

Closure Stage Quality Assurance Report

Overall Project Rating: Exemplary

Project Number : 00086627

Project Title : The overall objective of the Project is to contribute to the long-term environmental sustainability and inclusive economic development.

Project Date : 01-Jan-2015

Strategic

Quality Rating: Exemplary

1. Did the project pro-actively take advantage of new opportunities and adapt its theory of change to respond to changes in the development context, including changing national priorities? (select the option from 1-3 which best reflects this project)

- 3: The project team regularly completed and documented a comprehensive horizon scanning exercise to identify new opportunities and changes in the development context that required adjustments in the theory of change. There is clear evidence that the project board considered the scanning and its implications, and documented changes to the project's RRF, partnerships, etc. made in response, as appropriate. (both must be true to select this option)
- 2: The project team has undertaken some horizon scanning over the life of the project to identify new opportunities and changes in the development context. The project board discussed the scanning and its implications for the project, as reflected in the board minutes. There is some evidence that the project took action as a result, but changes may not have been fully integrated in the project's theory of change, RRF, partnerships, etc. (all must be true to select this option)
- 1: The project team may have considered new opportunities and changes in the development context since implementation began, but this has not been discussed in the project board. There is limited to no evidence that the project team has considered changes to the project as a result. This option should also be selected if no horizon scanning took place during project implementation.

Evidence

A horizon scanning exercise is being implemented by the Project on regular basis to timely identify and follow the contextual and national priorities changes. In the past year, the following activities have been initiated: a) Kazakhstan's Green Economy Concept update; b) amendments on SEA and EIA to the Environmental Code; c) Assessment of the situation in the transboundary Small and Big Uzen rivers. All these initiatives have allowed to identify new challenges and opportunities in the water sector to address such main problem issues as country's ability to maintain development gains despite the economic slowdown and to sustain its position as international facilitator of regional dialogues. The results of the studies and relevant recommendations were provided to the national stakeholders, the Project management Unit and considered in the work plan of the Project.

2. Was the project aligned with the thematic focus of the Strategic Plan? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

- 3: The project responded to one of the three areas of development work as specified in the Strategic Plan. It addressed at least one of the proposed new and emerging areas and implementation was consistent with the issues-based analysis incorporated into the project. The project's RRF included all the relevant SP output indicators. (all must be true to select this option)
- 2: The project responded to one of the three areas of development work as specified in the Strategic Plan. The project's RRF included at least one SP output indicator, if relevant. (both must be true to select this option)
- 1: While the project may have responded to one of the three areas of development work as specified in the Strategic Plan, it was based on a sectoral approach without addressing the complexity of the development issue. None of the relevant SP indicators were included in the project's RRF. This option is also selected if the project did not respond to any of the three SP areas of development work.

Evidence

The Project was aligned with SP output 2.5.1" Solutions developed, financed and applied at scale for energy efficiency and transformation to clean energy and zero-carbon development, for poverty eradication and structural transformation". Project RRF

outputs, targets and indicators contributed to SP indicator 2.5.1.1 "Number of countries with strengthened capacities for achieving energy transformation at scale"

3. Evidence generated through the project was explicitly used to confirm or adjust the programme/CPD's theory of change during implementation.

- Yes
- No

Evidence

The analytical activities implemented within the Project have demonstrated the great potential of the water sector to contribute significantly to economic growth and sustainable development of the country, confirming the UNDP's CPD's theory of change. Thus, the implementation of sustainable business models developed by the Project for five pilot projects will provide not only sound environmental and social impact, but also economic payback and profitability of such undertakings. Within a business model for a pilot water disposal project in the Akshi village of the Yenbekshi-Kazakh District of the Almaty Oblast, launched in the summer of 2018, a cooperative of the Akshi village local community and large water users was established. The cooperative now not only maintains newly reconstructed by the Project drainage system, but started their own business on the premises of the village disposal system (gathering pond and allotted land plot). A part of greenhouse business profit is being used to maintain drainage system. A similar approach was applied to develop a prototype business model to ensure the sustainability of operations, maintenance and financing of hydraulic structures, which are strategic elements of country water infrastructure. Based on a review of existing «Business Models for hydraulic structures», the Project developed a business model for the Kargaly water reservoir, generating revenues to cover the costs for operation and maintenance of infrastructure, which will make such objects attractive for the private investors. Feasibility study «Multipurpose use of Karagaly water reservoir» has been developed and submitted to the respective national authorities for approval. The Aktobe branch of KazVodKhoz RSE initiated the process of potential investors attraction for this project. Thus, the request for budget funds was submitted to the region Maslikhat consideration, negotiations with private sector are under way.

