

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Independent evaluation of:

**Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19
resurgence of the MSME sector (United Nations
Development Account project 2023W)***

Independent Evaluation Unit
June 2024

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AfDB	African Development Bank
DA	Development Account
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
EAC	Evaluation Advisory Committee
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EMPRETEC	Emprendedores (entrepreneurs) and tecnología (technology)
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
ET	Evaluation Team
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHRP	Global Humanitarian Response Plan
HIC	High-income Country
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LDC	Least Developed Country
LIC	Low-income Country
LLDC	Landlocked Developing Country
LNOB	Leaving No One Behind
MIC	Middle-income Country
MNE	Multinational Enterprise
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
MSME	Micro-, Small and Medium Enterprises
PMT	Project Management Team
PRODOC	Project Document
RC	Resident Coordinator
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPRP	Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan
SRO-SA	Subregional office for Southern Africa
TCS	Technical Cooperation Section
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNOSSC	United Nations Office of South-South Cooperation
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive summary

Project overview

The project “Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 resurgence of the MSME sector” aimed at enhancing the resilience of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in developing countries and economies in transition, especially in the wake of the global COVID-19 crisis. The primary objective of the project was to develop and implement capacity-building tools for both governments and MSMEs. These tools were designed to mitigate the economic and social repercussions of the pandemic, focusing on MSMEs’ contribution to the SDGs. Operationally, the project was structured according to the Entrepreneurship Policy Framework (EPF) of UNCTAD. The EPF aims to support developing country policymakers in the design of initiatives, measures and institutions to promote entrepreneurship. The EPF features 6 key components: 1: Formulating a National Entrepreneurship Strategy; 2: Optimizing the Regulatory Environment; 3: Enhancing Entrepreneurship Education and Skills Development; 4: Facilitating Technology Exchange and Innovation; 5: Improving Access to Finance; and 6: Promoting Awareness and Networking. Building on these components¹. The project was operated under five clusters, addressing critical areas of MSME recovery. These clusters included mobilizing entrepreneurial ecosystems, simplifying business registration processes, improving access to finance and financial literacy, increasing access to technology and innovation, and enhancing access to markets. The activities were designed to create an enabling entrepreneurship ecosystem by improving regulatory environments, providing access to innovation, technology, finance, and markets, and reaching out to vulnerable groups such as women and informal workers.

The project commenced in May 2020. The initial completion date was planned for March 2022 but this was extended to June 2022. It underwent three phases involving project startup and approval, initial project delivery and design of scaling up initiatives, and the launch of new activities based on previous results. Beneficiaries of this project included governments, policymakers, MSMEs, business associations, support services, and relevant technical staff in institutions and ministries. The project provided support to 96 beneficiary countries, employing various interventions such as advisory services, training, workshops, seminars, and online platforms. Jointly implemented by UNCTAD, DESA, and the UN regional commissions for Africa (ECA), Europe (ECE), Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the Arab region (ESCWA), the project received financial allocations totalling \$4,490,500, with each participating agency implementing its allocated component and managing day-to-day project operations. UNCTAD served as the lead coordinating entity. Key partners in this initiative included UN Development Partners, UN Resident Coordinators, UN Country Teams, UNITAR, UNDP, UNOSSC and ITC. Moreover, the project collaborated with EMPRETEC Centres and other stakeholders such as business incubators and support services. In alignment with the post-2015 development agenda, the project aimed to contribute directly to specific SDGs, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure).

Evaluation purpose and scope

This evaluation analysed the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of the project and its mainstreaming of gender, human rights and disability considerations. The evaluation was carried out between February 2023 and September 2023 following a structured process of data collection and analysis, which included desk review, key informant interviews and online surveys. The evaluation conclusions and recommendations are intended to inform the work of UNCTAD and other UN implementing entities as well as the Development Account Programme Management Team (DA-PMT), which will conduct a synthesis from this evaluation and those of the other four DA Covid-19 projects.

¹ According to the Project Document for Phase 2, interventions were selected based on several criteria including to target capacity building areas that are proven to have key impacts on entrepreneurship and MSMEs promotion as based on the formulation and implementation of UNCTAD’s Entrepreneurship Policy Framework (EPF): enabling ecosystem and facilitation of entrepreneurship competencies/motivation, access to finance, technology and markets, networking.

Conclusions

Relevance

The project responded to the needs of Governments and MSMEs. Interventions contributed to and were informed by needs and impact assessments. Recipients of project interventions were often involved in or contributed to the design and delivery of project activities and outputs. On various occasions, project outputs were tailored to the needs of target users and beneficiaries, being countries or vulnerable groups. The relevance of the interventions was somewhat mitigated by the mandates and capacities of the implementing UN entities. The latter are equipped for supporting medium- and long- term policy changes rather than immediate crisis responses. Other challenges included the restrictive Covid-19 measures and the short time frame for implementation of the project. Nonetheless, on the whole, the implementing UN entities exercised adaptive management to ensure high relevance of their interventions. The phased approach, in particular, provided the opportunity to introduce new activities not foreseen at an earlier stage.

Coherence

The project was anchored in the mandates and comparative advantages of the implementing UN entities. Selected interventions followed previous work and specific requests from member States and were often coordinated with or complementary to existing activities. At conception, the target of the project was to address specific constraints faced by MSMEs. It was designed around the Entrepreneurship Policy Framework to show the complementarities across interventions that each implementing UN entity would deliver in response to regional priorities and capacities. Some collaborations between implementing UN entities were pursued and complementarities established, but on a limited level. A few synergies in the form of joint outputs were integrated in the 3rd phase of the project. By design, technical task forces created through the project were expected to bridge the implementing UN entities. However, this proved difficult to launch and sustain, owing to several constraints, including a highly ambitious objective given the global crisis and competing priorities within each agency. Nevertheless, the coordination and complementarities established by the project among the implementing entities contributed to expanded dissemination and outreach of outputs, avoided overlaps between them, and allowed significant knowledge exchanges aligned with and supportive of a “One UN” system. On the other hand, collaboration of the implementing UN entities with other UN organisations, including UNCTAs, was limited. Despite this shortcoming, at national level, target recipients of project outputs found the interventions complementary to those of other UN agencies.

Efficiency

Project coordination was complex and demanding, involving seven UN entities and the target delivery of around 100 outputs, of which some were composed of many activities. Nevertheless, the coordination of the project was found to be efficient overall given the circumstances and resources available. The coordination of the design phase of the response was actively supported by the DA-PMT. Coordination of project implementation was led by UNCTAD in collaboration with a Steering Committee that met on a regular basis, most often bi-monthly. UNCTAD’s Budget and Project Finance Section (BPFS) produced the project’s financial monitoring table every month, which included the expenditure data of UNCTAD as well as the other implementing entities. A monitoring dashboard was created by UNCTAD to facilitate the tracking of UNCTAD’s project delivery. Data from some of the other implementing UN entities was added, when provided, at two reporting points during the lifetime of the project.

The project would have benefited from the allocation of more resources towards the coordination and monitoring of overall implementation. Across the implementing UN entities, the project was considered complex and hard to follow outside of the interventions under their direct control. Some staff perceived that there were too many participants in the coordination meetings, that the project lacked a Theory of Change, and that it was primarily a compilation of activities rather than a cohesive and mutually reinforcing bundle of interventions supporting in depth any given country. Some staff in the UN Regional Commissions questioned the efficiency cost of a global or inter-regional response versus regional responses. The project was implemented in three phases, which were supportive of adaptive management and perceived by staff as the most rational approach considering the circumstances. However, it was also pointed out that clearer visibility from the onset on the funding available for future phases would have facilitated planning and the search for synergies.

Effectiveness

The Development Account programme, as a funding modality, was quick to respond and adapt to the COVID-19 crisis. The prompt availability of resources and rapid orientation toward a global response contributed to the rapid launch of a wide range of interventions. However, questions remain as to its adequacy for addressing the immediate needs of a crisis in comparison with other UN agencies and mechanisms with a mandate for humanitarian response. The governance of this project, with DA-PMT's oversight, the management structure with UNCTAD in the lead coordinating role, and each implementing entity leading the operational implementation at the regional level, ensured the global and regional scope of project delivery. At the operational level, implementing entities relied more on partnerships with local and regional institutions rather than coordination within the larger project management structure. The project governance and management mechanisms evolved in tandem with the COVID-19 crisis and the project's emerging needs. The result was a high delivery rate but with limited inter-agency collaboration in the process. Yet, despite limited collaboration, this independent evaluation identified that the project was effective in producing identifiable results at the outcome level.

Overall, the project delivered 85% of the planned outputs. Phase 3, particularly, delivered the highest number of outputs but had the lowest outcome effectiveness rate, mostly because of budget cuts and some outputs still in progress at the time of this evaluation. There is evidence of the effective improvement of national capacities on formulating and implementing enabling policies on green, resilient and inclusive entrepreneurship and MSME promotion (outcome 1.A) [such as the adoption of a revised entrepreneurship strategy by South Africa, Uganda and Seychelles]; improved resilience and competitiveness of MSMEs (outcome 1.B) [for example with 64.5% of participants opening a new business after attending Empretec-based training]; facilitated MSME registration and formalization through e-platforms (outcome 2) in El Salvador, Benin, Cameroon and Mali; improved access to finance, including upskilling in financial literacy (outcome 3) [for example with 97% of the MSMEs in Latin America that attended trainings reporting improved financial literacy in accounting and reporting and also improved capacity to manage financial resources]; increased MSME access to innovation and technology (outcome 4) [including through capacity development on green technologies for SMEs in Southern Africa]; and increased access to local, regional and international markets through digitalization and non-tariff measures (outcome 5) [for instance with case studies on competition in Thailand, South Africa and Brazil, followed by webinars and the creation of an online course on SMEs and competition policy, primarily for government officials].

In relation to the project indicators, the assessment of their effectiveness was based on limited information, proxies, and expert judgement since they often lacked SMART criteria. It was possible to infer that 85% of them showed some level of progress, either through objective measures (e.g., sales increase) or proxies (e.g., post-training satisfaction assessments and survey responses). The high effectiveness results can be partly attributed to the conceptual framework provided by the EPF, as well as the cluster-based approach with each cluster addressing specific regional constraints and responding to demand from member States. In addition to clustering about 100 outputs from seven implementing entities into 5+1 outcomes, the EPF provided a coherent thread to relate outputs that cut across outcomes. Further analysis would be needed, however, to clearly identify which of those outputs are the most suitable or adaptable for a crisis response.

The project improved the capacity of policymakers in designing and implementing policies supportive of MSMEs, especially in terms of contributing to a country's government responses, country-specific studies, technical assistance, training courses, and the development of digital tools and regional interventions. This improved capacity is reflected in beneficiaries' reports of how they have been considering the needs of MSMEs, including those led by women and youth, in their daily work. These results could become more transformative and sustainable with more institutional support to networks of policymakers and communities of practice for mutual and regional learning on supportive policies for MSMEs, as well as by mainstreaming gender and Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) approaches in government officials' capacity-building.

Sustainability

The project developed approaches, tools and capacities that are being transferred at multiple levels. At the policy level, the addition of more functionalities to e-government tools, expanding training courses to more countries, and the establishment of agreements to implement the project recommendations are all strong evidence of the sustainability of the project's achievements. At the behavioural level, beneficiaries are applying new knowledge and skills to their daily work, be it by including MSMEs' issues in policy making or by improving MSMEs' management, performance, outputs and, by extension, resilience. Challenges to this transfer of

knowledge relate to the lack of financial resources, need for follow-up mentoring, and lack of a favourable business environment.

Gender, human rights, and disability

The overall project design was well aligned with the two key UN documents that provide clear direction for the integration of a human rights-based approach, which include addressing the aspect of gender equality and Leaving No One Behind. Although these aspects were well-articulated in the project documents, strong follow-through and documentation of their implementation was limited to a few project components. For those components that did include these aspects, gender was more commonly integrated and youth to a lesser degree. There was very little evidence of the outreach, participation, or impact of project activities for people with disabilities or other vulnerable groups. The UNCTAD component on Women and Cross-Border Trade targeting five countries in Africa was a good practice in how to design and implement this type of intervention with a strong reflection of the needs of some of the most vulnerable women across border areas.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: (i) UNCTAD should further leverage the experience gained through the project to map out how components of the Entrepreneurship Policy Framework relate to and can be best positioned to support MSMEs in their recovery from different types of crises and (ii) DESA and the Regional Commissions should add their analysis of how their work can contribute towards the objective. UNCTAD, DESA and the Regional Commissions could build on the project to map their areas of intervention in support of the MSME sector, as well as capacities and knowledge on the implementation of the EPF components, including in a crisis context, and opportunities for broadening the uptake of EPF components at the regional level based on national needs. UNCTAD, DESA and the Regional Commissions could further consider identifying areas of joint interventions that would trigger complementarities and synergies between the agencies. This could involve collaborating on the development of capacities of all national and sub-national actors, i.e. Governments, MSMEs, other partners (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Business Incubators, etc.) in line with United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (SDCF) in respective countries; strengthening or contributing to facilitate access to finance for the MSMEs (including seed money, grants, access to credit, etc.); improving the coordination of MSMEs related policies across ministries; increasing interventions at the local level, such as by supporting NGOs or MSMEs outside of the main cities. The application of a human rights-based approach, gender responsiveness and inclusion of other vulnerable groups (LNOB) should be ensured.

Recommendation 2: UNCTAD should continue building on the momentum generated by the project to continue fostering knowledge exchanges and promoting the Entrepreneurship Policy Framework. UNCTAD, DESA and the Regional Commissions should identify means to more meaningfully continue to share good practices and lessons learned on the demand-driven support they provide to the MSME sector, including on areas such as green/circular economy; innovation policies and ecosystems; MSME formalization and strengthening MSME capacities for the empowerment and leadership of women, youth and groups in vulnerable situations. UNCTAD and the Regional Commissions could also propose organizing regional events and/or a global conference to promote entrepreneurship policy and further advance the goals and impact of the Surge project. Furthermore, learnings from the experiences with the Surge about external partnerships should encourage UNCTAD to promote the EPF and entrepreneurship development to other UN agencies also engaged in this area (e.g. ILO, FAO, UN Women, etc.), to development banks, or to related initiatives such as the recent Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection. UNCTAD could also consider joining and supporting events that promote the achievement of SDG 8.3 as an avenue to further promote the EPF.

Recommendation 3: The DA-PMT should develop a clear framework for assessing the costs and benefits of implementing a global or inter-regional project versus regional projects. As a global crisis can affect regions and countries differently, global or joint projects should be developed only when there are clear benefits of joint implementation. Thus, a global or inter-regional vs. regional response would not be a priori decision, but a result of a clear assessment. A specific guideline or framework should be developed for this. Some of the assessment criteria could include the need or demand from member States for an integrated response; the range of common versus entity-specific activities and added value of complementary interventions (i.e. in terms of geographical coverage, reach of the target population, capacity, and/or coverage of multiple reinforcing technical areas, or networks and partnerships); capability to execute joint interventions (e.g. in terms of time, resources, logistics, and flexibility to pivot interventions without bureaucratic procedures);

coordination costs (which increase with the number of participating UN entities); project inception modalities and governance and knowledge management requirements to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing; scaling and sustainability plans; expected results of spreading resources versus concentrating on fewer countries; and so forth. The time taken to conduct such assessments will increase project coherence and effectiveness and facilitate the identification of the financial and human resources needed for project implementation. The network of DA Focal Points is a key existing asset for this assessment.

Recommendation 4: Implementing UN entities should ensure that they have a comprehensive Results Framework for the entire project as well as an adequate monitoring plan, with indicators that are designed to support the ongoing monitoring. The results framework should have one objective and ideally have one outcome per cluster/workstream. The objective should state the intended goal of the project, describe the overall achievement targeted by the project, involving a process of change aimed at meeting the needs of identified beneficiaries, and reflect the overall funding available to the project. Each objective should include reference to the project's beneficiaries and its substantive focus. The objective should not attempt to explain the ways in which the project intends to achieve the objective (i.e. it should not include the word 'through' or describe the internal work of the UN using verbs such as 'support', 'facilitate' or 'contribute'). The outcomes (OCs) should describe the changes that are expected to occur as a result of the completion of outputs. The OCs should be achievable within the project's timeframe and budget, and should be specific enough to be measured by the associated indicators of achievement. The indicators of achievement (IAs) should provide measures for monitoring progress towards achieving the OCs and reporting on them after completion of the project. Every indicator needs to provide clearly defined baselines, units of measurement and targets, detailing the quantity, quality and timing of expected results. The monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) system should also be designed to capture HRBA, gender and LNOB aspects. In phased interventions or during project execution, any changes in the logframe if/when pivoting activities should be clearly explained to the wider team.

Recommendation 5: Implementing UN entities should ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to project coordination, technical collaboration, and partnership building. The absorption capacity of implementing entities can be challenged by crisis response projects which add to the planned programme of work. This is further compounded by projects that come with an extensive UN partnership and a global scope. Sufficient resources should be dedicated to global coordination and to building global partnerships with strategic stakeholders (e.g., UN organisations engaged in supporting the MSME sector; development banks). Capacities should also be directed to supporting technical collaboration and the staff implementing interventions, including towards synergy or liaison with the UNCTs. When designing the project, implementing UN entities should consider featuring coordination and partnership-building in the Theory of Change or logframe of the project. Tools to support continuous connections and knowledge exchange, and to ensure institutional memory should be part of the response package, such as a project website, SharePoint space for all team members, and a Yammer network or Teams channel. The integration of cross-cutting aspects (HRBA, gender responsiveness, LNOB) also requires expertise with sufficient and dedicated time and resources. Guidance could be development to project managers on how to do this.

1. Introduction

1. This Evaluation Report presents the independent evaluation of the United Nations Development Account Project 2023W – “Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 resurgence of the MSME sector” (the MSME Surge project or project). The objective of the project was to develop and implement capacity-building tools for governments and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to facilitate their resurgence from the COVID-19 crisis and strengthen the resilience of MSMEs in developing countries and economies in transition. The project was implemented by UNCTAD, UN DESA and the UN regional commissions for Africa (ECA), Europe (ECE), Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the Arab region (ESCWA). Project implementation started in May 2020 and ran until June 2022.
2. The final evaluation of the MSME Surge project aims to assess the results of the project and establish the link between the achievements and activities of the intervention; to assess the response delivery and external coordination of the project, including the extent of gender, human rights and disability mainstreaming; and to identify good practices and lessons learned from the project that could feed into and enhance the implementation of related interventions.
3. The evaluation started in February 2023 and concluded in September 2023. The evaluation conclusions and recommendations are intended to inform the work of UNCTAD and the implementing UN entities, as well as the UN Development Account Programme Management Team (DA-PMT).

2. Description of the Project

2.1 Background

4. The first diagnosed cases of ‘viral pneumonia’ became public on 31 December 2019. On 30 January 2020, WHO declared the coronavirus outbreak a public health emergency of international concern (i.e., WHO’s highest level of alarm) and soon after it launched a COVID-19 Strategic Response and Preparedness Plan (SRPP) and asked the UN Secretary-General to activate the UN crisis management policy². COVID-19 was declared a “pandemic” on 11 March 2020. On 19 March 2020, the SG report “*Shared Responsibility, Global solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19*”³ launched a call for action with a focus on people – women, youth, low-wage workers, small and medium enterprises, the informal sector and on vulnerable groups who were already at risk. The UN published the *Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) for COVID-19*⁴ on 25 March 2020, initially calling for USD 2.01 billion. On 2 April 2020, the General Assembly adopted the Resolution on *Global Solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)*⁵. On 5 April the *COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF)* was established to channel funds for a system-wide immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. The *UN Framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19*⁶ further set out the structure for the United Nations’ urgent socio-economic support to countries and societies in the face of COVID-19. The Framework presented five streams of work connected by a strong environmental sustainability and gender equality imperative to *build back better*. One pillar of the Framework focused on *protecting jobs, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, and informal sector workers through economic response and recovery programmes*.
5. From its onset, the advent of COVID-19 confronted governments, the development and the humanitarian community and society with a deteriorating socio-economic context. COVID-19 affected poverty, trade and employment levels, and put at risk the achievement of the SDGs. The World Bank estimated the COVID-19 pandemic to have pushed an additional 119 million to 124 million people into extreme poverty

² The UN Crisis Management Team brings together 23 UN entities to coordinate a comprehensive whole-of-UN response. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/interactive-timeline/#event-47>.

³ https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_report_socio-economic_impact_of_covid19.pdf

⁴ UN OCHA. 2020. *Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19*. Geneva.

⁵ United Nations. 2020. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 2 April 2020. A/RES/74/270*. General Assembly. New York. Link: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/74/270>.

⁶ UN. 2020. *A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. April 2020*. New York.

in 2020⁷. The IMF estimated a 3.5 percent contraction in global GDP in 2020⁸. UNCTAD reported on the use of trade policy instruments with trade-restrictive effects in over 180 countries, most of them in developing countries⁹. ILO estimated that 8.8 per cent of global working hours were lost in 2020 relative to the fourth quarter of 2019, equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs¹⁰. At the beginning of the pandemic, most of these job losses affected women, and, by August 2020, the participation of women in the labour force was over 15 per cent lower than the baseline – male participation was about 10 per cent lower¹¹. Annual unmet SDG financing needs before COVID-19 were USD 2.5 trillion. The pandemic created additional needs in 2020 for USD 1 trillion in COVID-19 spending while the drop in external private resources for developing countries was USD 700 million¹².

6. The COVID-19 crisis plunged the global economy into a deep recession and micro, small and medium enterprises were amongst the hardest hit, with decreased liquidity or cash flow availability, decreased demand for products and services, and decreased supply of inputs¹³. According to UNCTAD's analysis of the World Bank data in selected countries, on average 13% of small-size firms were temporarily closed due to COVID-19 pandemic, almost 75% of SMEs experienced a decrease in demand for their products and services, over two-thirds of SMEs experienced decrease in supply of their inputs¹⁴. A survey implemented by UNECA and IEC Ltd of African MSMEs at the start of Covid-19 found that four-fifths of the survey respondents indicated being significantly affected by the current COVID-19 crisis (rating the effect as highly severe or severe). MSMEs make up 90 per cent of the economic engine of developing countries and are a major source of employment and self-employment, including for vulnerable groups, such as women, elderly and youth. Trapped in economic stagnation due to large-scale lockdowns, millions of MSMEs became the most vulnerable to COVID-19 within the private sector. At the sectoral level, demand and supply stagnation was seen in many industries. MSMEs are major players in non-essential services,¹⁵ which became the most affected sectors by lockdown and other isolation measures. In addition, many micro and small businesses are in the informal economy, which was hit first and hardest by the pandemic.

2.2 Project objectives and expected accomplishments

7. **The main objective of the project** was to develop and implement capacity-building tools for governments and MSMEs to facilitate the resurgence and strengthen the resilience of MSMEs in developing countries and economies in transition. These capacity-building tools sought to mitigate the economic and social impact of the global COVID-19 crisis and to facilitate the contribution of MSMEs to SDG implementation.

8. The initiative brought together UNCTAD, UN DESA and the UN regional commissions for Africa (ECA), Europe (ECE), Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the Arab region (ESCWA) with funding provided by the UN Development Account (DA). The project expected to ensure both global reach and regional presence, international cooperation, and exchange of knowledge and good practices from all over the world. The project also aimed to establish a *coherent approach* towards MSME resurgence reflecting the holistic and comprehensive nature of efforts needed to ensure and facilitate MSMEs' green, resilient and inclusive recovery.

⁷ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/updated-estimates-impact-covid-19-global-poverty-looking-back-2020-and-outlook-2021>

⁸ IMF. 2021. *World Economic Outlook Update. January 2021*. Washington.

⁹ UNCTAD. 2021. *Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on trade and development: Recovering, but unevenly* – Situation as at 31 March 2021. <https://unctad.org/programme/covid-19-response/impact-on-trade-and-development-2021#aTradePolicy>

¹⁰ ILO. 2021. *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Seventh edition. 25 January 2021*. Geneva.

¹¹ UNCTAD. 2021. *Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on trade and development: Recovering, but unevenly* – Situation as at 31 March 2021. <https://unctad.org/programme/covid-19-response/impact-on-trade-and-development-2021#aTradePolicy>

¹² OECD. 2020. *Global Outlook on Financing for Sustainable Development 2021*. Paris.

¹³ UNCTAD. 2021. *Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on trade and development: Recovering, but unevenly* – Situation as at 31 March 2021. <https://unctad.org/programme/covid-19-response/impact-on-trade-and-development-2021#aTradePolicy>

¹⁴ UNCTAD. 2021. *Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 resurgence of the MSME sector. MSME surge project – Addendum Phase 3 Project Proposal*. Geneva.

¹⁵ The exact definition of these services varies by country, but they are generally recreational businesses, such as accommodation, catering, entertainment and tourism.

2.3 Project strategies and key activities

9. The project followed the conceptual approach of clustering interventions under the overall umbrella of the Entrepreneurship Policy Framework (EPF)¹⁶ of UNCTAD. The five clusters addressed the most critical areas of MSME recovery:

- 1- Mobilize entrepreneurial ecosystem and strengthen business skills
- 2- Simplify business registration and facilitate formalization
- 3- Improve access to finance/financial literacy
- 4- Increase access to technology and innovation
- 5- Enhance access to markets

10. Activities were to be delivered through coordinated and complementary efforts of participating agencies covering key interrelated components of an enabling entrepreneurship ecosystem, such as improving a regulatory entrepreneurship environment and mobilizing entrepreneurship potential, enhancing MSMEs' access to innovation and technology, finance and markets, including at a policy level and at MSME level, and reaching out to most affected target groups, including women and informal workers. The project also included a number of activities to facilitate the green and sustainable recovery of MSMEs.

11. The project started its implementation in May 2020 and was scheduled to conclude on 31 March 2022, but received approval in February 2022 for an extension until 30 June 2022. The project was developed and implemented under **three phases**:

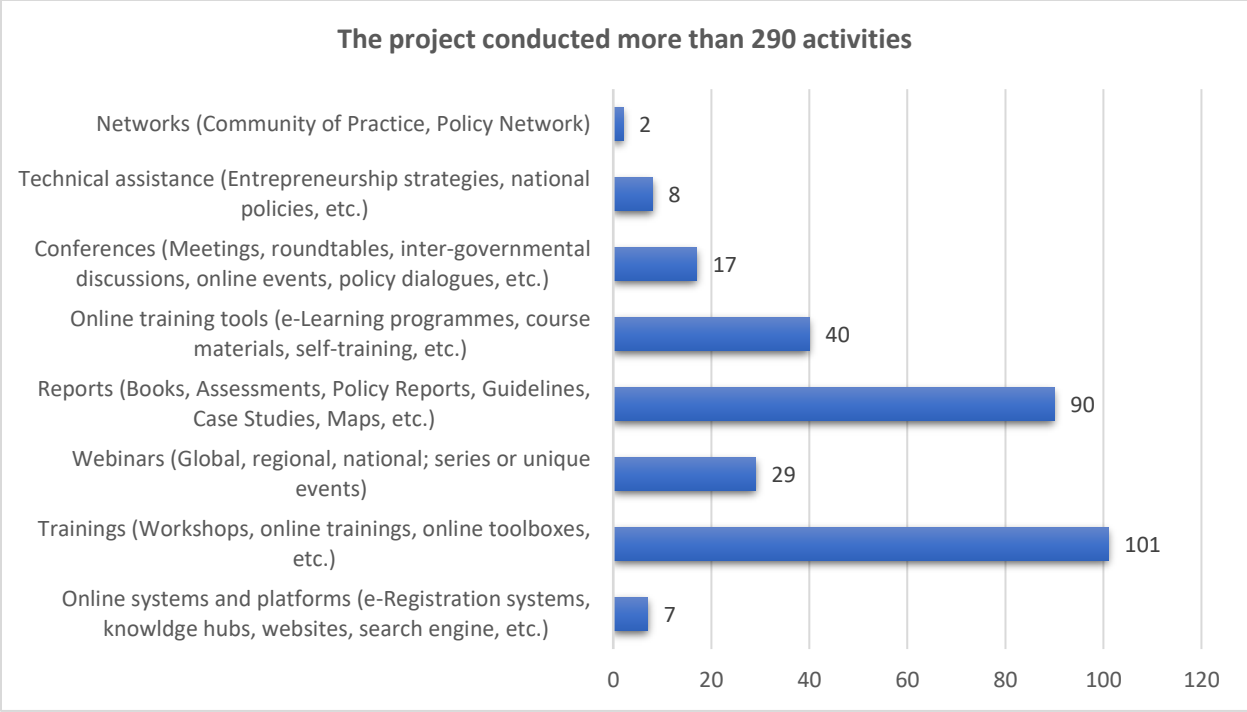
- Phase 1 (May-June 2020): The start-up of the project was approved by the DA Steering Committee based on a concept note presenting an overview of the project intended to be implemented over an 18-month period (to December 2021), the intended outcomes for Phases 1 and 2, and the detailed budget for phase 1 only.
- Phase 2 (July-December 2020): The Project Document submitted for approval of Phase 2 was expected to cover Phases 2 and 3, with the expectation that it would be revised in September 2020 to include the finalized Phase 3 activities and budget, and the project's monitoring and evaluation plan, for Phase 3 approval.
- Phase 3 (initially January-December 2021, extended twice, first to March 2022 and then to June 2022): The addendum to the Project Document focused interventions on scaling up the implementation of the online outputs developed in Phases 1 and 2 and launching new activities in selected countries based on demand and results in the previous phases.

12. Over its 3 phases the project implemented more than 290 activities (Figure 1). Activities were sometimes multi-faceted, for example with reports being used to feed training materials, conferences, or webinars. Activities involved varying levels of effort, from one-time webinars to reports or online platforms requiring several months of development.

Figure 1: Overview of project activities (indicative¹⁷).

¹⁶ [Entrepreneurship Policy Framework and Implementation Guidance | UNCTAD](#)

¹⁷ Some activities were described by the UN entities with interchangeable terms, such as webinars and trainings, while some other activities were not necessarily described, such as disseminating a report through a workshop. The evaluation reconstructed the number of activities based on a review and interpretation of the project logframe.



Source: Independent evaluation, 2023.

13. The Project Document did not formulate a Theory of Change (TOC) but presented a results framework that the evaluation used jointly with inputs provided by informants to reconstruct a simplified (draft) TOC at evaluation (Annex 1).

14. According to the Project Document (Phase 2), the monitoring arrangements planned for the project included:

- **Bi-monthly online meetings of the Project Steering Committee:** Representatives from all seven entities were sought to monitor project delivery to ensure smooth and steady implementation. Representatives were also expected to meet on an as-need basis for important decisions that affected all seven entities.
- **Inputs and feedback from the Project Design Team:** Representatives from UNCTAD, DESA, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA, who participated in the project design and its adjustments as needed, in accordance with the COVID-19 situation, were considered to be a key part of the project to evaluate and act upon stakeholder commentary.
- **Task Forces:** Task Forces comprised of experts from the partner entities were to be established to provide ongoing coordination of work of the five clusters.
- **Annual progress reports:** Annual or phase-based progress reports were to be provided to the DA-PMT on all aspects of project implementation.
- **Success stories:** based on request and template provided by the DA-PMT.

2.4 Beneficiaries and target countries

15. The **main direct beneficiaries** targeted by the project included: Governments, policy makers, Micro-, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), Business or industry associations, Business support services, Commercial Registry Offices, Technical/experts staff in relevant institutions and ministries, and Multinational Enterprises (MNE).

16. The beneficiary countries covered different geographical regions. The project compiled a list of 96 beneficiary countries in the final report, as shown in Table 1. These countries were supported by the Surge project, to varying degrees, either through physical/in-person activities or through online modalities. Some of the forms of interventions (in-person or online) included advisory services, trainings, workshops, seminars, conferences and events, platforms and systems. In many cases, implementing entities also provided direct technical assistance to countries through policy advice or in the form of assessment reports, research studies, or tailored guidelines¹⁸. Project partners organized online seminars targeting specific countries and also regional or global audiences in many cases.

Table 1: Project’s beneficiary countries.

Africa			
1. Algeria	2. Angola	3. Benin	4. Botswana
5. Cameroon	6. Egypt	7. Eswatini	8. Ethiopia
9. Ghana	10. Kenya	11. Lesotho	12. Malawi
13. Mauritius	14. Mozambique	15. Namibia	16. Nigeria
17. Seychelles	18. South Africa	19. Tanzania	20. The Gambia
21. Uganda	22. Zambia	23. Zimbabwe	
Americas			
24. Argentina	25. Bahamas	26. Barbados	27. Belize
28. Bolivia	29. Brazil	30. Chile	31. Colombia
32. Costa Rica	33. Cuba	34. Dominica	35. Dominican Republic
36. Ecuador	37. El Salvador	38. Grenada	39. Guatemala
40. Guyana	41. Jamaica	42. Mexico	43. Nicaragua
44. Panama	45. Paraguay	46. Peru	47. Saint Kitts and Nevis
48. Saint Lucia	49. Trinidad and Tobago	50. Uruguay	51. Venezuela
Asia			
52. Afghanistan	53. Armenia	54. Azerbaijan	55. Bangladesh
56. Bhutan	57. Brunei Darussalam	58. Cambodia	59. China
60. Georgia	61. India	62. Indonesia	63. Islamic Republic of Iran
64. Jordan	65. Kazakhstan	66. Kyrgyzstan	67. Lebanon
68. Lao PDR	69. Maldives	70. Malaysia	71. Mongolia
72. Myanmar	73. Nepal	74. Pakistan	75. Palestine
76. Philippines	77. Saudi Arabia	78. Singapore	79. Sri Lanka
80. Tajikistan	81. Thailand	82. Türkiye	83. United Arab Emirates
84. Viet Nam			
Europe			
85. Albania	86. Belarus	87. Bosnia and Herzegovina	88. Montenegro
89. North Macedonia	90. Republic of Moldova	91. Romania	92. Russia
93. Serbia			
Oceania			
94. Fiji	95. Papua New Guinea	96. Tuvalu	

¹⁸ Some of the countries that received direct technical assistance include for example Armenia, Bangladesh, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Cameroon, El Salvador, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Mali, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, The Gambia, Ukraine, Zambia.

2.5 Key partners and other key stakeholders

17. Jointly implemented by UNCTAD, DESA, ECA (through its Subregional office for Southern Africa), ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA, the project built upon the comparative advantages and mandates of the participating agencies to provide immediate advice, capacity-building and support to governments and MSMEs during the ongoing global pandemic. Broadly, the roles and lead entities, based on the mandates and expertise of the participating agencies, for each of the five project clusters and workstreams were as presented in table 2.

Table 2: Project clusters and lead and participating entities. Source: Project document Phase 2.

Project cluster/workstream	UNCTAD	DESA	ECA	ECE	ECLAC	ESCAP	ESCWA
Overall coordination ¹⁹	○						
Project cluster/workstream 1 Entrepreneurship and business skills promotion	○			○		○	○
Project cluster/workstream 2 Business facilitation/formalization	○	○					○
Project cluster/workstream 3 Access to finance/financial literacy	○					○	○
Project cluster/workstream 4 Access to technology and innovation			○				
Project cluster/workstream 5 Access to markets	○		○	○	○	○	○

○: Lead institution

○: Participating institution

18. UNCTAD was the lead project coordinating entity²⁰. Day to day management of the project was entrusted to each implementing agency for its own component. Each participating agency managed and implemented its component with funds allocated to it. Within UNCTAD, project oversight was ensured by UNCTAD's Enterprise Branch within the Division on Investment and Enterprise.

