



Independent Evaluation of DA Project 2023X: Transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics

Management Response¹

2024

Overall remarks

The UNCTAD Secretariat extends its sincere appreciation for the comprehensive evaluation of the Development Account (DA) project “2023X: Transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics” it coordinated. The Secretariat commends the evaluation team for their thorough and highly valuable evaluation report. Furthermore, the Secretariat acknowledges the professional approach, dedication, and transparency demonstrated by the evaluation team in addressing the multifaceted, intricate, and encompassing array of matters covered by the project.

The evaluation found the United Nations Transport and Trade Connectivity (in the Age of Pandemics) (UNTTC) project broadly relevant, coherent and effective, with strong outreach across LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs through targeted interventions that countries viewed as highly aligned with their needs. While the project embraced UN commitments to gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and the principle of leaving no one behind, these priorities were expressed more conceptually than operationally. UNTTC made significant contributions to global standards and tools for contactless trade and transport, including piloting the eTIR system across several regions and advancing UN CEFACt standards for multimodal data sharing. It also developed pandemic-related trade and transport guidelines, though limited resources constrained follow-up and left implementation largely to Member States.

¹ **Note:** This document considers each recommendation that is addressed to UNCTAD, discussing them in the order they are presented in the evaluation report. This is done in the format of the management response matrix and includes:

- a. The recommendation number and text copied from the evaluation report;
- b. Indication of whether the recommendation is accepted fully, partially, or rejected;
- c. Description of actions to be taken, with comments as required on the conditions to be met during implementation, or on reasons leading to a partial acceptance or rejection of a recommendation;
- d. The responsible party for implementing the action/s;
- e. The timeframe or schedule for implementation, if required;
- f. Indication if and what resources are required for implementing the recommendation.

Capacity building efforts, including IT systems, e-learning and webinars, showed strong potential but uneven uptake. Enhancements to systems such as ASYCUDA, ASYREC and NTM laid the groundwork for improved crisis response, though some rollouts and data updates remain incomplete. Training initiatives, including courses on international commercial contracts and the NTFC Empowerment Programme, produced concrete policy impacts and strengthened gender responsive crisis capacities. Regional collaboration, particularly in Asia Pacific, was notably reinforced, illustrated by the adoption of the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development. Sectoral cooperation in the maritime domain led to practical resilience gains, such as fewer personal transactions and more streamlined inspections at ports, demonstrating tangible national level benefits from UNTTC activities.

Box 1. Management response matrix²

| Management response to the Independent Evaluation of DA Project 2023X: Transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics | | | | | Date |
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| Evaluation Recommendation (a) | Management response (b) Accepted, partially accepted or rejected | Management plan | | | |
| | | Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection (c) | Responsible unit (d) | Timeframe (e) | Resources required (Y or N) (f) |
| Recommendation 1: <i>For the DA only</i> | | | | | |
| Recommendation 2: <i>For the DA only</i> | | | | | |
| Recommendation 3: Strengthen the connectivity between trade and transport sections internally within the commissions/agencies as well as across regions with a view to enhance focus on the trade-transport nexus and the quality of support. This should include: | UNCTAD Trade Facilitation Section: Partially accepted | UNCTAD Trade Facilitation Section: UNCTAD Trade Facilitation Section, and Transport Section have already a well established record and dynamic of cooperation among both sections in local and regional transport-trade connectivity initiatives as well as in capacity building activities within | DTL (TFS and TS) | June 2025 | N |