Relevant

Quality Rating: Exemplary

4. Were the project's targeted groups systematically identified and engaged, with a priority focus on the excluded and marginalized, to ensure the project remained relevant for them? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

- 3: *Systematic and structured feedback was collected regularly from a representative sample of beneficiaries, with a priority focus on the excluded and marginalized, as part of the project's monitoring system. Representatives from the targeted group were active members of the project's governance mechanism (i.e., project board or equivalent) and there is credible evidence that their feedback informed decision making. (all must be true to select this option)*
- 2: Targeted groups were engaged in implementation and monitoring, with a priority focus on the excluded and marginalized. Beneficiary feedback, which may be anecdotal, was collected regularly to ensure the project addressed local priorities. This information was used to inform project decision making. (all must be true to select this option)
- 1: Some beneficiary feedback may have been collected, but this information did not inform project decision making. This option should also be selected if no beneficiary feedback was collected.
- Not Applicable

Evidence

The Project systematically engages different groups of society to participate in the implementation of Project's activities. Most of the projects of the Grant Program were focused on the excluded and marginalized groups (orphans and children from low-income families, the elderly and disabled, rural communities etc.) and the Projects' regular reporting system allowed to monitor and use their feedback in decision making process. Representation of these social groups on the decision making level was provided through the participation of respective NGOs in the Project's technical workshops as well. Within Akshi pilot project representatives of the villagers including marginalized were active members of project's governance mechanism through community council.

5. Did the project generate knowledge, particularly lessons learned (i.e., what has worked and what has not) – and has this knowledge informed management decisions and changes/course corrections to ensure the continued relevance of the project towards its stated objectives, the quality of its outputs and the management of risk? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

3: *Knowledge and lessons learned (gained, for example, from Peer Assists, After Action Reviews or Lessons Learned Workshops) backed by credible evidence from evaluation, analysis and monitoring were regularly discussed in project board meetings and reflected in the minutes. There is clear evidence that the project's theory of change was adjusted, as needed, and changes were made to the project to ensure its continued relevance. (both must be true to select this option)*

2: Knowledge and lessons learned backed by relatively limited evidence, drawn mainly from within the project, were considered by the project team. There is some evidence that changes were made to the project as a result to ensure its continued relevance. (both must be true to select this option)

1: There is limited or no evidence that knowledge and lessons learned were collected by the project team. There is little or no evidence that this informed project decision making.

Evidence

The Lessons learned Report 2018 reflects the emerging challenges and lessons learnt in the past year. Findings, such as the problem to form the executive documentation correctly at the stage of completion and commissioning of the facility within pilot projects, which was encountered by all contractors and which has been integrated into the Projects annual work plan and its activities as reflected in the narrative reports 2018.

6. Were the project's special measures (through outputs, activities, indicators) to address gender inequalities and empower women relevant and produce the intended effect? If not, were evidence-based adjustments and changes made? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

3: *The project team systematically gathered data and evidence on the relevance of the special measures in addressing gender inequalities and empowering women. Analysis of data and evidence were used to inform adjustments and changes, as appropriate. (both must be true to select this option)*

2: The project team had some data and evidence on the relevance of the special measures in addressing gender inequalities and empowering women. There is evidence that at least some adjustments were made, as appropriate. (both must be true to select this option)

1: The project team had limited or no evidence on the relevance of the special measures in addressing gender inequalities and empowering women. No evidence that adjustments and/or changes were made, as appropriate. This option should also be selected if the project had no special measures in addressing gender inequalities and empowering women relevant to project results and activities.

