

Closure Stage Quality Assurance Report

Overall Project Rating: **Satisfactory**

Project Number : 00074802

Project Title : Strengthening Ecosystem Resilience and Community Adaptive Capacity in Climate Affected River Basins in DPRK(SERCARB)

Project Date : 01-Jun-2013

Strategic

Quality Rating: **Satisfactory**

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

The theory of change and RRF of the project are comprehensive, meeting the national priority needs, whilst slight modifications are done in the detailed process of project implementation based on consultations with local partners, with endorsement in the PSC meetings, which generally review project progress and plans, addressing issues, and finding solutions, including adjustment of some output indicators. In December 2016, a thorough review of the project was undertaken with external support, also looking critically at baselines, targets and indicators, and making specific recommendations for replication of pilot initiatives under the project. The review report confirmed the relevance of the project and recommended an extension of the project for 2 years, with an increased budget of about USD 5 M, and a geographical expansion beyond existing project sites. However, such a recommendation is not possible to be implemented at this stage due to the pending approval of new or extension of old CPD.

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 responds to one area of the UNDP corporate SP, i.e. "Resilience building". The RRF of the project also includes two SP output indicators: "Number of preparedness plans" and; "Number of EWs". In Atlas, the project has been linked with CPD Outcomes

5, output 5.4, which is also aligned to the SP.

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 draft CPD 2017-2021 makes explicit reference to the 2015 Baseline Survey Report produced by the CASE-Centre for Economic Research, as part of the Pilot Project to Support Socio-Economic Development of Rural Areas in DPRK (SED) and Strengthening Ecosystem Resilience and Community Adaptive Capacity in Climate Affected River Basins (SERCARB), to demonstrate that rural households have some opportunities to produce or obtain surplus nutritious food for self-consumption or sale. The new CPD was however not approved, as the previous programme cycle (2011-2015 was extended for one year in 2016, whilst in 2017 the project has been operated under a no-CPD situation.

Relevant

Quality Rating: Satisfactory

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 enhanced/enhances most vulnerable local communities' resilience to disaster. It has supported communities capacities in the Ris (villages), including Sloping Land User Groups (SLUGs) whose members are mostly women, forest management board members and its affiliated offices in Ris. Field Monitoring Visit reports have collected evidence-based information and feedback from beneficiaries addressing needs of local communities, which was further confirmed by the project review. Access to beneficiaries is however limited in DPRK, making systematic feedback arduous. The information collected was nevertheless used to inform the project decision making, including the Project Steering Committee.

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

With clearly defined indicators, the project monitored and reported them, among others, during the mandatory FMVs and projects' progress reports. They were presented at PSC meetings, as/if necessary. In addition, in December 2016, a thorough review of the project was undertaken, feeding into recommendations for adjustments and possible further extension.

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 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 project, by design, and throughout its implementation, is primarily focusing on women's empowerment. The project has a focus on gender equity issues across all its components, including in the governance and coordination structures being established. Priority is given to the participation of women, particularly in livelihood and income generation activities at the site level. Typical example of this is the Awareness Center where women are regularly trained, and their capacities built. The members of the Sloping Land User Groups, the primary targeted beneficiaries of the project, are mostly women. Data and evidence collected have served to adjust the project during implementation.

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

As the project was implemented at initial 2 pilot sites (Pakchon county & Kaechon city), another site was later on selected (Taechon county) to scale up, building on the success of the project implementation. Five project pilot sites / communities were identified. The review of the project in 2016 has positively concluded to the potential for scaling up 10 -15 communities for possible replication, within the same river basin and an adjacent river basin

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

The project contributed to some degree the improvement of the rights of local population to the improved environment, reduced disasters, and enhanced livelihood. No potential adverse impacts on human rights identified.

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

No major social and environmental impacts and risks (including those related to human rights, gender and environment) have been identified in the project document.

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 did not experience unanticipated social and environmental issues or grievances to date. However, the impact of natural disasters such as the floods in the North-Eastern part of the country in 2015 and 2016, by demonstrating the relevance of the project activities, has been taken into account in the recommendations for extension of the project.

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 has a comprehensive RRF including indicators, baselines and targets, of which the Planning matrix for monitoring has been integrated and monitored as part of AWP, FMVs. Progress from these are being reported quarterly (QPR and PSC meetings) and annually (APPR).