² Each column is cross-referenced to the bullet letters above.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced internal interaction and development of joint agenda between trade and transport teams in the commissions to facilitate that government decision makers in trade and transport are addressed from the holistic transport-trade connectivity perspective. This, however, needs to take into consideration that trade and transport issues usually are managed separately in the countries, with different agencies and line ministries involved, representing an institutional development challenge. - More explicit focus on aspects related to change management processes and internal power relations (political economy) in planning and implementation of capacity building activities within governmental institutions and authorities. - Focus on identification/analysis of countries which could serve as geopolitical drivers/promotors/champions of the trade-transport nexus within regions to help promote the nexus agenda and the UN global conventions / agreements at higher-level political fora. - Enhance organization of cross-regional learning session with participation of piloted/targeted | <p>UNCTAD Transport Section, TLB: Recommendation 3 can be accepted but need to take into account that implementation also depends on feasibility and timeframe.</p> | <p>governmental institutions and authorities.</p> <p>Identification of champions countries could be enhanced.</p> <p>UNCTAD TFS will continue working with UNCTAD TS to ensure even more connectivity among sections regarding current and future transport-trade initiatives, by having a dedicated monthly coordination meeting regarding TFS-TS projects, continuing collaboration in organizing and, delivering joint capacity-building initiatives.</p> | <p>Transport Section Trade Logistics Branch Division on Technology and Logistics</p> | <p>Ongoing This is not a one-off exercise but an ongoing process. Under specific projects such as the 16th</p> | <p>Resources received under the UNDA 16th Tranche project have helped implement some aspects of the Recommendation 3. Additional activities to help</p> |
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| <p>countries to allow for cross-learning across regions and countries.</p> | <p><u>Strengthen connectivity:</u> Collaborating with UNCTAD divisions such as DITC and the Statistic units in particular. As required, collaboration, consultation and information sharing and liaising with the remaining divisions is also conducted. More specifically, collaboration with DITC (Commission on Trade and Development), Joint projects (UNDA project 16th Tranche on Sustainable and Resilient Food Supply Chains, IMO project on GHG decarbonisation in shipping) and Statistics unit (maritime transport data including maritime trade, port traffic, liner shipping connectivity, SDG Pulse, Handbook of Statistics) are ongoing and extend beyond statistics to include data analysis and market intelligence. Collaboration is also enhanced with the regional commissions including under the UNDA 16th tranche project (ESCWA and ECLAC)</p> <p><u>Explicit focus on change management processes:</u> The focus is rather implicit. This includes making relevant guidance and capacity</p> | <p>Tranche UNDA project, the timeframe is that of the project 2024-2027.</p> | <p>implement all aspects under this recommendation that go beyond what has already been done as outlined in the third column of this table, would require more resources.</p> |
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| | <p>building material and tools available to users through websites i.e. these are not dependent on a particular person/management being in place whether at UNCTAD or the beneficiary.</p> <p>Focus on identifying champions: Not clear how this can be done. That being said, within TA projects, target or pilot countries are selected based on demand, needs, requirements, potential for replication and dissemination of positive impacts.</p> <p>Any material, insights, guidance, information, good practices, lessons learned, experiences generated are consolidated and shared with other countries through <i>inter alia</i> UNCTAD website, dedicated capacity building tools and instruments, publications, training activities and material Guidebook, etc. Information is further shared via expert meetings, Commission on Trade and Development documentations and discussions. So, these pilot countries can serve as champions and promoters of the transport and trade nexus although they have not been identified specifically for those purposes initially.</p> | | |
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| | <p>Enhance organisation of cross-regional sessions: Implemented already. UNCTAD organizes joint events with regional commissions including capacity building events, joint research and data sharing. UNCTAD also collaborates with global and regional entities working in the field of maritime transport and trade. This may include entities from industry such as ports associations (global and regional levels) as well as intergovernmental entities such as the regional commissions.</p> <p>UNCTAD ASYCUDA: The work done by the ASYCUDA programme as part of the 'OC2 – Cluster B Seamless' component in this DA project involved survey, and development of an automated coordination platform (ASYREC) for humanitarian emergencies primarily, but which could apply also to other types of emergencies.</p> <p>This involves stakeholders in trade and transport, but also all other stakeholders involved in</p> | | |
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| | | <p>international trade during period of emergencies.</p> <p>The automated coordination of humanitarian emergencies actors supported by ASYREC, which is currently piloted in Vanuatu, calls on significant change management and improved workflows.</p> | | | |
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| <p>Recommendation 4:</p> <p>In order to more strongly promote gender equality and human rights, DA projects need to ensure that projects clearly define whom the most vulnerable people are and that analysis of gender dimensions within a specific sector is included. This should further include clearly defined targets in results frameworks and development of data collection tools that allow for disaggregation by gender and vulnerability. It also includes a dedicated focus to ensuring consultations of women and people living with a disability (or organizations representing these groups) in research, law formulation and policy developments to ensure their perspectives and needs are duly taken into account. In addition, in order to fully reflect a focus on people living with a disability or other identified vulnerable groups the following recommendations should be integrated into future joint project designs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proper analysis of whom the most vulnerable people are and gender dimensions. - Collection of data that reports on not only how many women and men are reached but also youth, people living with | <p>UNCTAD Trade Facilitation Section:</p> <p>Accepted</p> | <p>UNCTAD Trade Facilitation Section: As usual UNCTAD TFS has followed UN gender policies as well as gender guidelines provided by UNDESA.</p> <p>In addition, UNCTAD TFS has a program to promote gender equality and women inclusion on trade initiatives.</p> <p>However, a consultation and analysis will be done to define clearer targets and enhance gender mainstreaming on TFS programs and initiatives to ensure reaching a vast majority of vulnerable groups.</p> | <p>TFS</p> | <p>December 2025</p> | <p>UNCTAD Trade Facilitation Section: Might be needed some resources to hire specialised consultants</p> |
| | | <p>UNCTAD Transport Section, TLB:</p> <p>Recommendation 4 can be accepted but need to take into account that implementation also depends on feasibility and timeframe. In other cases, it depends on</p> | <p>Transport Section</p> | <p>UNDA 16th Tranche time frame: 2024-2027</p> | <p>Resources already provided under the project budget.</p> |