Evidence

The gender equality and women empowering issues have been addressed within the four pilot projects of the Project. The gender analysis has been implemented within the social impact evaluation of four pilot projects, where gender component was seen through the qualification and involvement of the women in pilots construction, exploitation lens.

7. Was the project sufficiently at scale, or is there potential to scale up in the future, to meaningfully contribute to development change? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

3: *There is credible evidence that the project reached a sufficient number of beneficiaries (either directly through significant coverage of target groups, or indirectly, through policy change) to meaningfully contribute to development change.*

2: While the project was not considered at scale, there are explicit plans in place to scale up the initiative in the future (e.g. by extending its coverage in a second phase or using project results to advocate for policy change).

1: The project was not at scale, and there are no plans currently to scale up the initiative in the future.

Evidence

To provide a meaningful contribution to development change the Project supports legal and institutional framework optimization

(Green Economy Concept update, policy review and recommendations on tariffs etc.), facilitates the wide involvement in the Project's activities of decision-makers, developing and implementing natural resources and «green» economy policies (through participation in the Project board as well), provides capacity building trainings for the civil servants (including A, B corps), representatives of research institutions, NGOs. Thus, the Project reaches all the beneficiaries through the activities on the national level. On the regional level Project implemented pilot projects to demonstrate quick and practical solutions for optimizing water use through «green» technologies and practices deployment (4 pilot projects, 11 Grant Program projects, 8 regions of Kazakhstan).

Social & Environmental Standards

Quality Rating: Exemplary

8. Did the project seek to further the realization of human rights using a human rights-based approach? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

- 3: *There is credible evidence that the project aimed to further the realization of human rights, on the basis of applying a human rights based approach. Any potential adverse impacts on enjoyment of human rights were actively identified, managed and mitigated through the project's management of risks. (all must be true to select this option)*
- 2: There is some evidence that the project aimed to further the realization of human rights. Potential adverse impacts on the enjoyment of human rights were identified and adequately mitigated through the project's management of risks. (both must be true to select this option)
- 1: There is no evidence that the project aimed to further the realization of human rights. There is limited to no evidence that potential adverse impacts on the enjoyment of human rights were managed.

Evidence

Guaranteed access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a basic human right. The pilot projects implementation provided access to drinking water to more than 1 000 people. Please refer to the attachment in Q2

9. Were social and environmental impacts and risks (including those related to human rights, gender and environment) successfully managed and monitored in accordance with the project document and relevant action plans? (for projects that have no social and environmental risks the answer is "Yes")

- Yes
- No

Evidence

The Project does not have any social or environmental risks.

10. Were any unanticipated social and environmental issues or grievances that arose during implementation assessed and adequately managed, with relevant management plans updated? (for projects that did not experience unanticipated social and environmental risks or grievances the answer is "Yes")

- Yes
- No

Evidence

The Project does not have any social or environmental risks.

Management & Monitoring

Quality Rating: Exemplary

11. Was the project's M&E Plan adequately implemented? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

- 3: Progress data against indicators in the project's RRF was reported regularly using highly credible data sources and collected according to the frequency stated in the project's M&E plan, including sex disaggregated data as relevant. Evaluations, if conducted, fully met decentralized evaluation standards, including gender UNEG standards, and management responses were fully implemented. Lessons learned, including during evaluations, were used to take corrective actions when necessary. (all must be true to select this option)
- 2: Progress data against indicators in the project's RRF was collected on a regular basis, although there may have been some slippage in following the frequency stated in the project's M&E plan and data sources were not always reliable. Any evaluations conducted meet most decentralized evaluation standards; management responses were fully implemented to the extent possible. Lessons learned have been captured but not used to take collective actions. (all must be true to select this option)
- 1: Progress data either was not collected against the indicators in the project's RRF, or limited data was collected but not regularly; evaluations did not meet decentralized evaluation standards; and/or lessons learned were rarely captured and used.

Evidence

The project implementation is in line with the M&E plan of the project document. M&E is being reviewed and regularly updated within the Atlas project management module. Systematic reporting on the project results is made on the quarterly basis. The results are reflected in the annual progress reports and lessons learnt reports (attached to Q5).

12. Did the project's governance mechanism (i.e., the project board or equivalent) function as intended? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

- The project's governance mechanism operated very well, and is a model for other projects. It met in the agreed frequency stated in the project document and the minutes of the meetings are all on file. There was regular (at least annual) progress reporting to the project board or equivalent on results, risks and opportunities. It is clear that the project board explicitly reviewed and used evidence, including progress data, knowledge, lessons and evaluations, as the basis for informing management decisions (e.g., change in strategy, approach, work plan.) (all must be true to select this option)
- The project's governance mechanism met in the agreed frequency and minutes of the meeting are on file. A project progress report was submitted to the project board or equivalent at least once per year, covering results, risks and opportunities. (both must be true to select this option)
- The project's governance mechanism did not meet in the frequency stated in the project document, and/or the project board or equivalent did not function as a decision making body for the project as intended.

Evidence

A Project Board monitored and analyzed the project implementation process and provided recommendations on the most effective project implementation strategy to ensure that the Project results achieved, and related activities are coordinated. Project Board meetings take place once a year. The project invites to the project board meetings representatives of non-governmental organizations and other project stakeholders closely involved in the project implementation. The project team involved all interested parties through regular working meetings and evaluation committee meetings for the pilot projects throughout the year. Please see related evidence in Q 21

13. Were risks to the project adequately monitored and managed? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

- 3: The project actively monitored risks every quarter including consulting with key stakeholders at least annually to identify continuing and emerging risks to project implementation and to assess if the main assumptions remain valid. There is clear evidence that relevant management plans and mitigating measures were fully implemented to address each key project risk, and some evidence that risk mitigation has benefitted performance. (all must be true to select this option)
- 2: The project monitored risks every quarter, as evidenced by a regularly updated risk log. Some updates were made to management plans and mitigation measures. (both must be true to select this option)

1: The risk log was not updated every quarter as required. There may be some evidence that the project monitored risks that could have affected the project's achievement of results, but there is no explicit evidence that management actions were taken to mitigate risks. The project's performance was disrupted by factors that could have been anticipated or managed.

Evidence

The risks were monitored, managed and updated on a quarterly basis. Project team took all necessary mitigation measures. Risk log was updated on a regular basis in the Atlas project management module.

Efficient

Quality Rating: Exemplary

14. Adequate resources were mobilized to achieve intended results. If not, management decisions were taken to adjust expected results in the project's results framework.

- Yes
- No

Evidence

The project received the donor (EU) contribution in line with the funding agreement in full amount.

15. Were project inputs procured and delivered on time to efficiently contribute to results? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

- 3: *The project had a procurement plan and kept it updated. Implementation of the plan was generally on or ahead of schedule. On a quarterly basis, the project reviewed operational bottlenecks to procuring inputs in a timely manner and addressed them through appropriate management actions. (all must be true to select this option)*
- 2: The project had a procurement plan and kept it updated. The project annually reviewed operational bottlenecks to procuring inputs in a timely manner and addressed them through appropriate management actions. (all must be true to select this option)
- 1: The project did not have an updated procurement plan. The project team may have reviewed operational bottlenecks to procuring inputs regularly, however management actions were not taken to address them. This option is also selected if operational bottlenecks were not reviewed during the project in a timely manner.

Evidence

As per General conditions of the financial agreement procurement is not allowed during the last year of the Project.

16. Was there regular monitoring and recording of cost efficiencies, taking into account the expected quality of results? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

- 3: *There is evidence that the project regularly reviewed costs against relevant comparators (e.g., other projects or country offices) or industry benchmarks to ensure the project maximized results delivered with given resources. The project actively coordinated with other relevant ongoing projects and initiatives (UNDP or other) to ensure complementarity and sought efficiencies wherever possible (e.g. joint activities.) (both must be true to select this option)*
- 2: The project monitored its own costs and gave anecdotal examples of cost efficiencies (e.g., spending less to get the same result,) but there was no systematic analysis of costs and no link to the expected quality of results delivered. The project communicated with a few other projects to coordinate activities. (both must be true to select this option)
- 1: There is little or no evidence that the project monitored its own costs and considered ways to save money beyond following standard procurement rules. It is not clear that the link between cost savings and quality of results was made.

Evidence

The cost efficiency was ensured mainly through the procurement activities. This was achieved by application of the corporate rules and standards of UNDP.

Effective

Quality Rating: Exemplary

17. Is there evidence that project outputs contributed to the achievement of programme outcomes?

- Yes
- No

Evidence

The final narrative report is attached under Q 14.

18. The project delivered its expected outputs.

- Yes
- No

Evidence

The project fully achieved its expected results.

19. Were there regular reviews of the work plan to ensure that the project was on track to achieve the desired results, and to inform course corrections if needed? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

- 3: *Quarterly progress data informed regular reviews of the project work plan to ensure that the activities implemented were most likely to achieve the desired results. There is evidence that data and lessons learned (including from evaluations) were used to inform course corrections, as needed. (both must be true to select this option)*
- 2: There was at least one review of the work plan each year with a view to assessing if project activities were on track to achieving the desired development results (i.e., outputs.) There is no evidence that data or lessons learned were used to inform the review(s).
- 1: While the project team may have reviewed the work plan at least once per year to ensure outputs were delivered on time, no link was made to the delivery of desired development results. Select this option also if no regular review of the work plan by management took place.

Evidence

The Project monitored its Annual work plan and achievement of relevant indicators to ensure the Project's objectives to be delivered in line with the approved plan. To overcome emerging challenges and to respond to changes in the development context the Project quarterly revised the annual work plans, indicators achievement plan to adjust it accordingly. Indicators achievement plan and final donor narrative report are attached under Q 14.

20. Were the intended targeted groups systematically identified and engaged, prioritizing the marginalized and excluded, to ensure results were achieved as expected? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

- 3: *Targeted groups were systematically identified using credible data sources on their capacity needs, deprivation and/or exclusion from development opportunities relevant to the project's area of work. There is clear evidence to confirm that targeted groups were reached as intended. The project engaged regularly with targeted groups to assess whether they benefitted as expected and adjustments were made if necessary to refine targeting. (all must be true to select this option)*

- 2: The project targeted specific groups and/or geographic areas, based on some evidence of their capacity needs, deprivation and/or exclusion from development opportunities relevant to the project's area of work. Some evidence is provided to confirm that project beneficiaries were members of the targeted groups. There was some engagement with beneficiaries to assess whether they benefitted as expected. (all must be true to select this option)
- 1: The project did not report on specific targeted groups, or there is no evidence to confirm that project beneficiaries have capacity needs or are populations deprived and/or excluded from development opportunities relevant to the project's area of work. There may have been some engagement with beneficiaries to assess whether they benefitted as expected, but not regularly.
- Not Applicable

Evidence

The Project kept focus on the excluded and marginalized groups and the Projects' regular reporting system allowed to monitor and use their feedback to adjust Project's activities if needed. The Grant Program provided orphans and children from low-income families, the elderly and disabled of 10 social facilities in the East Kazakhstan Oblast with access to hot water, 1500 students, 300 teachers of eight schools of the Aral region as well as residents of surrounding areas, more than 1200 villagers of the South-Kazakhstan Oblast - with drinking water, mobilization and capacity building of rural communities in South Kazakhstan resulted in the creation of profitable greenhouse business with sound environmental and social impact. Geographically, activities of the Project cover all the regions of Kazakhstan, including the water-scarce Kyzorda oblast where oasis irrigation pilot project demonstrates the possibilities of «green» technologies to release an unsuitable saline land for the agricultural use.