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

Operating under the DIM modality, PSC meetings, chaired by the DRR, are convened on quarterly basis, and provide overall guidance to the project in its implementation and planning. Project reports have been submitted on a quarterly basis, and were presented at PSC meetings, effectively assessing results, risks and opportunities.

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

Risk log is updated on quarterly basis by program, project team which was reported in PSC meeting and reflected in Atlas. Risks, as/when necessary have been escalated by M&ES to appropriate levels via the quarterly programme monitoring report.

Efficient

Quality Rating: Satisfactory

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

Financial resources and staffing were allocated to the project to implement its activities in a scale that is adequate to produce the outputs, and contribute meaningfully to the objectives. The constraints in which the UNDP CO has been operating (e.g. cash conservation mode due to recurring closure of banking channel for funds transfer to DPRK) have however prevented the project from fully using those resources, resulting in the re-phasing of project funds to 2017 (no-cost extension), which enabled the basic completion of all project activities and achievement of the project's intended results.

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

The procurement plan was updated on regular basis (quarterly & annually). There were however severe constraints need for clearance by the Sanctions Committee, increasingly stringent internal procedures for procurement in DPRK, and disruption of banking channels, beyond the control of the project, thus hampering the ability of the project to always deliver the expected results as planned.

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

Cost efficiencies are hard to measure in the context of DPRK and a planned economy where the concept of goods and services is different. Further, because of sanctions and delays in procurement, the cost of delivering of project results has been relatively high, making its efficiency questionable. However effort was made by the CO to save cost e.g. through having only one (1) PM for two relevant projects. The project has conducted a review whose recommendations supports improvement of cost-efficiency in designing the upcoming activities of the project.

Effective

Quality Rating: Satisfactory

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

- Yes
- No

Evidence

The project mid-term review clearly confirmed the contribution of the project outputs to the achievement of the programme outcome.

18. The project delivered its expected outputs.

- Yes
- No

Evidence

The project is on track after an one-year no-cost extension which enables basical completion of all project activities and achievement of all intended 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 AWP of the project presented to PSC at the end of previous year or beginning of new year for review, quarterly progress is reported and plan developed and reported every quarter to PSC for review, issues are identified and the course of action corrected as needed. Budget revisions are undertaken whenever necessary to reflect actual project delivery.

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 site selection was made based on detailed and relevant criteria. Local households were mobilized through the formation of Sloping Land User Groups (SLUGs). The SLUGs focus on the participation of women and farming households working in marginalized areas. Women are a special focus in this component, given the extensive use of marginal sloping lands for household food production and hence to food security issues. The SLUGs prioritize the participation of women and their role in the governance and decision-making structures. Working through these groups, the project conducts participatory assessments of energy and resource use, agricultural practices and livelihood patterns to identify the main drivers of unsustainable agricultural practices. A range of alternatives are piloted, including livelihoods and income-generation options, alternative crops and renewable and energy-efficient systems for cooking, heating meeting community needs. The SLUGs are provided with training support to develop participatory approaches.

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

- Yes
- No

Evidence

30% of project personnel are women in spite of every effort being made to increase the proportion of women among those personnel paid by project budget.

Sustainability & National Ownership

Quality Rating: 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

Given the special country context, the project operates in DIM environment, and the CO is mandated by the UNDP Executive Board to work only at the lowest level (County and Community/Ri) in DPRK. Stakeholders and partners fully engaged in the decision-making, implementation and monitoring of the project notably through the PSC, Field Monitoring visits and through community institutions at the project sites.

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

Given the special country context, the project operates in DIM environment, and the CO is mandated since 2009 by the UNDP Executive Board to work only at the lowest level (County and Community/Ri) in DPRK. There is no anticipated change changes in this situation, or in capacities and performance of institutions and systems.

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

As per the conclusions of the review of the SERCARB project undertaken in December 2016, the project targets and objectives are in line with the national counterparts' objectives, and sustainability is considered to be likely. The sustainability could be jeopardized if technical solutions selected would not be available or affordable after the end of the project, but this risk may be mitigated during implementation.

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

Summary/Final Project Board Comments: