operation Models of Trans-Border Terrestrial Cable Networks for the Implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway to foster building of consensus on cross-border, cross-sectoral fibre optic co-deployment.

Enhancing national capacities to use ICT for socio-economic development

Objectives: To enhance the capacities of policymakers, government officials and other relevant stakeholders to promote, adopt and utilize ICT for achieving national sustainable development goals.

Rationale: The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on KBD as specified in its updated Terms of Reference. The activities will be funded through the extrabudgetary resources of APCICT and co-funding mobilized through national and subregional partners.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Conduct capacity-building workshops on APCICT's flagship ICT for development programmes (e.g. training on Data-Driven Governance in Kazakhstan, tentative envisaged for last quarter of 2019);
- (ii) Development of localized versions of the APCICT training modules, targeted at SPECA countries;
- (iii) Provide advisory services to SPECA countries in areas related to ICT for socio-economic development, subject to funding and resource availability; and
- (iv) Conduct capacity-building workshops on the application of ICT tools for renewable energy resource assessments at the national level in the SPECA countries, subject to funding and resource availability (APCTT).

Capacity development on the utilization of ICT and GIS for disaster risk reduction

Objectives: Develop knowledge-based tools for disaster risk management and strengthen resilience into development policy and planning of SPECA countries.

Rationale: The project contributes to the objectives of the WG on KBD as specified in the updated Terms of Reference, in particular to the objective of knowledge-based disaster risk reduction and management. Implementation will be financed from the ESCAP extrabudgetary funds.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Assist SPECA countries to use decision making tools for drought monitoring and early warning;
- (ii) KOICA-ESCAP Fellowship Programme: capacity-building drought monitoring; and early warning by using geospatial information systems (GIS).
- (iii) ESCAP provides continued support on disaster risk reduction by promoting innovative technology applications including ICT and GIS.

Strengthen institutional capacity on integrating geospatial and statistical data, with a focus on land accounts in Central Asia

Objectives: Enhance the institutional capacity of the Central Asian countries to integrate geospatial and statistical information to develop land accounts.

Rationale: The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on KBD to support land-related SDG challenges including disaster risk reduction as specified in the updated Terms of Reference.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Conduct assessment of country profile on land accounts with a diagnostic tool and template (patterned after ESCAP's environment statistics diagnostic tool) to identify policy priorities, available information, data sources, stakeholders and institutional mechanisms necessary to develop or strengthen the land accounts;
- (ii) Organize an inception regional workshop and expert group meetings to discuss preliminary estimates of assessment on country land accounts in the Central Asia region, and assist capacity-building on using the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) and the framework for integration of the geospatial and statistical information; and
- (iii) Organize a policy forum to share key findings and methodologies to assess disaster-related SDGs implementations.

KNOWLEDGE-BASED DEVELOPMENT		
Name of Project/Activity	Lead Executive Agency	Timeframe
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected. These activities would be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners would expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities.		
Capacity-building on policy options and practical instruments to promote knowledge-based development	UNECE	2019-2021
Implementation of the UNECE project on Innovation for	UNECE	2019-2021

Sustainable Development Reviews of selected countries		
Support to SPECA countries to foster innovation to deliver the SDGs	UNECE	2019-2021
Implementation of ESCAP activities in support to the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Initiative	ESCAP	2019-2021
Enhancing national capacities to use ICT for socio-economic development	ESCAP	2019-2021
Capacity development on the utilization of ICT and GIS for disaster risk reduction	ESCAP	2019-2021
Strengthen institutional capacity on integrating geospatial and statistical data, with a focus on land accounts in Central Asia	ESCAP	2019-2021

GENDER AND SDGs

Noting the progress and challenges in the implementation of programmes and strategies to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women – SDG 5 as well as in the cross-cutting areas of the SDGs, the participants from the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs reiterated the need to continue the exchange of experience and best practices within the SPECA countries in the following areas:

- Strengthening regional (within the SPECA) cooperation to develop and implement coherent gender-transformative policies aiming at increasing the employment of women in public and private sectors in their respective countries through a range of development-oriented policies ensuring decent job creation for women and men with equal pay for equal work, education and training to develop skills and knowledge of women, breaking stereotypes in education, innovations in all spheres of work.
- Developing and implementing gender responsive budgeting as a tool to improve the results of budgets in general, and gender equality and women’s empowerment in particular.
- Introducing special policies in areas and regions where poverty is widespread and persists, in particular in rural areas.
- Promoting further policies and mechanisms for financial support for women entrepreneurship development that should be accompanied by the provision of capacity-building opportunities, such as financial and business literacy trainings, network building and information sharing; it has to include new financial schemes and innovations as well as areas to support women’s engagement in new sectors the economy, reducing the existing segregation in labour participation.
- Producing systematically and regular sex-disaggregated and gender data, including for poverty, employment, education and entrepreneurship needs; time-use surveys to be used for recognising gender gaps, in particular in unpaid care and developing policies to eliminate those gaps.
- Strengthening the partnership with the private sector across a wide range of activities.

- Continue to explore opportunities for joint projects in the area of women's economic empowerment, including entrepreneurship development and cooperation, and other areas within the identified areas of common interest and objectives of the Working Group as reflected in the updated Terms of References of the Group.
- Contribute to the involvement of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs in subregional projects, meetings, conferences and workshop in any of the above areas.

Other activities include:

Beijing+25 Global Review meeting at the 64th session of the CSW

The participants of the WGG agreed to organise a joint side event at the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women to be held in New York in March 2020.

Capacity-Building for women entrepreneurs (4 workshops)

Building on the successful cooperation with the Centre for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel and the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre since 2006, training workshops in support of women's entrepreneurship in Central Asia are expected to continue in 2020 and 2021.

Meetings for Women Entrepreneurs

Initiated by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs to the Republic of Azerbaijan, a conference is planned for 2020 which will focus on exchanging experience, practices and ideas for strengthening networking and communication of women entrepreneurs.

Further activities, including meetings on bilateral basis for exchange of experience between the SPECA countries as well as joint projects at subregional level within the above areas of work are subject to funds availability.