21. Were at least 40 per cent of the personnel hired by the project, regardless of contract type, female?

- Yes
- No

Evidence

50% male and 50% female

Sustainability & National Ownership

Quality Rating: Highly Satisfactory

22. Were stakeholders and partners fully engaged in the decision-making, implementation and monitoring of the project? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

- 3: Only national systems (i.e., procurement, monitoring, evaluation, etc.) were to fully implement and monitor the project. All relevant stakeholders and partners were fully and actively engaged in the process, playing a lead role in project decision-making, implementation and monitoring. (all must be true to select this option)
- 2: *National systems (i.e., procurement, monitoring, evaluation, etc.) were used in combination with other support (such as country office support or project systems) to implement and monitor the project, as needed. All relevant stakeholders and partners were actively engaged in the process, playing an active role in project decision-making, implementation and monitoring. (both must be true to select this option)*
- 1: There was relatively limited or no engagement with national stakeholders and partners in the decision-making, implementation and/or monitoring of the project.
- Not Applicable

Evidence

The national stakeholders are fully engaged into the decision-making and monitoring of the project through active participation in project boards, working consultations, and assessment of the annual work plans, independent evaluation of the procurement activities, etc. UNDP provides the support in project operations and oversight activities as indicated in the Agreement and outlined in the ProDoc.

23. Were there regular monitoring of changes in capacities and performance of institutions and systems, and were the implementation arrangements adjusted according to changes in partner capacities? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

- 3: Changes in capacities and performance of national institutions and systems were regularly and comprehensively assessed/monitored using clear indicators, rigorous methods of data collection and credible data sources. There is clear evidence that capacities and performance of national institutions and systems improved by the end of the project, if applicable. Implementation arrangements were formally reviewed and adjusted, if needed, in agreement with partners according to changes in partner capacities. (all must be true to select this option)
- 2: Aspects of changes in capacities and performance of relevant national institutions and systems were monitored by the project using indicators and reasonably credible data sources. There is limited evidence that capacities and performance of national institutions and systems improved by the end of the project, if applicable. Some adjustment was made to implementation arrangements if needed to reflect changes in partner capacities. (all must be true to select this option)
- 1: Some aspects of changes in capacities and performance of relevant national institutions and systems may have been monitored by the project, however changes to implementation arrangements were not considered. Also select this option if changes in capacities and performance of relevant national institutions and systems were not monitored by the project.
- Not Applicable

Evidence

not applicable

24. Were the transition and phase-out arrangements implemented as planned by the end of the project, taking into account any adjustments made to the plan during implementation? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

- 3: *The project's governance mechanism regularly reviewed the project's sustainability plan, including arrangements for transition and phase-out, to ensure the project remained on track in meeting the requirements set out by the plan. The plan was implemented as planned by the end of the project, taking into account any adjustments made during implementation. (both must be true to select this option)*
- 2: There was a review of the project's sustainability plan, including arrangements for transition and phase-out, to ensure the project remained on track in meeting the requirements set out by the plan. The plan was implemented by the end of the project, taking into account any adjustments made during implementation. (both must be true to select this option)
- 1: The project may have had a sustainability plan that specified arrangements for transition and phase-out, but there was no review of this strategy after it was developed. Also select this option if the project did not have a sustainability strategy.

Evidence

To provide for a continuous sustainability of the Project results and in order to consider the necessary actions for further integrating local communities and/or national or regional partner organizations, an exit strategy has been developed by the Project. Based on this strategy every activity or pilot initiative of the Project was designed and implemented in accordance with the understanding of subsequently ending both external financial support and providing expert support, thus transferring the responsibility to an enabled local partner in a manner consistent with the objective of producing sustainable development outcomes.

25. Please upload the final lessons learned report that was produced for this project.

Summary/Final Project Board Comments:

The final Project Board endorsed the project completed as successfully achieved its targets and objectives.