19. Key project partners included the UN Development Partners with the UN Resident Coordinators (UNRCs), UN Country Teams (UNCTs), UNITAR, UNDP, UNOSSC, ITC. The project was also implemented with the EMPRETEC Centres²¹. Other key stakeholders included technical/expert staff in relevant institutions, ministries, and business incubators and support services.

2.6 Resources

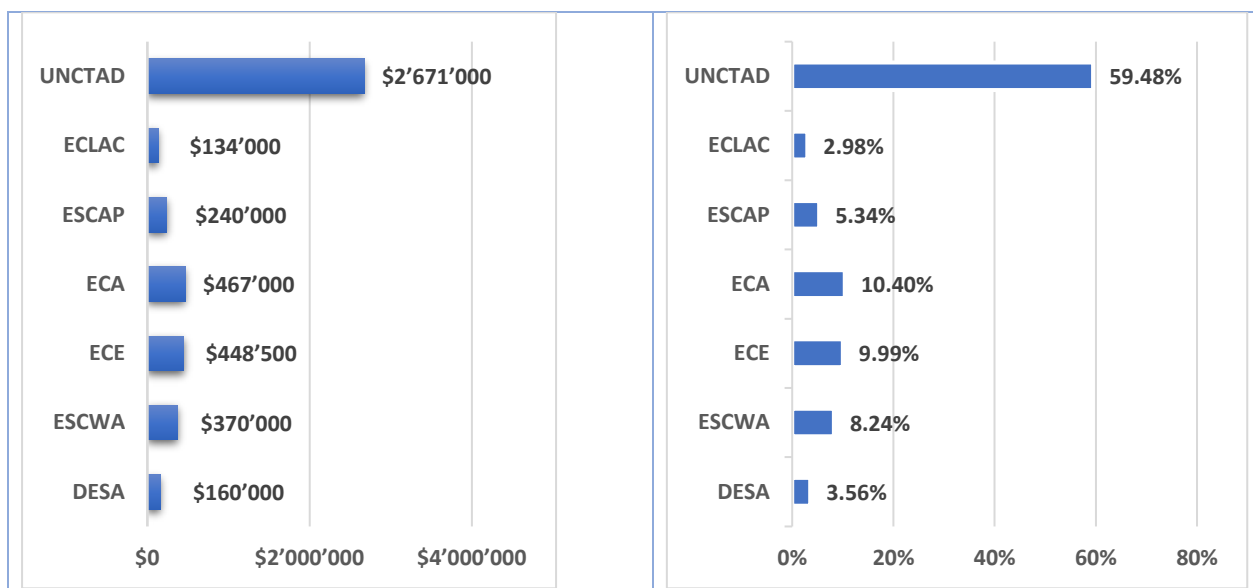
20. Overall, the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) allocated a total of \$4,490,500 under this project. Concretely, UNCTAD received \$2,671,000, ECLAC received \$134,000, ESCAP received \$240,000, ECA received \$467,000, ECE received \$448,500, ESCWA received \$370,000 and DESA received \$160,000 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Allocation of project funding.

¹⁹ Phase 1 of the project was co-led by UNCTAD and ESCWA.

²⁰ UNCTAD and ESCWA co-led phase 1 of the project.

²¹ EMPRETEC is a flagship capacity-building programme of UNCTAD for the promotion of entrepreneurship and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to facilitate sustainable development and inclusive growth.



Source: Final report.

21. The project budget was approved and distributed by phase (Table 3). The budget for phase 1 was \$325,000 and the budget for phase 2 was \$1,310,000. Budget for phase 3 was reduced in November 2011 from a provisional \$3,165,500 to \$2,855,500 (see section 5.3).

Table 3: Project's implementation phases

Phases	Implementation period	Effective budget allocations
I	May-June 2020	\$325,000
II	July-December 2020	\$1,310,000
III	January 2021-June 2022	\$2,855,500

2.7 Link to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

22. The project aimed to contribute to the post-2015 development agenda by making direct contributions to the **sustainable development goals** (SDGs), in particular goal 4 on “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (target 4.4); goal 8 on “Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services” (target 8.3); and goal 9 on “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation” (targets 9.3 and 9.5).

2.8 Innovative elements

23. The project demonstrated several innovative elements. At the institutional level, the project relied on increased consultative processes and a phased approach which enabled adaptive management. At the programmatic and technical levels, the project contributed to the introduction of MSMEs into policy discussions in response to the pandemic crisis, and e-government services. At the operational level, the project developed innovative approaches and tools to respond to country needs, such as online delivery of trainings and knowledge sharing events.

3. Evaluation objectives, scope, and questions

3.1 Purpose and objectives

24. As per the TOR (Annex 7), the final evaluation of the MSME Surge project has the following specific objectives:

- Assess the results and establish the link between achievements and activities of the intervention;
- Assess the response delivery and external coordination²², including the extent of gender, human rights and disability mainstreaming; and
- Identify good practices and lessons learned from the project that could feed into and enhance the implementation of related interventions.

3.2 Evaluation scope, criteria, and questions

25. The evaluation covers the duration of the project from April 2020 to June 2022. The evaluation focuses on the countries covered by the project. The evaluation analysed unintended positive (or negative) outcomes beyond the 96 countries identified by the project as beneficiary countries. The evaluation conclusions and recommendations are intended to inform the work of UNCTAD and other UN implementing entities as well as the Development Account Programme Management Team (DA-PMT), which will conduct a synthesis from this evaluation and those of the other four Covid-19 surge projects. The evaluation took a retrospective and forward-looking approach. It was summative but also formative aiming to support UNCTAD and UN partners in their next steps.

26. The evaluation addressed the questions in table 4. The evaluation questions were unpacked into an evaluation matrix with suggested measures (Annex 2) and guided data collection methods (Annex 3).

Table 4: Evaluation questions.

CRITERIA	KEY QUESTIONS
RELEVANCE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent was the project designed to target the new needs and priorities of participating countries as a result of COVID-19? 2. To what extent was the project aligned with the COVID-19 socio-economic responses of the participating countries (e.g., COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan)?
COHERENCE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. To what extent was the project complementary to, and coordinated with, other work undertaken by the implementing entities? 4. To what extent has the project been coordinated with, and complementary to, the response of other UN entities (Secretariat and non-Secretariat) to COVID-19 in delivering socio-economic support to Member States?
EFFICIENCY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. How well coordinated was the process for the response among the entities implementing the joint project? 6. How did the three-phase budgeting and programming approaches impact the efficient delivery of the project?
EFFECTIVENESS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. To what extent did the programme (Development Account) and project governance and management structures and processes enable, or hinder, the effective implementation of the joint project and the achievement of its results? 8. To what extent has the project contributed to the expected outcomes as enunciated in the project document? 9. How did the response contribute to the participating country Governments' responses to COVID-19, especially in the area of MSME resurgence?

²² The OIOS COVID-19 response evaluation protocol identifies the following three cross-cutting focus areas: 1) response delivery; 2) external coordination (or "Delivering as one"); and 3) business continuity. "Response delivery" is further defined as consisting of delivery of: 1) the existing mandate needed to implement previously mandated activities in the new environment created by the pandemic; and 2) the COVID-19 specific response (health and non-health) needed to address the pandemic specifically. See OIOS (October 2020), "COVID-19 Response Evaluation Protocol", para 3-4.

	10. What innovative approaches or tools, if any, did the response use, and what were the outcomes and lessons learned from their application?
SUSTAINABILITY	11. What measures were adopted to ensure that outcomes of the response would continue after the project ended?
GENDER, HUMAN RIGHTS AND DISABILITY	12. To what extent were perspectives on gender equality, protection of human rights and reaching underserved groups integrated into design and implementation of the project? What results can be identified from these actions?

4. Methodology

27. The evaluation collected and analysed data from a range of sources to deepen understanding and triangulate the assessment. The following data collection instruments were used:

- **Desk review:** Study of secondary resources (Annex 4) as per the project management process and logframe in order to validate achievements, including UN GA resolutions, UN strategies and policies, documents/data related to project-level planning, implementation and results achievement (including post-training assessments, whenever data allowed²³), project outputs and monitoring reports, and external reports (Annex 2).
- **Interviews and focus groups:** Interviews were conducted with a selected number of staff, partners, and stakeholders (Annex 5). Contact details of UN staff and partners were provided by UNCTAD (38 target informants), ECLAC (10), UNECE (10), UNECA (8), DESA (5), ESCAP (5), ESCWA (3). All prospective informants were invited to inform the evaluation, with at least one follow-up reminder message sent in absence of any response. The evaluation interviewed 58 informants. The canvas for semi-structured interviews was tailored to ensure specific relevancy to the selected stakeholders. To optimize time, a few interviews took the form of focus groups. Consultations were conducted virtually with Zoom or Teams. The following consultations per stakeholder group were conducted (Table 5):

Table 5: Groups of informants and number of consultations.

Informant groups	Number of informants
Project Coordination Team	10
Project focal points of implementing entities (i.e. members of Task Forces)	12
DA-Project Management Team and DA focal points in participating entities	8
UN and Development Partners (UNCT members, UNDP)	3
Governments (Ministries, national institutions) and policy makers	6
MSMEs, Business or industry associations, Commercial Registry Offices	8
Technical/experts staff in relevant institutions, including EMPRETEC Centres	11
Total	58

- **Survey:** The evaluation carried out six external surveys (Annex 6) to inform the assessment of the relevance, coherence, and effectiveness of the project and its contribution to outcomes for women and youth entrepreneurs and other vulnerable and marginalized groups. The surveys targeted participants to project activities and beneficiaries. The lists of contacts were provided by UNCTAD, DESA, ESCAP, ECLAC, ECA, and ECE (Table 6)²⁴. The sampling strategy was convenience sampling. In addition, in consultation with UNCTAD Independent Evaluation Unit, the evaluation used purposive sampling to exclude from the lists provided by the UN entities (i) the staff from the same UN entities who were part of those lists as having attended or contributed to the events; (ii)

²³ Not all post-assessment data could be used by the evaluation team, because some were responded by a very small number of training participants, in relation to the total number of participants in a given training.

²⁴ ESCWA was requested to provide a list of survey recipients but did not share one.

participants to Trainings of Trainers workshops as their role was to train project beneficiaries; (iii) participants to one-time only webinar sessions as having had very limited exposure to the project. The surveys were composed of questions that were common to all six questionnaires and some specific to each of the 5+1 project outcomes²⁵. The questionnaires were made available in English. They were translated in Spanish for outcomes 3 and 5 as target recipients were primarily in the Latin America and Caribbean region. The surveys were anonymous and remained open for 2 weeks, from Thursday 20 July to Friday 4 August. Two reminder messages were sent to increase the response rate. The surveys were launched to a combined list of 1454 persons from at least 120 countries (information on the localisation of survey recipients was not available for all recipients), with 89 messages bouncing back. Altogether, the surveys compiled feedback from 133 respondents. Responses were received from at least 53 countries (some participants did not indicate their location). Responses were received from at least 62 males and 42 females (some participants did not indicate their gender). All survey questions were optional. Questionnaires partially completed were kept in the batch of results when they contained information that was judged credible and meaningful. Statistics were calculated on the basis of the number of valid responses per question and not on the basis of the overall number of respondents to the surveys. The overall response rate to the email surveys is circa 9.7%. The surveys presented the opinion of those who responded but not of the entire list of recipients of the questionnaires nor of all the beneficiaries of the project.

Table 6: Survey recipients and respondents.

Outcome	Email addresses	Bounced back	Valid email	Valid responses	Percentage
1A	574	38	536	52	9.70%
1B	258	24	234	40	17.09%
2	21	0	21	4	19.05%
3	219	4	215	11	5.12%
4	98	1	97	13	13.40%
5	284	22	262	13	4.96%
Total	1454	89	1365	133	9.74%

- **Cross-cutting thematic analysis on human rights, gender and inclusion:** As an integral part of the above-mentioned methods of data collection, the evaluation team explored the extent to which gender equality, human rights and leaving no one behind perspectives were considered in the design and implementation of the project. The UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19²⁶ guided the assessment as it outlines how the responses to the pandemic should be consistent with international human rights standards, ensure gender equality and special measures to protect the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and migrants.

28. The evaluation used a combination of complementary tools for analysis of the data collected.
- **Qualitative analysis** of data, secondary resources and interviews/focus groups. The evaluation used ATLAS.ti for coding qualitative inputs.
 - **Quantitative analysis** including systematizing post-training assessments, indexing and cross-tabulations of survey data, and quantitative coding of survey qualitative inputs.
29. The evaluation confronted several constraints or limitations that were mitigated as follows:

²⁵ The project outcome 1 was subdivided into outcome 1A and 1B.

²⁶ A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19, April 2020

<https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/UN-framework-for-the-immediate-socio-economic-response-to-COVID-19.pdf>

- **Remote data collection:** The evaluation did not include country visits that would allow for face-to-face interviews and direct observations, which may have limited the collection of evidence at the outcome level. *Mitigation: Use of complementary data collection methods to enrich and triangulate findings.*
- **Limited availability of informants:** The interviews (individual and group) are a key instrument for this evaluation. Given turnover and time since the project was completed, some country staff were not available for interviews as they, for example, had retired or left the organization, did not recall exactly what happened, or had too much work or competing demands for their time. *Mitigation: Support was requested from the Project Manager for securing interviews.*
- **Lack of generalisation of survey results:** Convenience sampling cannot ascertain that survey recipients were statistically representative of the entire community of project beneficiaries. Furthermore, reminder messages mitigated but did not prevent any non-response bias. Respondents also required to have internet access. The surveys presented the opinion of those who responded but not of all the beneficiaries of the project. Surveys were used as one among other sources of findings.
- **Limited evaluability of some indicators:** Because some indicators do not comply with the SMART criteria and are elaborated in a broad way, it was difficult to identify the evidence that answers to them. Additionally, they were associated with the work of specific implementing entities, rather than the project as a whole. This posed an additional challenge, especially when the entity associated with a certain indicator was not clear. *Mitigation: Targeted consultation about these indicators, corresponding evidence directed at the responsible entity, and an inductive approach to associate results achieved within an outcome to specific indicators.*
- **Too short a time between end of project and the evaluation to observe impact:** Since most of the project's activities take time to show impact, this evaluation reports on indications of possible future impact on beneficiaries, governments, and partners. *Mitigation: Self-reported survey for beneficiaries, and data triangulation generated this evidence.*

5. Findings

30. This section presents the evaluation findings per evaluation criteria and question.

5.1 Relevance

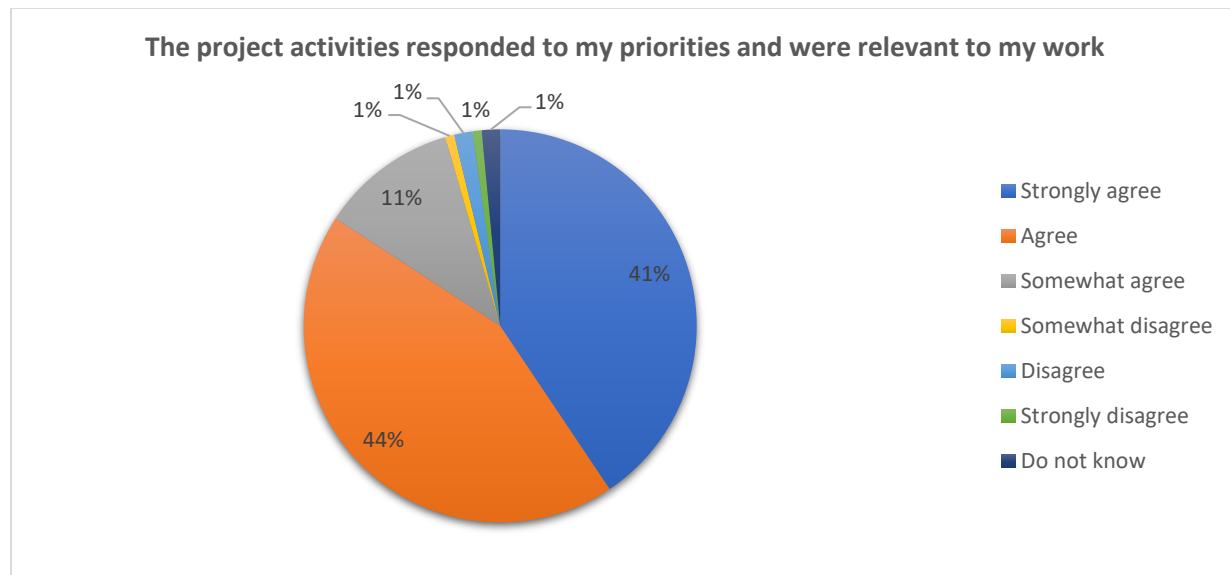
To what extent was the project designed to target the new needs and priorities of participating countries as a result of COVID-19?

31. **The project was designed to respond to demands of Member States to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.** The project was based on ownership by beneficiary countries and relevance towards national and sub-national sustainable development priorities. A demand-driven approach was mainstreamed throughout the project lifecycle. The project was designed based on the request to UN Secretariat entities for assistance for MSMEs from Member States, as well as intergovernmental demands and resolutions on COVID-19. The Project Document for phase 2 reported requests for support received from more than 70 countries across the 5+1 project outcomes. For example, the Governments of El Salvador, Benin, Cameroon and Mali, requested UNCTAD to create online services that streamlined and simplified business registration. The Governments of Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia, requested UNCTAD to scale-up the format of the cross-border trade trainings piloted in these countries and to replicate them at other borders in the same countries. Georgia and North Macedonia expressed interest for ECE to develop country-specific reports based on the findings of the regional Guidelines and Best Practices for MSMEs in delivering energy efficient products and in providing renewable energy equipment. Several staff from the implementing UN entities also mentioned that in-country interventions were conditioned by the receipt of a Letter of Agreement from Member States. In a few cases, informants further illustrated the demand-based approach of the project by indicating that some initial plans for collaboration were parked sometimes due to changing country needs and priorities.

32. **The project conducted or contributed to needs and impact assessments to inform interventions.** Across all regions the project collaborated with Member States and national stakeholders to conduct surveys,

needs assessments, or impact studies that informed project design and implementation as well as national responses. In South-east and Central Asia, and the Pacific, countries such as Samoa, Bangladesh, Nepal, Cambodia and Kazakhstan participated in ESCAP in-depth country assessments. In the Southern African region, ECA carried out a survey across its 11 member states to assess the impact of Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine on MSMEs in association with national business organizations. The survey gauged policies needed to foster regional integration and technology and innovation in post Covid-19 recovery strategies. ECE produced a rapid impact assessment series on end-to-end supply chain activities to support long-term development efforts for five beneficiary countries and presented them for intergovernmental discussion. ECLAC ran diagnostics on competition policy and consumer protection, and on SME support policies, to identify needs for project activities or products in target countries, including the needs of women and vulnerable groups. In Kenya, DESA and the Kenya Micro and Small Enterprises Authority assessed how MSMEs were affected by the pandemic. The survey results were disseminated to stakeholders, who were brought together to participate in a validation workshop to discuss most needed support systems and formulate policy advice to be shared with the Ministry of Cooperatives and MSME Development. In several cases informants also recalled that needs assessments are part of the project design methodologies implemented by UN entities. For example, the first step of the EPF is to assess the status of the national entrepreneurial ecosystem. According to the evaluation survey, the vast majority of respondents reported that project activities have responded to their priorities and were relevant to their work (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Perceived relevance of the project according to the survey (n=133 respondents).



Source: Independent evaluation survey, 2023.

33. **Stakeholders, including policymakers, MSME entrepreneurs and development partners, participated in project design and implementation.** On various occasions, evaluation informants stressed that the involvement of Member States and stakeholders in designing and implementing interventions was also a factor contributing to addressing their needs and priorities. In Kenya for example, in addition to ensuring buy-in from the Government before implementing cross-border trade trainings, UNCTAD relied on national institutions to facilitate project delivery on the ground. UNCTAD asked the Government to identify training participants and the Government requested local associations to identify participants and to help with logistics. A representative of the Ministry of Trade of Kenya travelled to the border to introduce the workshops. This was the first instance of high-level government support to the project. Several Empretec centres also mentioned that the identification of workshop participants was done in collaboration with government agencies and departments. In Zimbabwe, the Empretec centre selected primarily businesswomen and youth whose businesses were declining or faltering. Another example involved the creation of training materials on Core Indicators for Sustainability and SDG Reporting (GCI). A series of trainings of trainers (TOT) were organized by UNCTAD and participants' feedback was used to revise the materials before training entrepreneurs.

34. **Project activities and products were tailored to Member States and target beneficiaries.** Project activities and products were often tailored to the needs of target recipients. Many regional reports were localized through national studies. For instance, ECE developed guidelines and best practices for MSMEs to assure resiliency and progress towards a circular economy in sustainable resource management and critical raw material supply chain solutions, as well as guidelines and best practices for MSMEs in delivering energy-efficient products and in providing renewable energy equipment²⁷. Four countries of the ECE region were chosen as pilot countries for which the guidelines were customized, before spanning to other countries. In Tanzania, the Empretec centre delivered a training on entrepreneurship skills development that was based on the UNCTAD-EMPRETEC methodology but was adjusted to participants with limited literacy skills. UNECA delivered an online training course on the role of technology and innovation for MSMEs under Phase 2 and feedback from the training was used to develop a second course on role of green technologies in MSME development under Phase 3. For many activities and products, UN entities also ensured the translation of materials in official UN and local languages to facilitate access and outreach at global, regional and national levels. In the early months of the response, ECE partnered with UNDP (which had a Zoom license) to deliver workshops with simultaneous interpretation as this could not be accommodated by ECE online platforms.

35. **Implementing UN entities adapted to maximize the relevance of interventions aimed for longer term change.** While some Surge project outputs were found to be more crisis-response driven and with a shorter path to outcomes, such as the implementation of e-registration systems, other activities such as the design of a national entrepreneurship strategy were referred to as yielding an impact after a longer period of time. This is typical of DA projects and other socio-economic UN initiatives. Several interviewees were of the opinion that the UN socio-economic pillar did not generally have many crisis response products. Despite the achievements of the project (see section on Effectiveness), the capacity of the UN to respond to the needs and priorities of participating countries as a result of COVID-19 depended on institutional factors that were not always under their direct control. It was further indicated that at the onset of the pandemic, countries needed immediate financial support to help their companies and MSMEs to stay alive. Several survey respondents reported that complementing capacity-building activities for entrepreneurs with grants would have been beneficial²⁸. Although the EPF and cluster-based approach proved an appropriate conceptual framework to articulate the response (see section on Coherence), the latter could have benefited from some prior analysis of the relief-recovery-development pathway to facilitate the identification of appropriate crisis mitigating interventions. Implementing UN entities therefore used adaptive management to ensure adequacy of the services in addressing demand-orientation and longer-term outcomes.

To what extent was the project aligned with the COVID-19 socio-economic responses of the participating countries (e.g., COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan)?

36. **The project was aligned with the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plans (SERPs) in many participating countries, but the design occurred before the SERPs were finalized.** The project was part of the general strategic plan of the United Nations called “A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19”²⁹ and specifically contributed to Pillar 3 “*Economic Response and Recovery: Protecting Jobs, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, and Informal Sector Workers*” of this system-wide framework³⁰. This UN framework also served to guide the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plans (SERPs) which were developed by UN Country Teams and Member States and stakeholders. However, while the concept note of the project was released in April 2020 and the Project Document for phase 2 in June 2020, many SERPs were published later, i.e. in or after August 2020³¹. The design of Phase 3 of the project was finalized in early 2021 but most outputs were a continuation of previous work. Several informants also mentioned that the implementing UN entities have limited country presence, reducing the capability to mainstream the project in the SERPs. Despite these limitations, the evaluation reviewed a purposeful sample

²⁷ [UN Development Account project | ECE](#)

²⁸ See for example: [Training and grant support for potential entrepreneurs and start-ups in the Sea of Azov region, Ukraine \(ilo.org\)](#)

²⁹ <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/UN-Framework-for-the-immediate-socio-economic-response-to-COVID-19.pdf>

³⁰ The UN framework built upon the UN General Assembly’s resolution on “Global solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) (A/RES/74/270)” and on the Secretary-General’s report on “Shared responsibility, global solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19”.

³¹ [UNSDG | Resources Library](#)

of 10 SERPs³² showing their systematic coverage of pillar 3 of the UN framework and some frequent references to or links with the outcome areas of the project, with a prevalence of connections with outcomes 4, 3 and 1A. The evaluation also found references sometimes to the project outputs. For example, the Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan for the Republic of Moldova (June 2020)³³ was informed by the ECE's survey-based assessment of the COVID-19-induced economic crisis and changes in non-tariff measures to contain the pandemic on MSMEs (May 2020) and by the Assessment on the impact of the crisis on female-owned enterprises (June 2020).

37. **Independently of the SERPs, implementing UN entities considered the COVID-19 socio-economic responses of participating countries during project design and implementation.** As noted in the earlier section, the project delivered many regional and national needs assessments and impact studies, which were a source for aligning project activities with the COVID-19 socio-economic responses of the participating countries. For example, UNECA organised, at the request of the Government of Mauritius and in association with the SADC Business Council, a regional seminar on the impact of Covid-19 on MSMEs in Southern Africa and the recommendations were intended to support the development of a roadmap for technical assistance at a regional level. In Latin America, ECLAC analysed the policies implemented by governments to face the MSME crisis generated by COVID-19. Experiences in countries having MSME fostering institutions were prioritized. Good practices were systematized and shared among public institutions in charge of MSMEs policies. Virtual meetings were organized to share implementation experiences about measures to help MSMEs in order to enhance the coordination of public policies for economic recovery. In the Gambia and Kenya, DESA ensured that the design and implementation of project activities were aligned with the national agendas to contribute to the relevance of the interventions and strengthen ownership by the countries. In the Gambia, work was carried out with the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (MOTIE), UNDP and the UNRCO. Project implementation served to strengthen the capacity of policy makers and other stakeholders to implement new policies and to pursue coherence among the already formulated policies in the country. Several evaluation informants indicated the project was relevant for bringing MSMEs to the policy debate where they were often absent.

5.2 Coherence

To what extent was the project complementary to, and coordinated with, other work undertaken by the implementing entities?

38. **The project was anchored in the mandates, comparative advantages, and programme budgets of the implementing UN entities, paving the way to complementarities with previous interventions.** The initial concept note and Project Document presented a detailed review of the respective mandates and comparative advantages of the implementing UN entities as a rationale for their contribution to the project³⁴. Among these

³² The evaluation selected 2 SERPs per region and countries where the project implemented interventions, i.e. Argentina, Bangladesh, Bhutan, BiH, Cameroon, Jordan, Moldova, Peru, Thailand, and Zimbabwe.

³³ [MDA Socioeconomic-Response-Plan_2020.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

³⁴ Many factors were put forward to stress the institutional coherence and rationale for the project. Some highlights include: (i) UNCTAD is a focal point in the UN on entrepreneurship and MSME policy as formally mandated by two United Nations General Assembly resolutions on Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development. UNGA resolutions /RES/71/221 and A/RES/73/225 both call on "the United Nations system, and in particular the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, to continue to provide support to and assist member States, at their request, to identify, formulate, implement and assess coherent policy measures on entrepreneurship and the promotion of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises". UNCTAD also provides technical assistance and capacity-building support to a number of developing economies, including advice and training to policy makers to inform and guide the development and implementation of *national entrepreneurship policies* based on UNCTAD's Entrepreneurship Policy Framework (EPF), which was endorsed by member states through a series of intergovernmental discussions and formally launched at the Ministerial Conference UNCTAD XIV in 2012. (ii) DESA brings relevant expertise from implementing the project "Enhancing national capacities for enhancing potentials of MSMEs in achieving SDGs in developing countries (MSME project)" funded by the UN Peace and Development Fund (PDF). (iii) ESCWA has developed and launched an SME information portal for the region with an aim to support entrepreneurs and small businesses access information needed to support their business. (iv) ECE has conducted rapid impact assessment of the COVID-19 pandemic on end-to-end supply chain activities, with a view to supporting national and regional recovery and long-term development efforts. (v) The ECA sub-regional office for Southern Africa leverages its mandate and implementation of a UNDA 13th tranche project for integrating a component to build capacities of MSMEs in Southern Africa to harness technological applications

enabling institutional factors, references were primarily made to supporting policy makers on MSME development as well as to building capacities of MSMEs and entrepreneurs. Significant evidence was found showing that the project was consistent with and sometimes a continuation of previous activities. UNCTAD for instance relied on its network of Empretec Centres to deliver activities on the capacity-building of entrepreneurs. In collaboration with centres and experienced Empretec trainers, UNCTAD delivered on-line trainings and developed demand-driven, customized tools to assist the centres in coping with short-term and medium-term pandemic-induced challenges to their business operations. UNCTAD also built on earlier contacts to support the establishment of e-Registration platforms in El Salvador and Benin, which was accelerated by the pandemic. ESCWA grounded its proposed contribution to the 1st phase of the project in previous meetings and surveys. ECLAC delivered courses that were the result of prior studies and a long preparatory phase of getting to know the issues of SMEs in e-commerce. ESCAP's "Bangladesh Startup Ecosystem Assessment Report"³⁵ delivered by the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division followed earlier work from another division.

39. **Interventions were often coordinated with and complementary to other internal activities that were underway in the implementing UN entities.** Within each implementing UN entity, internal complementarity was sought with other projects. ECE for example used the impact assessments on the novel COVID-19 pandemic on end-to-end supply chain activities, conducted under UNDA 10 "*Strengthening the national capacities of selected ECE countries for evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies to achieve SDGs*", to further draw two national assessments in Armenia and Moldova focusing on female-owned enterprises. DESA leveraged its expertise and understanding of country needs gained with the project "*Enhancing national capacities for enhancing potentials of MSMEs in achieving SDGs in developing countries (MSME project)*"³⁶ funded by the UN Peace and Development Fund (PDF), DESA complemented the PDF Kenya and The Gambia to improve contributions of MSMEs to social and economic resurgence after the pandemic and strengthen their roles as enduring institutions for jobs and entrepreneurship to reach those further behind. ESCAP took advantage of the Asia-Pacific MSME Policymakers Network established with the project to present and launch the 2nd edition of the "Policy Guidebook for (M)SME Development in Asia and the Pacific"³⁷, and its accompanying "Online Resource Centre for MSME Development". Several knowledge products from ESCAP were also co-financed by the project and other sources. For instance, the publication of *MSME Access to Finance: The Role of Digital Payments*³⁸ was funded from the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation for the studies on Cambodia and Nepal, and from the Government of Canada (through Global Affairs Canada, in the context of ESCAP's Catalysing Women's Entrepreneurship Programme), for the studies on Bangladesh and Samoa. The UNECA Sub-regional office for Southern Africa leveraged the project to build complementarities with an ongoing UNDA 13th Tranche project on innovation and technology for SMEs, which was approved at the start of 2020. ESCWA presented the DEPAR portal³⁹ and MSME toolbox⁴⁰ at the first Arab SME Summit⁴¹, organized in Jordan from 30 October to 1 November 2022 by another ESCWA project.

40. **The Surge project increased internal collaborations between departments in the implementing UN entities.** Evaluation informants often shared the perspective that the project has contributed to increased communication between internal departments that were used to working separately. Several project outputs were developed on the basis of internal cross-collaborations between teams. In UNCTAD for example, the SME Entrepreneurship Branch and the Empretec centres collaborated with the Trade and Gender team, the Competition Branch, and the Accounting team. Staff from these sections participated in coordination meetings, exchanged tools and new materials, and were consulted to identify beneficiaries. The UNCTAD Business registration team also commended the project for providing an opportunity to have an open channel of communication with the Entrepreneurship section. This contributed to sharing experiences and good practices

to address the impact of the pandemic. (vi) ECLAC has a long experience in studying the MSME performance in Latin America and in supporting public institutions in developing, implementing, and evaluating MSME fostering policies. (vii) ESCAP responds to ESCAP Resolution 70/5: Strengthening regional cooperation and capacity for enhanced trade and investment in support of sustainable development, and has planned to work with existing initiatives and organizations to support MSMEs in the region.

³⁵ [Bangladesh startup ecosystem assessment report | ESCAP \(unescap.org\)](#)

³⁶ [UNPDF | Enhancing national capacities for unleashing full potentials | United Nations](#)

³⁷ [Policy guidebook for MSME development in Asia and the Pacific, 2nd edition | ESCAP \(unescap.org\)](#)

³⁸ ESCAP. 2022. *MSME Access to Finance: The Role of Digital Payments, MSME Financing Series No.7*. Bangkok. Available at: <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/msme-financing-series-role-digital-payments>.

³⁹ [Communities | DEPAR \(unescwa.org\)](#)

⁴⁰ [MSME Toolbox Dashboard | DEPAR \(unescwa.org\)](#)

⁴¹ [Arab SMEs Summit | DEPAR \(unescwa.org\)](#)

and for these colleagues to be better positioned to promote e-Registration. In ECE, project activities helped to break down silos and foster collaboration between different teams working in the area of sustainable trade, innovation, circular economy, rational use of natural resources, PPPs and women's empowerment. In ESCWA, the work on the MSME toolbox involved 7 divisions, reflective of the 7 foci of the toolbox. Each specific team helped with research, data collection, and finalising materials. Weekly meetings were organized with the coordinators under each division. The teams used Trello to see what others were doing. In ECLAC, the International Trade and Integration Division and the Production, Productivity and Management Division jointly developed a course promoting digital economy and digital trade. In ECA, the ECA Subregional office for Southern Africa (SRO-SA) and the ECA Digital Center of Excellence (DCE) collaborated to jointly produce a study on the "Role of Digitalisation in Strengthening Capacities of Micro, Small and Medium-size Enterprises (MSMEs) in Southern Africa"⁴². The ECA Subregional Office for Southern Africa collaborated with the ECA Africa Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) to deliver two training courses on role of technology and innovation for MSMEs. In some cases, informants mentioned that the Surge coordination meetings organized by UNCTAD helped identify other units from the same implementing UN entity involved in the project. Despite such examples, other staff also stressed that the overall emergency context meant there was little time to pursue internal synergies as teams concentrated most often on activities under their direct responsibility and on achieving immediate results.

41. **The project enabled some level of technical collaboration and complementarities between implementing UN entities.** According to the concept note, the project was conceived to propose a *coherent approach* towards MSME resurgence reflecting the holistic and comprehensive nature of efforts needed to ensure and facilitate the MSMEs' green, resilient and inclusive recovery. Activities sought complementary and synergies in impact among participating agencies covering key interrelated components of an enabling entrepreneurship ecosystem. Inter-agency collaborations expanded the dissemination of agency-specific products while coordination and communications helped to avoid overlapping activities. Some joint products were also developed by the implementing UN entities, most often involving UNCTAD as one of the partners (see also next paragraph). UNCTAD and ESCWA, for example, cooperated to inform and build awareness on the e-registration platform for MSMEs. ESCWA leveraged US\$ 30,000 from the project to organize a capacity development workshop with UNCTAD to familiarize member states in the Arab region with the e-registration system. This generated interest and ESCWA was later able to mobilise US\$ 600,000 from different sources for two e-registration projects in Jordan and Syria⁴³. UNCTAD also produced a global report on market access and competition policy⁴⁴ to which ESCWA and the other Regional Economic Commissions contributed through advice, inputs, data, and review of the document. In Europe, ECE's COVID-19 impact assessment targeting MSMEs in Georgia⁴⁵ spurred discussions with the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development leading to the integration of Georgia's non-tariff measures (NTM) information into UNCTAD's NTM database⁴⁶. In Romania, ECE took up the Empretec methodology and provided grants for the *Asociatia pentru Antreprenoriat din Romania* (APAR) to conduct two in-person workshops of 9 days each which were attended by 60 MSMEs. In coordination with the Regional Economic Commissions, UNCTAD organized a series of regional capacity-building events to raise the awareness of policy makers on the role of competition-related policies for access to markets in the post-COVID-19 resurgence of MSMEs. UNCTAD, ESCAP and the Trade and Competition Commission of Thailand (TCCT) organized, for example, a conference in June 2022 on the Contribution of Competition Policy to the Resurgence of MSMEs post-COVID-19⁴⁷, to which DESA and ESCWA also contributed. UNECA and UNCTAD co-organised a Regional Policy Dialogue on "The role of Competition Policy in supporting MSMEs economic recovery in the post COVID-19 crisis" and collaborated on a case study on South Africa for the UNCTAD global report on "How Covid-19 affects MSME access to markets and competition: a review of key issues and recommendations for future action". Evaluation informants also mentioned that the project provided a unique and successful opportunity to learn about the work of the other implementing UN entities in the area of entrepreneurship and MSME development, therefore contributing to

⁴² [The role of digitalisation in strengthening capacities of Micro, Small and Medium-Size Enterprises \(MSMEs in Southern Africa to take advantage of the AfCFTA\): ECA Sub-Regional Office for Southern Africa \(SRO-SA\) & ECA Digital Centre of Excellence \(uneca.org\)](#)

⁴³ ESCWA also mobilized an additional US\$300,000 for an e-registration project in Sudan but the political context in the country did not allow for implementation.

⁴⁴ [The covid-19 pandemic impact on micro, small and medium sized enterprises: Market access challenges and competition policy \(unctad.org\)](#)

⁴⁵ [Impact COVID-19 Georgia.pdf \(unece.org\)](#)

⁴⁶ [UNCTAD TRAINS](#)

⁴⁷ [Conference on the Contribution of Competition Policy to the Resurgence of MSMEs post-COVID-19 | UNCTAD](#)

the “One UN” agenda. The project website⁴⁸, developed to gather outputs and increase their visibility and sustainability, was also commended by many informants. However, most of these collaborations had a bilateral character and the evaluation noted the difficulties for Regional Commissions to collaborate with one another.

42. **Several factors limited opportunities for amplifying synergies between interventions and for establishing a stronger global coherence.** From a total of 100 project outputs formulated across the three phases of the project logframe, only 6 were identified by the evaluation as joint outputs from 2 implementing UN entities (Figure 4, in yellow), out of which just 4 were effectively delivered (i.e., UNCTAD and ECLAC on outcome 5). Joint outputs were formulated for phase 3 of the project, owing to several factors such as the short duration of phases 1 and 2 and the need for a sufficient amount of time to design joint interventions identified after a national agenda, the number of implementing partners progressively increasing between phases 1 and 2, or the limited cross-institutional awareness of each partner’s expertise on and capacities for supporting MSMEs.

Figure 4: Project outputs per implementing UN entity and phase.

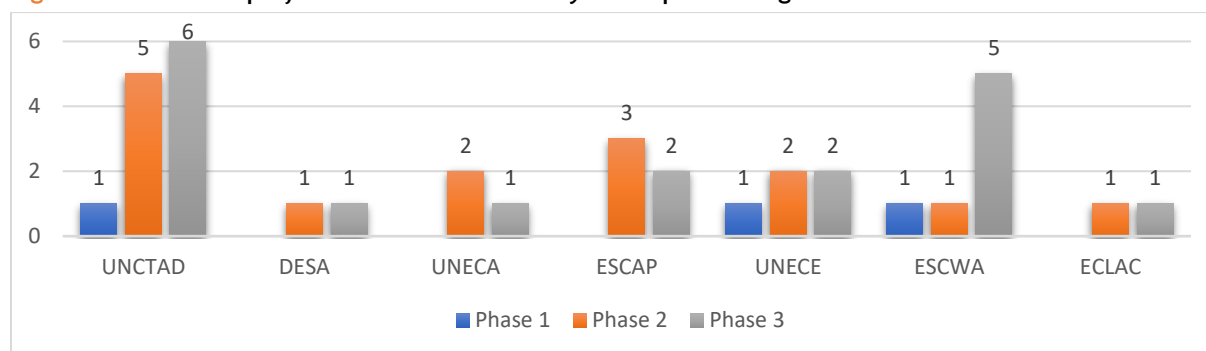
Phase	Outcome	Implementing UN Entity
Phase 3	Outcome 1A	UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
	Outcome 1B	UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
Phase 2	Outcome 2	UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
	Outcome 3	UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
Phase 1	Outcome 4	UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
	Outcome 5	UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD
		UNCTAD

Note: Joint outputs are referred to in yellow. Source: PRODOC.

43. Staff from different Regional Commissions attempted to establish synergies with other Regional Commissions for this project but with limited success. ESCWA for example reached out to ECE and ECA to seek their prior experience in supporting MSMEs with a view to uploading their materials on the DEPAR portal to be used in the region and globally. Despite several meetings and some exchange of materials, there was no concerted effort to populate the DEPAR portal. Several evaluation informants in UNCTAD and the Regional Commissions seconded the perspective of an ECE staff member that “everybody was too busy and there was no time to make the effort of cooperation”. According to a staff member, if “capacity development by Regional Commissions is to be jointly done, this is a long process cycle” not suited to a crisis situation. Evaluation informants also mentioned that the geographical focus and mandates of the Regional Commissions created various challenges to collaboration as the Regional Commissions come with different areas of expertise and niches. Furthermore, needs of Member States also varied across and within regions. In addition, although the EPF was found to be a comprehensive and flexible framework, none of the implementing UN entities outside of UNCTAD had the capacity to cover all pillars. On average, UN entities covered about 2 out of 5+1 project outcomes (Figure 5), i.e., they remained geographically and technically focused. Accordingly, several informants shared the perspective that the project was a compilation of activities and outputs based on a unifying and valid conceptual framework (i.e., the EPF) and cluster-based approach but with limited synergies, moderate coherence, and high overall complexity. According to a staff member at ESCAP, “The project did not install joint indicators and reporting. If there was to be a joint event, it would indicate specifically who would deliver what. It was not about the project producing a pool of papers without referring to one or another agency; products were assigned by entity. From then on, it was clear agencies would have different streams of work.” Some evaluation informants questioned the cost and benefit of a global project in a crisis context compared to several inter-regional projects (see section on Efficiency), despite this project enabling strong knowledge exchange between participants.

⁴⁸ [Home | UNCTAD](#)

Figure 5: Number of project outcomes covered by the implementing UN entities.



Source: Final report.

To what extent has the project been coordinated with, and complementary to, the response of other UN entities (Secretariat and non-Secretariat) to COVID-19 in delivering socio-economic support to Member States?

44. **The project triggered some collaboration with other UN entities at national, regional, and global levels.** At global level, UNCTAD partnered with UNITAR to provide the e-learning course “*Policymaking: Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development*”⁴⁹, which was followed by 317 policymakers from over 104 countries. ESCAP also published a series of knowledge products on MSME Financing⁵⁰ that benefitted from a partnership between ESCAP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). Complementarities with other UN organisations were also at national level. In several cases, the UN RCOs and UNCTs were referred to as project partners. In the Gambia, the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment together with DSDG/DESA and the UN Country Team organized a high-level policy implementation forum in December 2020 on supporting MSMEs in the post-Covid-19 pandemic era, focusing on promoting MSME formalization⁵¹. In Europe and Central Asia, UNDP was often involved substantively and/or logistically in the delivery of online or hybrid workshops and dissemination events. In Armenia for example, ECE, UNDP, and other partners organized in March 2022 a conference on “Unveiling Market Opportunities for Boosting Residential Energy Efficiency and Alleviating Energy Poverty”⁵². UN Women also contributed to the development of a roadmap in Moldova based on the recommendations outlined in a study on women-led MSMEs, conducted by the project. Country office staff from several UN organisations including FAO, UNDP, OHCHR, and UNHCR also attended some of the online trainings or events delivered by the project. Despite such examples, evaluation informants were often of the opinion that the project had not maximised partnerships with other UN entities owing to several constraints or limitations, including the respective crisis response priorities and challenges in UN development agencies, limited staffing capacities from the project to focus on partnership building at global level, limited funds directed towards creating synergies with other agencies, lack of dedicated outputs and indicators referring to joint work with other agencies, and the lack of country presence of the implementing UN entities (see also §46).

45. **The project was implemented with a range of partners that complemented the responses of the UN entities.** Besides UN entities, project implementation involved a range of other partners at international, regional and national levels that helped to complement the responses from other UN organizations. Expert speakers in ECE events included, for example, important players in greening the MSMEs agenda, including the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), World Trade Organization (WTO), Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and a number of national authorities and private sector players. In Southern Africa, the project contributed to strengthen a partnership between the ECA Subregional office for Southern Africa (SRO-SA), the SADC Business Council and national chambers of commerce and industry in all 11 Southern African countries. Joint events were organized by ECA and the SADC Business Council at the SADC Industrialisation Week in Malawi and the Dubai Expo 2020. ECA also developed a digital platform on technology and innovation for MSMEs to

⁴⁹ [E-Learning Course on Policymaking: Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development | UNCTAD](#)

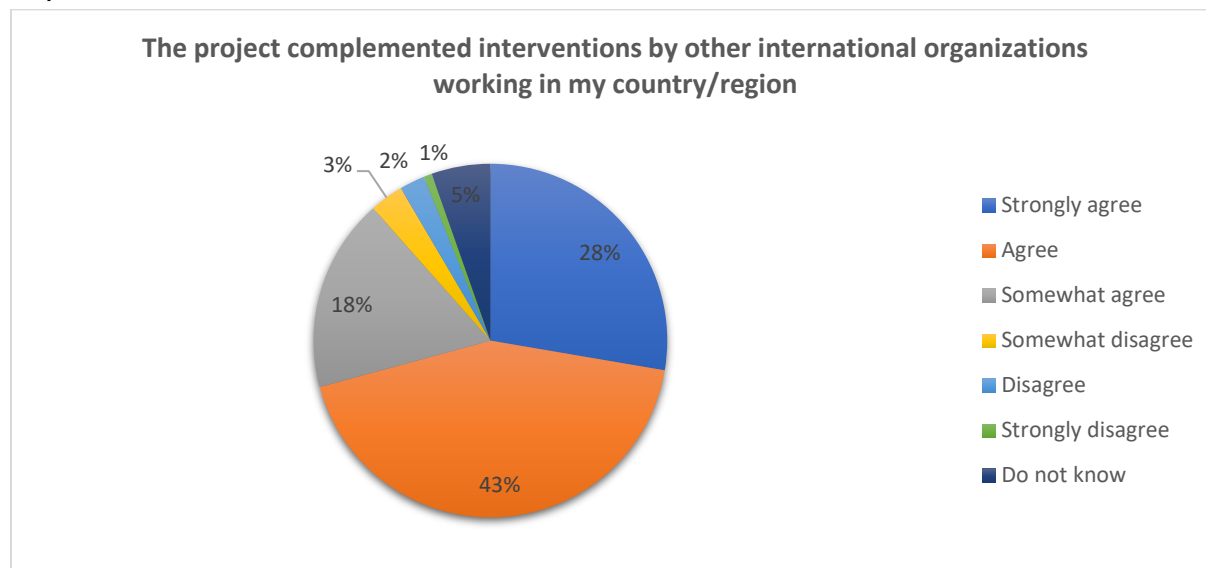
⁵⁰ [ESCAP’s MSME Financing Series | ESCAP \(unescap.org\)](#)

⁵¹ [High Level Policy Forum on MSMEs | United Nations Development Programme \(undp.org\)](#)

⁵² [From buildings to small companies. UNECE supports countries to reap benefits of improving energy efficiency | UNECE](#)

be hosted by the SADC Business Council. According to the evaluation survey, the majority of respondents were of the opinion that the project complemented interventions implemented by other international organizations working in their country/region (Figure 6). As illustrated by a private sector representative in North Macedonia, “A lot of organizations were conducting projects regarding COVID. However, this one was the only one providing actual information on practical ways to mitigate some challenges arising from the pandemic”.

Figure 6: Perceived complementarity of the project with other interventions according to the survey (n=130 respondents).



Source: Independent evaluation survey, 2023.

46. **Partnerships with other UN entities and organisations proved challenging to harness.** Despite the above and some other cases, the evaluation found that the project was not able to establish a cohesive ecosystem of strategic partnerships. The initial concept note of the project considered that project governance would establish working groups on each outcome area, including “Digital economy solutions for advancing SME resilience (ITC, ITU, UNCDF, UN/CEFACT)”, “Resource Efficient and Cleaner production (led by UNEP and UNIDO)”, “Zoning/urban issues (led by UN-Habitat)”, “Employment (led by ILO)”. The Project Document for Phase 2 of the project also mentioned that “Close cooperation and partnerships should also be sought with World Bank, IFC.” This proved over-ambitious. In practice, the evaluation found limited global collaboration with UN entities also engaged in responding to the crisis and providing support to MSMEs, such as the ILO⁵³, UN Women⁵⁴, or FAO⁵⁵. The evaluation also did not find evidence of the project attempting to leverage funding from other UN COVID-19 response mechanisms, such as the UN COVID-19 Response & Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) which financed projects at the national or subnational level in some of the countries where the project was implemented. Some informants stressed that Member States were looking for financial resources to support MSME resurgence, which is rather in the realm of the development banks. However, connections with the World Bank and the regional banks were limited. Partnerships appeared, therefore, primarily based on a bottom-up approach, relying on legacy collaborations or immediate opportunities, but not necessarily globally strategized and pursued. It should be noted though that the project did not dedicate specific resources to such activities (see next section).

5.3 Efficiency

How well coordinated was the process for the response among the entities implementing the joint project?

⁵³ [wcms_854253.pdf \(ilo.org\)](#)

⁵⁴ [WEA-ActionBrief3-SMEs.pdf \(weeps.org\)](#)

⁵⁵ [COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme | Resource Mobilization | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(fao.org\)](#)

47. **Despite unprecedented circumstances with the Covid-19 pandemic, and the lack of clear dedicated resources, the administrative, management and financial processes for the response were well coordinated overall.** According to the initial concept note, Phase 1 of the project aimed to implement two components. Component 1 was to be led by ESCWA and planned to establish a virtual knowledge hub. Component 2 was to be led by UNCTAD and targeted the provision of hands-on assistance to countries on several sub-components grouped as 1+5 thematic clusters⁵⁶. Although the narrative of the concept note did not identify an agency in charge of the overall coordination of the project, the budget featured the output “Coordination and proposal preparation” for which UNCTAD was to be provided US\$ 27,000. This lack of clarity in the initial setup of the coordination of the project was reflected in the evaluation interviews, informants from the various implementing UN entities, including UNCTAD and ESCWA, having different perspectives on the scope of work and responsibilities for the coordination of the process during the first phase of the project (see also section on Effectiveness). The Project Document for Phase 2 clarified that UNCTAD would be the lead agency for the overall coordination of the project. This role was reflected in the budget of the project, with UNCTAD receiving US\$ 40,000 for “Output –.1 – Overall coordination”, but not included in the project logframe. A Project Steering Committee was to monitor project delivery and make necessary adjustments to ensure smooth implementation⁵⁷. In practice, evaluation informants distinguished three different periods regarding the coordination process. The first period coincided largely with the preparation and implementation of Phase 1 of the project (from April to June 2020) during which the DA-PMT was reported by UN entities’ informants as having a very active coordination role. The second period spanned from August 2020 until April 2021, covering Phase 2 and part of Phase 3 of the project. It had regular (i.e., about bi-monthly) Project Steering Committee meetings coordinated by UNCTAD. Then, from April 2021 until the closure of the project, a third period saw the Project Steering Committee meetings attended by a larger number of participants (up to 40 participants). Project Steering Committee meetings held during the 1st, 2nd and 3rd phases were not technical but provided room to discuss and align activities. According to an informant who attended the 3rd phase meetings, “they were also used by UNCTAD to propose participants to build synergies on topics, but the project was so broad that this seldom happened (*sic*)”. Most often, the evaluation informants reported that these 3rd phase meetings were useful to learn about the activities of other implementing entities. However, the complexity of the project also made these 3rd phase meetings at times quite long and difficult to follow. Furthermore, the different time zones made it challenging for all staff to participate. In terms of administrative and financial management, project staff in UNCTAD reported an efficient and supportive DA team. This was valued as, according to a staff in UNCTAD, “the UN requirements to obtain the funds are onerous. There is a need for expertise for administrative management and administrative rules to prepare requests and reporting.” Monthly financial statements were provided to project management in UNCTAD. The DA also helped in understanding who among the UN entities was behind schedule and who was on track. According to an informant in UNCTAD, “In the project management meeting, one UN entity could have a narrative saying that all was going great but then, with the DA, we would see the financial delivery was only 12%. Then we knew we had to push delivery. The DA provided the implementation rate. Very helpful.”⁵⁸ To support its internal coordination, UNCTAD specifically designed in April 2021 a new product, the project monitoring dashboard, consolidating information on UNCTAD’s planned outputs and how each intervention was progressing. Several informants from UNCTAD reported this as a very useful, centralized tool. The dashboard was regularly updated, despite being demanding to maintain. Collecting information from staff was time-consuming. Furthermore, the dashboard was very detailed, recording information at the activity level (some outputs could entail a dozen activities) and across 11 data fields. In preparation for the progress report for Phases 1 & 2 in May 2021, the dashboard was used to compile information from all the implementing UN entities. Despite most informants reporting appropriate and efficient project coordination considering the circumstances, informants in UNCTAD, and across the partner entities, shared the perspective that the project could have benefited from additional staffing capacities dedicated to global coordination as well as to coordination with countries and UNCTs, and to partnership building.