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| <p>a disability etc. and other vulnerable groups considered a target group for the specific intervention. The ongoing analysis of these data during implementation is essential to understand whether the intended target groups are reached or other strategies are required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In order to ensure consideration of people living with a disability in trade facilitation, people living with a disability or organizations representing them should be included in NTFCs and measured to the same extent as representation of women. - In order to influence policy and advocate for a greater level of inclusion, it is crucial that research papers and studies include analysis of human rights, gender dimensions and considerations of whom the most vulnerable people are within a specific sector. - A dedicated outreach and communication strategy is required to ensure reaching of vulnerable groups and people living with a disability etc. In order to ensure enrollment of such target groups in training courses etc. a different outreach and communication approach is required (e.g. communication directly through organizations working with | <p>applicability to the work/project</p> <p>UNCTAD ASYCUDA: Partially accepted</p> | <p>implemented jointly by UNCTAD (DTL and DITC), ESCWA and ECLAC.</p> <p>Analysis and data have been added to address the gender dimension, people with disability, and vulnerable groups</p> <p>Activities under the project including the analytical studies at the regional (Caribbean and MENA region) and national level (Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Lebanon, Morocco) will have a dedicated section dealing with these aspects.</p> <p>Outreach and communication strategy to ensure more coverage and inclusiveness will be developed under the project. This includes identifying participant in relevant validation workshops, expert discussions and capacity building activities.</p> <p>UNCTAD ASYCUDA: As a demand/technology-driven and recipient countries-funded TA programme of UNCTAD, ASYCUDA applies the established UN policies</p> | | | |
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| <p>people living with a disability to ensure that the messages are being communicated to the right people/community).</p> | | <p>on Gender and Human Rights in all project documentation, and during projects implementation, eg. HR. It also has its specific gender policy document.</p> <p>This in a context, ie. customs, and industry (ICT) where gender representation is statistically uneven.</p> <p>Recipient countries representing the biggest share of the ASYCUDA programme's funding, the programme's capacity to conduct data collection and analysis, and communication on gender/vulnerable people representation and human rights is very limited.</p> | | |
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