⁵⁶ The concept note indicated the creation of the following clusters: A- Access to Resources (Component 1); B- Entrepreneurship and business skills facilitation; C - Business facilitation; D- Access to Finance/financial literacy; E- Access to Technology; F- Access to Markets.

⁵⁷ As per the Project Document for Phase 2: “Project Steering Committee – Representatives from UNCTAD, DESA, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA will have online meetings once in two months to monitor project delivery to ensure smooth and steady implementation. Representatives from all seven entities will meet on an as-needed basis for important decisions that affect all seven entities.” (p. 53).

⁵⁸ As a side note, DA Focal Points reported that meetings of the DA Focal Points network became more dynamic and substantive with the response to the Covid crisis.

48. **The technical coordination of the response proved sometimes difficult to install and sustain.** According to the concept note (Phase 1), working groups and task forces were to be formed around thematic clusters to support a coordinated approach and complementary efforts among participating agencies. It was initially envisaged that members of these task forces would include the implementing UN entities as well as other UN partners. The Project Document (Phase 2) narrowed down the prospective setup for the clusters' technical coordination by referring to Task Forces comprised of experts from the implementing entities. According to an informant, "The discontinuation of the original concept note was positive because it was unrealistic. The problem is that staff members were on other jobs, no one exclusively working on the project. It was time-consuming to coordinate and staff had different agendas and there were different priorities between partners." In practice, this cluster-based thematic coordination was loosely implemented but fluid, sometimes involving sharing of information between several implementing agencies, though more often one-on-one bilateral and direct exchanges. As noted earlier, interviewees reported information sharing with UNCTAD and sometimes directly between the Regional Commissions "but then entities were doing their own part". One of the cluster leads for example proposed that the Regional Commissions undertake a global analysis on market access and COVID-19 to develop a joint policy paper, but this did not work: "Colleagues wanted it but there were so many things to do. Project managers did not approve it and it was not in the logframe." In that sense, the technical coordination of the project and its contribution to the efficiency of the response was eventually more closely aligned with the aim stated in the initial concept note as "(t)he effort will help to enhance coordination in the area of the MSME promotion in the UN system, and avoid confusion, duplication, and waste of resources". Informants in UNCTAD and the Regional Commissions shared the perspective that directing adequate staffing capacities specifically to technical coordination may have facilitated the establishment of stronger synergies between the implementing entities. Furthermore, despite most UN informants being supportive of the global architecture of the project, including as a modality to enlarge partnerships and seize the benefits of a "One UN" system approach, a few staff from the Regional Commissions suggested to commit more time in the future to analyse the added value of global/inter-regional versus regional projects. It was argued that coordination costs increase with the complexity of the project and with the number of actors involved. As indicated by a staff in ECE, options to balance would include designing a global project or inter-regional or regional projects "and then coming together for dissemination at global level". Therefore, "the added value of a global project should be thoroughly assessed before project design. But during Covid it was a global challenge. [...] Regional projects might have been an option. If going through inter-regional projects, their added value should also be well assessed. But in crisis, with the short timing and need to bring everybody under the project, one needs to cut some corners."

How did the three-phase budgeting and programming approaches impact the efficient delivery of the project?

49. **The phased approach was found to be a valid mechanism to cope with the uncertainty of the crisis.** The project was developed and implemented under a three-phase budgeting and programming approach: Phase 1 spanned over 2 months (May-June 2020), Phase 2 was implemented in 6 months (July-December 2020), and Phase 3 was provided a total of 18 months (initially January-December 2021, extended twice, first to March 2022 and then to June 2022). On the programming side, during Phase 1 various entities were able to leverage existing products to deliver some immediate responses to countries that had requested assistance. In general, during Phase 2, the project contributed to develop tools, deliver technical support, and customizing materials required by countries. Phase 3 enabled implementation at country level of the tools developed during phase 2 and, building on country experience, to collect good practices and lessons learned that further informed policy makers. Technical staff interviewed by the evaluation were largely positive about the 3-phased approach. Interviewees recalled that this was a very difficult period and that it was unclear when the pandemic would end. Although a clear project plan for the entire period would have been beneficial, the context was too unstable to warrant it. According to a staff member in one of the Regional Commissions, the 3-phased approach "was the optimal and rational thing to do". It was well aligned with the uncertain circumstances and supportive of a learning process. According to staff at UNCTAD, "Phases helped adaptive management" as "each phase was an innovative stage that gave a chance to introduce new things not foreseen at the beginning". Incidentally, as put forward by a staff member in one of the Regional Commissions, it shows that the UN had an agile way of thinking to cope with the challenge. On a few occasions, a more nuanced assessment was conveyed by interviewees. Several informants reported that the phased approach added to the complexity and uncertainty of the project and made it more difficult to understand its design, and that a Theory of Change was missing.

50. **The project would have benefited from providing clearer visibility on the funding available.** From a financial standpoint, the five Development Account COVID-19 projects, including this project, were funded from various DA funding sources. This entailed relying on interest savings, residual balances from the 10th and other closed tranches, and savings from the 11th tranche. Accordingly, the overall available funding was confirmed by phase. It was determined in late 2021 that the combined proposed phase 3 budgets submitted by the five projects exceeded the funding that became available by 1 million USD. As a result, the projects were requested in November 2021 to reduce their proposed phase 3 budgets, and for this project, the budget was reduced by \$310,000, from a total of \$3,165,500 to \$2,855,500. UNCTAD received the final instalment for phase 3 in December 2021. Due to the requirement to reduce the budget and revise the planned activities for phase 3, all five projects were extended by three months to March 2022. However, according to informants at UNCTAD, this initial 3-month extension did not fully account for the late final instalment in the context of a global crisis. A UN staff member mentioned, for example, that if implementing UN entities “want to recruit a consultant, they need funds, then to identify candidates, then 2-3 weeks to issue the contract, then the consultant needs to do the work. That can take 3 months in normal circumstances”. However, the context of the pandemic imposed additional delays. Some activities that were planned to be delivered in person had to be delivered online instead in 2022, which required time for reprogramming based on the new budget. Furthermore, counterparts were also challenged as there were uneven capacities in beneficiary countries to put in place some of the interventions. Accordingly, activities for which disbursements were made shortly before the closure of the project in June 2022 were still underway several months later. Informants indicated that this contributed to the delayed completion of the final report of the project, together with limited resources for project monitoring and reporting in the Regional Commissions, particularly when the DA Focal Points were not associated with project implementation (see next section). Some staff also felt that the phased approach created a lack of visibility on the funds that would be mobilized by the DA. This was sometimes found to be a challenge when designing the project, as it prevented setting clear expectations and a clear design. Better visibility on the resources in the pipeline could have helped to construct a different logframe, which would have been designed at phase 2 and used at phase 3 with little revision. According to a UN staff member, a clearer view on the funding available for the entire duration of the project could have helped the teams to consider additional scenarios, such as focusing some of the activities on a more limited number of countries with greater depth.

5.4 Effectiveness

To what extent did the programme (Development Account) and project governance and management structures and processes enable, or hinder, the effective implementation of the joint project and the achievement of its results?

51. **The Development Account programme, as a funding modality, was an effective tool in supporting the design of a global response to support the resurgence of MSMEs post-COVID-19, with remaining questions about it being the most adequate tool in comparison with other UN agencies and mechanisms with a mandate for humanitarian response.** DA is a regular budget capacity development programme. It funds, among others, operational workshops, advisory services, and travels to countries to deliver capacity-building activities. Projects are approved by the General Assembly as part of the programme budget for the first year in the biennium. The project implementation period (from receipt of funds by implementing entities to the financial closure of the project) usually is 4 years, following a design or planning period that takes about 1.5 years.⁵⁹ Given project specificities and circumstances, and, possibly, limited knowledge of the DA rules and procedures, evaluation participants reported different views on the duration of DA-funded project cycles, the requirements for partnerships and indicators, and the DA governance structure. The converging perception is that a regular DA-funded project cycle is long and onerous to plan for. Nevertheless, to provide a swift and global answer to the COVID-19 crisis, an adaptive management approach was adopted. These procedures were made flexible, the design phase was significantly shortened, and a phased planning was introduced. For the five COVID-19 projects, the Surge project included, the GA approval of project concepts was skipped, while the endorsement by the DA Steering Committee remained and the use of residual balances from closed

⁵⁹ Under regular tranches of DA, the design or planning phase of projects starts with the launch of a DA new tranche by the USG for Economic and Social Affairs and the development of concept notes by 10 DA entities, and ends with the approval of the project documents by the DA Programme Management Team and the endorsement of DA budget and funded projects by the General Assembly.

and closing projects to fund the five projects was retrospectively reported in the fascicle for 2022, which was submitted to the GA in 2021.⁶⁰ Hence, the concept note of the Surge project and 1.5 years of implementation period was endorsed to initially respond as quickly as possible to the urgent requests from Member States to address the socio-economic fallouts of the pandemic. It was widely reported by informants that this was the best approach to the circumstances, as no one knew how long the crisis would last, with expectations that it could be just a few months. An advantage of this alternative path to access residual balances from closed and closing projects, reported to this evaluation by a DA representative, is the almost immediate availability of resources. This promptness is praised by stakeholders in many implementing entities as a 'unique' achievement.

52. Nevertheless, when the DA was compared with other UN agencies and mechanisms with mandate and resources to provide humanitarian assistance in a crisis context, informants referred to the difficulties to be as prepared as these other agencies. The strategy, then, was to focus on post-crisis recovery and development, as a suitable DA approach to actively support countries and, specifically to the Surge project, MSMEs. Yet, informants from the regions referred that adaptations to the project document guidelines kept the highly demanding requirements of the fund and this was assessed by them as an issue to be reviewed if the fund is to be used in future crises. A better crisis-fit approach would have involved an even more agile track, and a focus on deliverables of immediate effect to mitigate the crisis' impact on MSMEs and government policies (e.g., enhanced access to emergency finance and digital tools for trade). Informants shared expectations about the DA-PMT's review of the five COVID-19 evaluations toward helping to inform the DA's role in dealing with future shocks.⁶¹ Among members of the project coordination team, for instance, there are ideas about the usefulness of the Entrepreneurship Policy Framework as an overarching tool with relevant potential outputs for crisis response, as discussed later. Considering that the EPF is the key framework of UNCTAD to fulfil its role as the UN focal point for entrepreneurship and MSME policy for sustainable development (RES/71/221 and A/RES/73/225), EPF-related ideas can be considered as a tool to support crisis response funded by the UNDA.

53. **Project governance and management structures and processes, overseen by the DA-PMT, supported a quick and overall effective response in light of the UNDA standards, identifying available resources and potential partnerships that ensured the delivery of an impressive number of outputs and achievements at the outcome level, even if joint delivery between implementing entities took time to come to fruition and some DA-FPs were ambivalent about the extent to which they were involved.** Addressing a crisis of global scope such as the COVID-19 pandemic was new to the DA's management structure. Seeking to find quick and effective ways to deal with it, the Head of the Capacity Development Programme Management Office of DESA, in his role of assisting the DA Programme Manager, sent out a memo to the DA focal points in the 10 implementing entities on 18 March 2020, inviting them to a Skype call to discuss the DA's COVID-19 support to Member States, in particular the possible reorientation of the ongoing 10th, 11th and 12th tranche projects, on 20 March 2020. The meeting minutes indicate that the participants were informed of two proposals for potential response initiatives from ESCWA (on SMEs) and from DESA (on statistics). A follow-up meeting was convened on 26 March, where five other project proposals were discussed, and other implementing entities were requested to provide comments on those proposals, as well as submit any additional proposals. After these extensive consultations with DA-implementing entities, DA-PMT selected five topics considered as the most relevant to a socio-economic response to COVID-19 and built on comparative advantages of DA-implementing entities. This included strengthening the capacity and resilience of MSMEs to mitigate the economic and social impact of the pandemic – ESCWA's proposal. The preliminary idea of this project, as reflected in its 1-page concept note, focused on digital tools to support SMEs. UNCTAD further enriched it with additional ideas, such as the e-registration platform and entrepreneurship for SMEs. The project concept note finally took shape with the inputs of more entities, including DESA and other four regional commissions. As more implementing entities joined the project, UNCTAD supported the clustering of activities in 5+1 outcomes, with implementing entities taking outcome leadership according to their expertise and capacities. This structuring of the project governance, with DA-PMT's oversight, and the management structure with UNCTAD in the overall coordinating role and each implementing entity leading the operational implementation at

⁶⁰ A report commentator referred that "this has happened in the past when developing projects using residual balances from the tranche budget, but has never happened, nor is allowed to happen, for regular tranche projects."

⁶¹ An updated information about this review received in feedback to this evaluation report refers that "this programme-level evaluation had to be cancelled due to the delay with the completion of four of the five project evaluations (only one has been completed to date, and two are expected to spill into 2024). A meeting of the DA focal points to discuss the findings of the five project evaluations will be organized by DA-PMT as soon as they are completed; the DA's role in dealing with future shocks would certainly be discussed at this meeting."

regional level ensured the global and regional scope of the project delivery. At the level of the ongoing processes, implementing entities relied more on partnerships with local and regional institutions rather than coordination within the larger project management structure. The online meetings of the steering committee and the smaller-scale coordinating role of the task forces to weave efforts worked to a limited extent, as these meetings were not as regular as planned in the project document. The result was a high delivery rate with limited inter-agency coordination in the process. Yet, this independent evaluation identified that the higher-level governance and management structures and processes were effective in bringing the project together with identifiable results at the outcome level.

54. Given the uncertainties about how the pandemic would evolve, and considering the pressing immediate needs, a first phase of the project was launched with a limited number of outputs (n=7), in May 2020. It resulted from meetings of the DA Network in March and April 2020. From April 2020, these became bi-weekly meetings of the DA focal points. It is noteworthy that this process was not recollected as such by the informants of this evaluation. There is a perception that not all DA-FPs were involved from the start, that this inclusion was gradual and followed advances in the project. Informants acknowledged that these meetings also included staff from the implementing entities to discuss the next steps to be taken, the different country and regional needs, and the installed regional expertise to propose responsive actions⁶². This trickled down into several smaller-scale bilateral meetings at the regional and local levels. It became clear that the DA's mandate on development had to be taken into consideration when planning the project outputs and adapting activities associated with crisis response (e.g., providing direct health support was out of the scope of possible answers). The DA's development mandate, instead, could support the strengthening of institutions that needed preparedness and resilience to design supportive measures in a post-pandemic recovery perspective. Hence, out of five projects, the Surge was one with the objective of developing and implementing capacity-building tools for governments and MSMEs to facilitate the resurgence and strengthen the resilience of MSMEs in developing countries and economies in transition. There was a need to bring the relevant expertise of different entities quickly on board. Because of its global mandate and expertise on entrepreneurship and MSME policy, UNCTAD became the lead agency of the Surge project, and coordinated the elaboration of a project document to deliver a global response with more entities. For the first time, the DA-PMT was intensively involved in the oversight and monitoring of project implementation, with more direct contacts with the technical cooperation staff – rather than going through organizational-level DA focal points. “The DA PMT was in contact with the DA-FPs but had more contacts with the project managers than it would normally have.” (DA-PMT representative). This was made possible by the small number of projects responding to the COVID-19 crisis. This centralized approach allowed for a swift response at a global level, with a record time endorsement of the concept note and the Phase 1 budget by the DA Steering Committee. DA-PMT's oversight and direct contact with technical staff resulted in the institutionalization of periodic meetings with DA-FPs and other stakeholders. UNCTAD DA-FP, represented by the Technical Cooperation Section (TCS), served as a bridge between the DA-PMT and UNCTAD project teams, especially at the design stage. UNCTAD TCS also provided substantive support to the UNCTAD project coordinator in the draft of the concept note of the MSME Surge project. During the implementation stage, UNCTAD DA-FP participated in several project Steering Committee meetings and addressed questions from project teams. UNCTAD, as the leading entity, and under the guidance of the DA-PMT, communicated directly with the project focal points to monitor progress. This monitoring was supported by UNCTAD Budget and Project Finance Section through the sharing of financial information on implementation rate by the implementing entity. This, and the evolution of the pandemic, brought more clarity about the needs and the implementing capacity of UN entities and member states in responding to the crisis. It supported the design and implementation of phases 2 and 3. There is consensus between informants that the introduction of the phased planning was consistent with the uncertainties of the pandemic crisis, and they would not recommend another way to respond to it, despite reporting some bottlenecks.

55. There are different perspectives on how well the DA procedures were adapted for crisis response. Following the requirements for joint proposals as much as possible, according to informants, felt like squeezing a 4-year long implementation period into 1.5 years. It was suggested by some informants that, instead of a concept note and a PRODOC, a crisis response could have required only one of them. Outcomes were over-ambitious for a 2-year project, but project planners felt they had to comply with the DA requirements, even if this would imply challenges to deliver at the outcome level. Indeed, some outputs were delivered after the end of the project (see next section). There was an internal quality control of the PRODOC with multiple

⁶² Other informants referred to these meetings as more about sharing information than coordination between implementing entities.

inputs, oversight by the DA-PMT to ensure a 'good enough quality' level, however, a higher-level involvement of all relevant DA-FPs in dialogues and feedback loops from the start and the gender review and other quality assurance steps (i.e., internal clearance processes of the implementing entities of interim documents) could have improved the quality of the PRODOC further. For instance, it could have ensured that project indicators cover the SMART⁶³ criteria and be better aligned with a crisis response context – some were the same Empretec-based indicators in use for the past 10 years. In one example suggested by an informant, instead of having an indicator on increased sales of MSMEs, the project could have one about ensuring that a certain percentage of MSMEs that received project support remain in business. Informants confirmed that designing the logframe of the project was challenging because of the scale of the COVID-19 crisis, the number of implementing entities involved, and the uncertainty about the level of funding associated with the phased approach. The high number of planned activities and countries would imply a thin distribution of financial resources. What some project teams did to manage the uncertainty of resource availability and ensure delivery in the Surge project was saving resources from regular projects. Informants acknowledged that these managerial and processual arrangements were the best that could have been done during the crisis and the uncertainties associated with it, but also acknowledged that, even with some trimming in the proposed activities, the end result was less focused than would usually be the case. A lesson learned is the need to assess what crises the DA programme is equipped to respond to (e.g., economic, financial, market, health, climate, national, regional, global, etc.) and what tools can be immediately made available to countries in need. For instance, the e-registration platform was mentioned as an existing technology for e-government that was rapidly scaled up to respond to the needs of MSMEs in the COVID-19 crisis.

56. **The project governance and management structures and processes were effective in supporting bilateral collaborations between UNCTAD and individual Regional Commissions in delivering project outputs, but there were limited project-level management mechanisms. Nevertheless, the operating mechanisms supported communication and seeded exchanges of information between regions with increased joint deliveries toward the end of the project.** From the perspective of the DA-PMT, according to interview data, one of the purposes of bringing all implementing entities together in bi-weekly meetings was to foster dialogue and help collaboration for a quick response to the crisis. It seems that this did not represent an inter-entity coordination function of these meetings, but a sharing of knowledge to be taken up by other coordination structures. A project coordination team, with two representatives of UNCTAD and one of each of the other implementing entities, was set up. The actual coordination was mostly centralized in UNCTAD, as the project lead. The perception of some members of the PCT is diverse in relation to how the PCT worked, with some of them referring to themselves as focal points rather than members of the PCT, and others not providing substantive evidence on how the PCT, as a whole-of-project coordination structure, worked. Evidence from deliverables indicates that collaboration was bilateral, mostly between UNCTAD and individual Regional Commissions, and built on previous successful collaborations. Some informants referred to parallel streams of work without coordination with the work of other Regional Commissions. Others saw the Surge project as an opportunity to learn about what other Regional Commissions were doing and to set the stage for future collaboration. For instance, ESCAP, ESCWA and ECA exchanged information about the DEPAR portal, exchanged materials, and participated in meetings; ECE and ESCAP acknowledged that mutual cooperation can be facilitated by them having member States being in both commissions. Interviewees from all implementing entities referred to attending events organized by other entities. An advanced level of cooperation was achieved by ECLAC and ECA (through its Africa Trade Policy Center (ATPC) and IDEP), on the online course material on competition policies delivered in Portuguese. They engaged in initial conversations and, because the pace of implementing this specific output was different in each entity, this was an asynchronous cooperation, mostly involving the sharing of course materials. Yet, this is reported by ECLAC as a successful South-South cooperation during a turbulent crisis context.

57. UNCTAD, as the lead agency, focused on bilateral cooperation according to regional expertise and planned outputs. UNCTAD cooperated with ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, ECA, and ECE in the delivery of outputs such as "The COVID-19 pandemic impact on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises – Market access challenges and competition policy" (phase 1, output F7). With ECLAC, UNCTAD collaborated in delivering a training course on competition law and policy, an online course on competition and SMEs and cross-border trade, outputs on competition policy, and technical assistance for projects on Asia exports in the LAC region. With ESCAP, UNCTAD collaborated with the creation of the ASEAN SME policymakers' network, and a discussion paper and meetings proceedings of this network. With ESCWA, UNCTAD collaborated in actions on topics such as e-registration, and the organization of an event on digitalization. This partnership grew

⁶³ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound.

stronger and new partnerships emerged in the area of competition. With ECE, UNCTAD collaborated with a report on SMEs, and counted on ECE speakers contributing to its workshops. This is consistent with UNCTAD's traditional approach of engaging in bilateral cooperation, rather than interregional. A factor associated with this approach is the source of demands for assistance, which normally are country- or regionally based. In addition to collaboration between implementing entities, the Surge project also promoted intra-agency cooperation. This was reported within UNCTAD, involving Empretec, the competition and consumer protection policies branch and the investment branch, within ESCAP, on the Bangladesh-related outputs, including the UNCTAD Voluntary Peer Review of Competition law and policy of Bangladesh, with a focus on SME, and within ECLAC, between the economic affairs and international trade divisions. This independent evaluation identified that, toward the end of the project, in phase 3, there were more joint deliverables involving different Regional Commissions (e.g., the online events on competition policy and MSMEs held in phase 3), which suggests that cooperation increased as the project advanced. A lesson learned from these collaborations is that cooperation depends on a combination of countries' needs, sources of resources (e.g., donors' requirements, modalities of funding and what they allow to be funded), continuous presence of staff and time for coordination. This makes planning for cooperation a challenge, especially under a global crisis of the COVID-19 scope. Nevertheless, higher collaboration could have been fostered had the project coordination team worked more effectively and planned joint outputs. Hence, despite Surge's opportunities for cooperation, actual results of these initial efforts are at an early stage.

To what extent has the project contributed to the expected outcomes as enunciated in the project document?

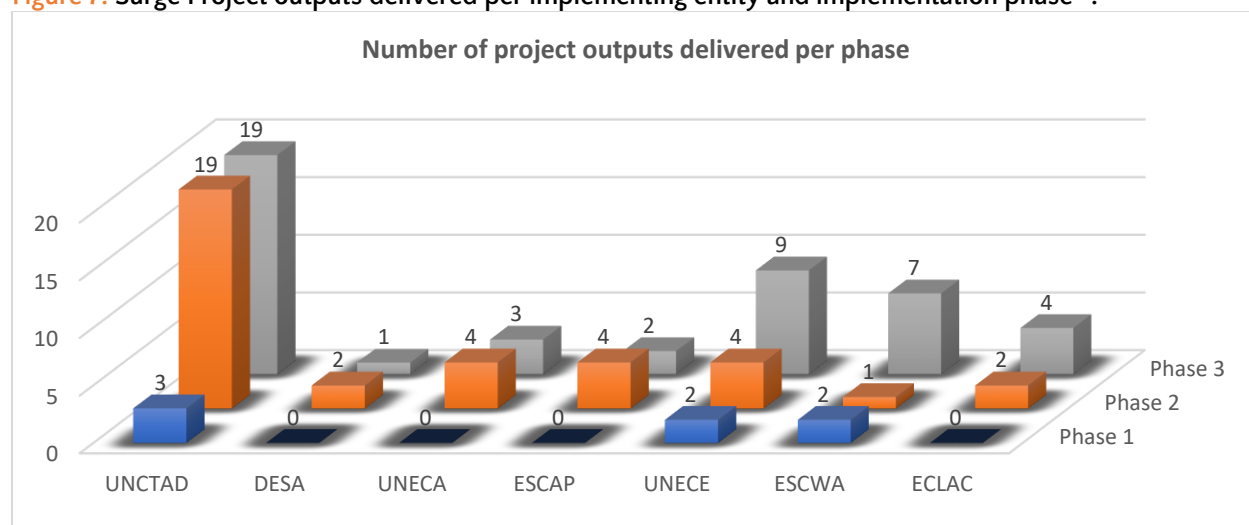
58. **Eighty-six outputs were delivered across the world's regions, built on the expertise of UNCTAD and the Regional Commissions, and some degree of inter-entity collaboration. These deliverables composed a mosaic of actions that, on a global scale, contributed to achieving the outcomes enunciated in the project document.** Implementing entities adapted resources and expertise that they already had and expanded (mostly bilateral) inter-entity partnerships to quickly attend to the most urgent needs of entrepreneurs and policymakers to support MSMEs in the first 2-3 months of the project. These actions comprised making information digitally available⁶⁴, converting face-to-face training into online, developing digital platforms to support MSMEs and governments in responding to the crisis, and producing and disseminating assessment reports on the impact of COVID-19 on MSMEs. UNCTAD, ESCWA, and ECE delivered the eight outputs of phase 1, with some collaboration with the other entities to collect data for the development of these outputs. For the delivery of the Competition and Consumer Protection assessment report (output F7 of phase 1), under UNCTAD lead, for instance, all regional commissions were involved. Outputs in phase 1 were delivered not knowing how long the crisis would last but considering it could extend to 2021. As successive COVID-19 infection waves hit the world, the end of sanitary measures was not foreseeable. Phases 2 (planned to last until the end of 2020) and 3 (planned to last until the end of 2021) expanded the project to support more countries and MSMEs, and increasingly relied on inter-entity collaboration to ensure a high rate and quality of delivery. The PRODOC of these phases, then, involved seven implementing entities and shifted from general responses (phase 1) to the delivery of a wide range of country- and region-based interventions⁶⁵. The project's responses to these needs depended on the locally installed capacities to develop more resilient institutions and supportive policies to MSMEs. Some of these deliverables, mostly those related to online awareness-raising, policy dialogue and workshops, relied on inter-entity partnerships to be successfully delivered. Examples from phases 2 and 3 are the UNCTAD-ESCAP Regional Dialogue held in cooperation with the ASEAN Secretariat, the series of Online regional capacity-building events on the role of competition policies for access to markets in post COVID-19 resurgence of MSMEs (UNCTAD-ECE, UNCTAD-ECLAC, UNCTAD-ESCAP), the UNCTAD-ESCWA-ECA Regional Policy Dialogue: The role of Competition Policy in supporting MSMEs economic recovery in the post COVID-19 crisis, the Sub-regional workshop: Global initiative towards post-Covid-19 resurgence of the MSME sector – Women in informal and small-scale cross-border trade (UNCTAD-ECA), the online course *Oportunidades y retos para Mipymes de América Latina en el e-commerce*

⁶⁴ Smart search engine: [Manara Portal \(unescwa.org\)](https://manara.unescwa.org/); MSME knowledge portal: <https://msme-resurgence.unctad.org/>

⁶⁵ From a project management perspective, phase 2 was to develop intervention tools and phase 3 was to implement them at country level. The analysis of the deliverables, however, shows a mixed picture, determined by the local capacities to move from the development of a tool to its implementation. Many outputs in both phases 2 and 3 combine, for instance, course development and delivery (e.g., OP 1.5 and 1.6, OP 3.4 and 3.5, and OP 5.10 in phase 2, and OP 1.14, and 5.3 in phase 3).

*transfronterizo*⁶⁶ (ECLAC-UNCTAD), and the Global Policy Dialogue: Post COVID-19 Resurgence of MSMEs and Competition Policy (all seven implementing entities), The Surge project, therefore, effectively delivered a wide range of interventions (i.e., advisory services, trainings, workshops, seminars, digital portal, events, and direct technical assistance through policy advice, assessment reports, research studies, and tailored guidelines), directly assisting 96 countries in specific ways. A good practice that comes from this approach is that a global response can be made of multiple local and regional actions that are the most relevant and impactful for its recipients during a crisis. Figure 6 shows the distribution of project-planned activities per phase and implementing entity. The number of outputs planned increased from 7 in phase 1, to 38 in phase 2 and 60 in phase 3 (+57.9% from phase 2), totalling 105 outputs, even under a budget cut of USD 310,000. UNCTAD was responsible for 50% of the outputs in phase 2 and 43% in phase 3.

Figure 7: Surge Project outputs delivered per implementing entity and implementation phase⁶⁷.



Source: Project's final report, 2022.

59. It is noteworthy that the number of outputs slightly changed between the PRODOC and the project final report. Additionally, this independent evaluation received evidence of deliverables completed after the conclusion of the final report, in 2022 (e.g., three outputs delivered by UNECA in phase III), and others that do not clearly fit in any of the project planned outputs (e.g., ESCAP's papers on MSME Financing Series, delivered in 2022). Table 7 summarizes these changes and updates and presents the percentage of outputs delivered.

Table 7: Planned and delivered outputs per project phase.

Phases	PRODOC outputs	Final report outputs	Delivered outputs*	% delivered	Not delivered**
1	7	8	8	100	
2	38	39	36	92.3	4.1, 5.9, 5.13
3	60	54	42	77.8	1.25, 2.2, 2.3, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, 4.7, 5.5, 5.6
Total	105	101	86	85.2	

* Based on evidence collected in this independent evaluation. **These outputs fall into the following situations: not delivered due to budget cuts, in progress (i.e., reports in the inception phase by the time of this evaluation), or missing information.

60. Overall, 85% of all project outputs were delivered. Phase 3 has the highest number of outputs and the lowest percentage of effectiveness, around 78%. It was impacted by the budget cuts, the longer time needed to conclude some outputs and the lack of information for this independent evaluation. In cases of budget cuts, this evaluation counted as delivered those outputs with at least 50% of the activities concluded. It is

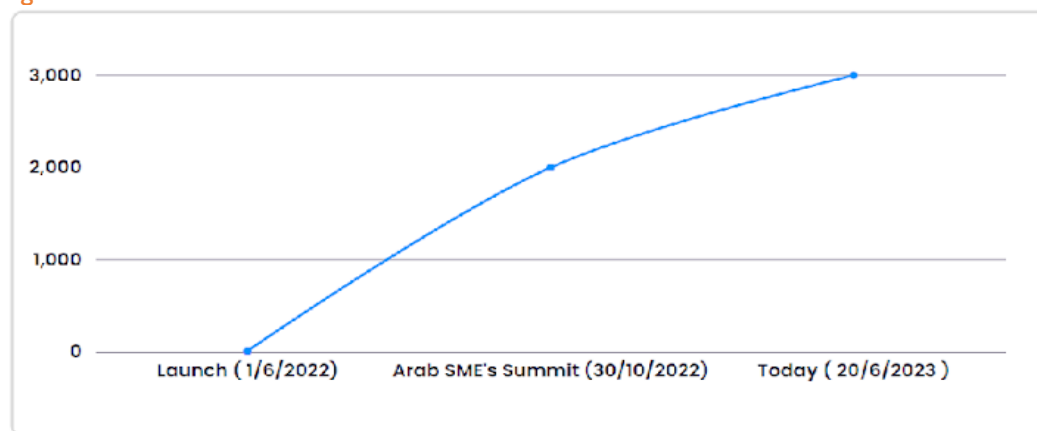
⁶⁶ Translation: Opportunities and challenges for MSMEs in Latin America in the cross-border trade.

⁶⁷ Figure 7 presents the number of outputs fully delivered as stated in the project's final report. In addition, 6 outputs were still in progress when the final report was submitted (ECLAC 1 output, UNCTAD 1 output, UNECA 4 outputs in progress).

noteworthy that the delivery of some of these outputs was concluded after the end of the project⁶⁸, given factors such as the pandemic barriers to implementation, coordination difficulties, personnel turnover, and limited capacities of member states. Considering all these barriers, this independent evaluation considers the level of effectiveness high, since these rates of delivery contributed to the achievement of the main project objective through significant achievements in each project outcome, as described next.

61. **National capacities on formulating and implementing enabling policies on green, resilient and inclusive entrepreneurship and MSME promotion in post-COVID-19 resurgence (outcome 1.A) improved through e-learning courses, awareness-raising activities, technical assistance in designing and implementing national entrepreneurship policies, the creation of regional networks of policymakers, and knowledge production and hubs on MSME's policies.** Deliverables to support national capacities started in phase 1, with the launch of the **DEPAR portal** by ESCWA. This portal provides a wide range of tools and services to MSMEs, such as the MSME toolbox⁶⁹, with business guides, inspiration stories, start-up tools, external tools and news from partners on innovation, technology, policy-making, etc. It allows visitors to become part of a community of practice, in which participants can share content, build their own community, create events, develop courses, and announce opportunities. One of the ideas for the portal was to provide a one-stop shop for materials from other Regional Commissions too, but, later, it became clear that this would lengthen the path⁷⁰ for MSMEs and policymakers to access materials from their respective regions and this was not implemented. Figure 8 indicates a growing number of users to the portal, with about 2000 users four months after launch, and about 3000 users one year after launch. Most of these users are from Jordan (59%, according to data from 20 June 2023). There was no qualitative information to explain the quantitative trend.

Figure 8: DEPAR number of users.



Source: ESCWA.

62. Other deliverables under outcome 1.A included e-learning courses based on the EPF; a series of webinars to policymakers on entrepreneurship policies for MSME resurgence; technical assistance in designing and implementing national entrepreneurship policies; the creation of the Asia-Pacific MSME policymakers' network and follow-up workshops; the creation of a knowledge hub on policy measures, tools and practices on MSMEs' resurgence; regional workshops to promote dialogue on women's role in small-scale and informal cross-border trade and tailored recovery; development of the '*Compendium of Renewable Energy Technologies*' with an online toolbox and training materials on green recovery of MSMEs; policy roundtables with communities and SMEs; and design and implementation of entrepreneurship policies and strategies based on regional assessment. **Survey evidence** from this independent evaluation corroborates the positive assessments observed for individual deliverables, with approval rates above 74% across project dimensions (Figure 9). It is noteworthy that, given the small response rate, survey results need to be

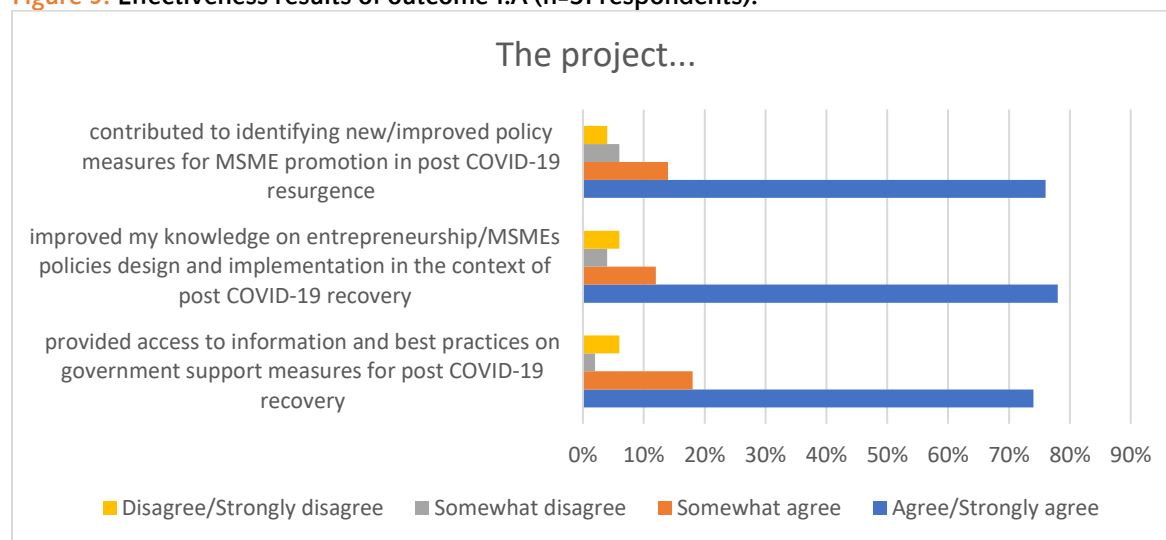
⁶⁸ Interviewees used the project's final report (2022) as reference for the end of the project, since some of their deliverables, pending then, were concluded afterwards.

⁶⁹ <https://depar.unescwa.org/msmetoolbox>.

⁷⁰ This would increase the need to liaise with ESCWA to upload information according to regional needs (i.e., more time to have information available online), and could impose a barrier to MSMEs and policymakers from other regions to access their regional information (i.e., by adding ESCWA as an intermediary institution between local stakeholders and their respective RECs).

interpreted with caution, keeping in mind that these findings reflect the perceptions of those who responded to the survey questions, and are not representative of all participants (See the methodology section for details).

Figure 9: Effectiveness results of outcome 1.A (n=51 respondents).



Source: Independent evaluation survey, 2023.

63. In the second half of 2021, the 5-week **UNCTAD/UNITAR EPF e-course** launched with the objective of enhancing the capacity of policy makers to provide policy response and support measures on MSMEs for post-COVID-19 resurgence and develop longer-term strategies for a resilient and competitive MSME sector. One of the course contents explicitly addressed how the environment for and role of entrepreneurship evolved during and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was developed in English, French and Spanish, and covers all five pillars of the EPF. It was preceded by the launching of **webinars** with the participation of UNCTAD officers, UNITAR representatives, policymakers, and thematic experts. The UNCTAD / UNITAR 2021 Summary Report of this EPF online course presents data for each of its three versions. Results indicate a gender balance between the number of male (n=221) and female (n=223) registrants to the course in the English version, a higher number of female registrants (female=65, male=48) in the Spanish version, and a higher number of male registrants (male=78, female=52) in the French version. Between 5-7% of registrants indicated another gender in the three course versions. The majority of survey respondents, in the three versions, indicated that the course presented new information (>75%) and was relevant to their jobs/occupations (100%). The likelihood of survey respondents applying the information acquired from the course is above 96%, and all respondents would recommend the course to a friend or colleague. This e-course supported UNCTAD's assistance to Uganda, Seychelles and South Africa in designing and implementing **national entrepreneurship policies (NES)** based on the EPF. The NES of South Africa focuses on Youth Entrepreneurship, the NES of Uganda on migrant and refugee entrepreneurs, and the NES of Seychelles on the marine biotechnology sector with reference to youth entrepreneurs. Although there was an impact assessment of the NES implemented before the COVID-19 pandemic in The Gambia, this was not delivered due to the budget cuts in phase 3.

64. A set of deliverables by ESCAP included the launch of the terms of reference of the **Asia-Pacific MSME Policymakers' Network** (February 2021), followed by a concept note. Three online regional dialogues of the Network were organized by ESCAP in partnership with UNCTAD and ASEAN secretariats. They covered the digital economy (including how to support women entrepreneurs through ICT, business skills training and innovative financing), the role of competition policy in strengthening the business environment, both in March 2021, and the launch of the Policy Guidebook for MSME Development in Asia and the Pacific⁷¹, in May 2022. Documents produced to support the Network include a **paper on the digital economy**⁷², UNCTAD's broad **survey on the impacts of the COVID-19** on the business environment, particularly in relation to competition

⁷¹ This book describes the MSME contribution to achieving the SDGs, with comprehensive and practical information to policymakers on MSME development.

⁷² Callo-Müller, M. V. (2020). Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and the digital economy.

issues (2020)⁷³, and the **regional report** *'The Role of Competition Policy in Strengthening the Business Environment for MSMEs in the ASEAN Region'* (2021)⁷⁴. Following up on the second meeting, there was a report with recommendations to governments, competition authorities, development agencies, and multiple stakeholders on competition policy measures in a pandemic recovery context. Assessment data is available for the two first meetings and shows that more than 75% of the respondents indicated enhanced knowledge and skills, allowing them to effectively receive from and share information with others in the region regarding MSME policies (>67%), and providing opportunities to enhance regional cooperation in competition policy and law (>69%). Comments from participants referred to the advantages of sharing experiences with other countries, learning how they try to overcome MSMEs' problems during COVID-19, and providing ideas on how to promote digitalization to MSMEs via education. Interview data indicates that the Network became inactive afterwards, since ESCAP dropped the MSME agenda after the project to focus on other demands.

65. In September 2021, the *'UN-ESCWA Entrepreneurship Community Workshops and Policy Roundtables – How to improve existing government and non-government programs'* took place, with a set of interactive discussions on existing government programs, existing non-government programs, needed government programs, and needed non-government programs, with follow-up recommendations on these areas. Specifically on the health economy, a set of **online conferences on 'Entrepreneurship in the new health economy'** were delivered in October 2021. One targeted the Asia-Pacific region⁷⁵, with 45 attendees, another targeted Latin America⁷⁶, with 25 attendees, and another, Africa⁷⁷, with 33 attendees. They were organized in partnership with private sector organizations in the health sector for policymakers. It is noteworthy that, except in the African event, these conferences did not include policymakers among their panellists. These conferences generated inputs to the **publication 'Entrepreneurship & innovation in the new health economy'**⁷⁸, launched by UNCTAD in 2022. This document highlights the role of SMEs and start-ups in the new health economy in developing countries, with main findings on the role of regulation in the e-health sector, and the role of public institutions in building bridges between different stakeholders.

66. **The resilience and competitiveness of MSMEs in post-COVID-19 resurgence (outcome 1.B) improved through a large set of Empretec-related activities (including trainings tailored to low literate entrepreneurs), cross-border trade workshops for female traders, adaption of the Farming as a Business program, and country-tailored guidelines and best practices on circular economy and sustainable resource management.** Outcome 1.B is the one with the highest number of deliverables (n=28), each encompassing sets of activities and supporting MSMEs in multiple countries. They can be grouped in four packages: Empretec (responsible for most of these deliverables and demonstrating the effectiveness of UNCTAD's pre-existing capacity to deliver trainings, including onsite, during the COVID-19 pandemic), informal and small-scale cross-border trade for women traders, UNCTAD's Farming as Business program, and Guidelines and best practices on circular economy and sustainable resource management⁷⁹. **Survey evidence** from this independent evaluation corroborates the positive assessments observed for individual deliverables, with approval rates above 68% across project dimensions (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Effectiveness results of outcome 1.B (n=39 respondents).

⁷³ UNCTAD (2020). Covid-19: Firmer Action Needed to Better Protect Consumers. [online] <https://unctad.org/news/covid-19-firmer-action-needed-better-protect-consumers>.

⁷⁴ ESCAP (2021). The Role of Competition Policy in Strengthening the Business Environment for MSMEs in the ASEAN Region. 11 February 2021. NOTE: there is no authorship in the document. This reference may need revising.

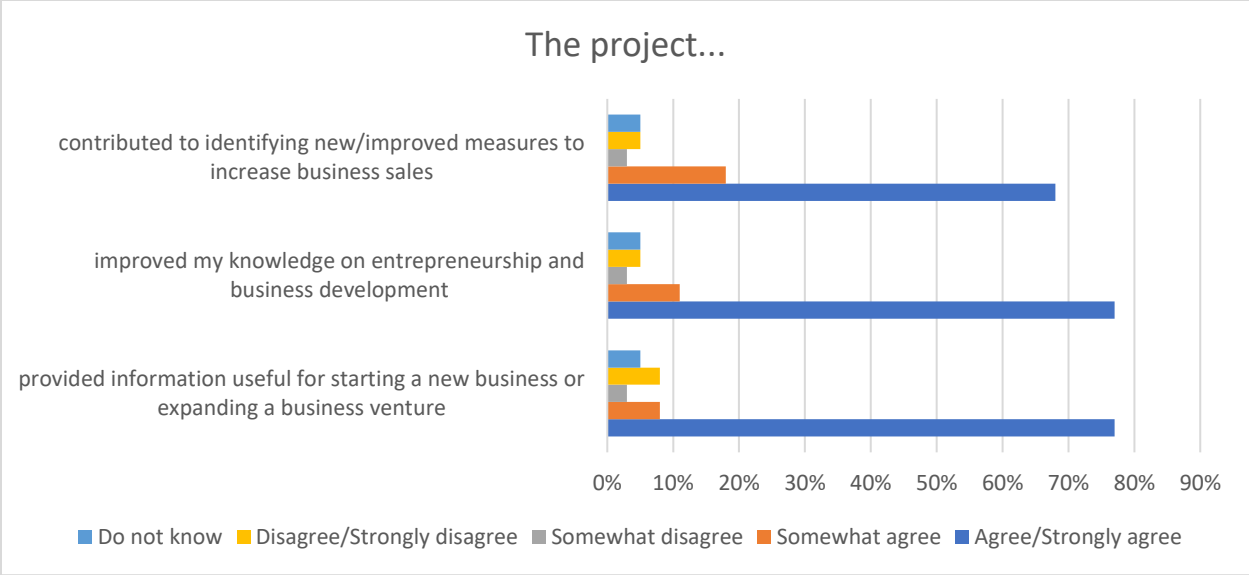
⁷⁵ *Scaling innovation in the new health economy – lessons learned from the Asia-Pacific region.*

⁷⁶ *The rise of medtech in Latin America.*

⁷⁷ *Unlocking digital health innovation in Africa.*

⁷⁸ UNCTAD (2022). *Entrepreneurship & innovation in the new health economy.* Geneva: UNCTAD.

⁷⁹ Given the higher emphasis on government advice, more details on these guidelines are in the highlight box on the contribution of the Surge project to the country's government responses to the COVID-19 crisis regarding the resurgence of MSMEs.



Source: Independent evaluation survey, 2023.

67. Effectiveness evidence of the **Empretec** package of deliverables indicates that development of the updated online training course (E6DM) was a strategy to facilitate post-COVID-19 entrepreneurship recovery. Ten **Empretec webinars**, jointly organized and delivered by UNCTAD and Empretec Centres between April and December 2020, were attended by Jordan, Malaysia, Ghana, Nigeria, Russia, South Africa, The Gambia, Argentina, Benin and Zimbabwe. In tandem, **5-day E6DM TOTs** were delivered in seven batches with participants from 15 countries⁸⁰, between June and October 2020. In total, 65 men and 32 women participated in these trainings. Training assessments show positive results, with more than 85% of the respondents rating the course content as good or very good, and as a useful opportunity to progress as an Empretec trainer or trainee trainer. The **21-day TOT**, delivered in English, French and Spanish in November 2020, had 35 participants from African countries⁸¹ and Romania, and 35 participants from Latin America⁸². The content was assessed as good or very good by more than 83% of the respondents (16 in Africa and Romania, and 25 in Latin America), and useful for their progression as Empretec facilitators (>91%). Training survey comments highlighted, for instance, the online approach, the follow-up and participant-centered approach, and the possibility of interacting and sharing opinions with colleagues as the most interesting aspects of the training. In sequence, ten **6-day Entrepreneurship Training Workshops (E6DM)** were delivered in seven countries⁸³ between September 2021 and July 2022. The total number of participants across countries was around 300⁸⁴, with about 50% of women (estimated on the data available) and some countries reporting the participation of youth entrepreneurs up to 54% (i.e., Ghana). When post-training assessment is available, results are positive with more than 88% rating the overall workshop as effective/useful/good or very good/excellent⁸⁵. More than 84% rated the workshop content as good-excellent/relevant. Good-very good improvements in entrepreneurial skills ranged between 43% and 100%, good-very good relevance of the training to run the business was above 80%, and estimated good-very good impact on the future of their businesses was between 33% and 100% in a set of 10 possible impacts. Subsequently, UNCTAD delivered an additional **online 1-day E6DM TOTs** in September and October 2022, as a pioneer effort to homogenize the application of new versions of the Empretec method to different Empretec Centres and trainers. Participants totalled 109 (64 male, 45 female) from 19 countries⁸⁶.

⁸⁰ Argentina, Benin, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Peru, Romania, Russia, Tanzania, The Gambia, South Africa, Venezuela, and Zambia.

⁸¹ Benin, Botswana, Ghana, Mauritius, Romania, South Africa and Tanzania.

⁸² Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela.

⁸³ Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, The Gambia, Ghana, and Malaysia.

⁸⁴ Note: Some country reports do not inform the total number of participants.

⁸⁵ Measurement scales could be different between countries.

⁸⁶ Angola, Argentina, Botswana, Colombia, Ghana, Ecuador, El Salvador, Jordan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Panama, Romania, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda.

68. Other innovations to the Empretec programme implemented in 2021 were the development of a version for low-literate people and a full online training. Between April and May 2021, UNCTAD delivered three sessions of the **TOTs for low-literate people**, in English, French and Spanish, for 62 male and 58 female participants. Trained trainers, then, delivered three **8-day workshops for low-literate people**, between March and July 2022, in Benin, Malaysia and Uruguay. The total number of participants was 72, 57% female. The assessment was positive⁸⁷ in relation to the workshop in general, its content, and its relevance for the participants' businesses. Regarding the development of the **online Empretec training** course using gamification and other IT-based tools⁸⁸, there is evidence of three pilot workshops with entrepreneurs, delivered in hybrid format and in partnership with SEBRAE (Empretec host institution in Brazil) between December 2021 and August 2022. Each pilot tested the effectiveness of the digital tool and led to the identification of, and solutions to, technical issues. **Interviews** for this independent evaluation conducted with Empretec centers and UNCTAD staff indicated that the performance of Empretec in the online course was below face-to-face training. An informant said that "workshops are better when people share in the classroom, with safe environment, with facilitator. Online does not facilitate that." However, even if the online format is not suitable for a workshop that requires six full days of commitment, some procedures, e.g., tracking participants' progress, and resources, such as web platform for Empretec centers, can be online. Another challenge of delivering the Empretec training online was conciliating the objective of reaching out to vulnerable beneficiaries with no access to the necessary technology. The solution, then, was to keep Empretec workshops offline. Only the TOTs remained online, to ensure there would be trainers when the presential workshops could be resumed.

69. The Surge project delivered a series of **webinars on the role of Empretec on enhancing entrepreneurship promotion in post-COVID-19 resurgence**. At the global level, it supported the virtual **7th Empretec Global Summit**, '*Boosting Entrepreneurship: The Contribution of Empretec into the Post-Covid-19 Resurgence of the MSME Sector*', in April 2021. The Summit was attended by over 570 participants from 64 countries and was interpreted in seven languages⁸⁹. "It was also followed by 783 viewers on UNCTAD Facebook Live and almost 2,000 views were recorded on UN WebTV from 94 countries." Another global event was the **Global Entrepreneurship Congress**, in Riyadh, in March 2022. UNCTAD contributed to the Ministerial Roundtable on Entrepreneurship. **Regional webinars** were held face-to-face in Colombia, in November 2021, with Empretec center's representatives from Colombia, Argentina and Ecuador and entrepreneurs; and with the francophone Empretec centres, with 68 participants from Benin, Cameroon and Mauritius, in May 2022. **Country webinars** included an online event with NAWEN in Malaysia, in December 2021.

70. To expand knowledge on relevant topics of the modernized version of Empretec, UNCTAD delivered a series of **ad-hoc online courses** between August and October 2021. They covered business model generation (64 attendants from nine countries⁹⁰), design thinking (83 participants from 11 countries⁹¹), entrepreneurship and marketing (Seychelles, no attendance data available), capacity-building for women in cross border trade (59 women participants in Kenya and Tanzania), and a 4-day TOT on sustainable businesses and SDGs (62 participants from 10 countries⁹²). Post-training survey data (22 respondents) is available for the last course, indicating 90% of participants were satisfied with the training content and 86% agreed that sustainability as per the 2030 Agenda should be included in their Empretec training activities.

71. An **impact survey** conducted by UNCTAD in March 2023 collected data from a representative sample of Empretec in Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, The Gambia and Zimbabwe. The Empretec programme was positively assessed by respondents (8.75 points in 10) and was considered better than the average of other business training tools by 54%. Most respondents reported sales growth after the ETW (67%), and 94% believed sales will increase in 2023-24. Among non-entrepreneurs, 60% reported an increase in their income levels after the workshop, 88% felt more motivated to venture after the ETW, 67% foresaw opening a business in the coming three months, and 91% of the Empretec believed their employability level had increased after the ETW, a trend even stronger among women. **Interviews with Empretec centers** for this independent

⁸⁷ 100% of good-excellent ratings in Benin, and an average range between 4.5 and 4.7 in a scale of 5 in Uruguay. The training report for Malaysia did not present specific assessment data.

⁸⁸ LMBInterativa (2022). Empretec Online. Delivery report.

⁸⁹ Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

⁹⁰ Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

⁹¹ Ecuador, Ethiopia, Jordan, Kenya, Malaysia, Romania, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

⁹² Angola, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

evaluation indicated that, in Zimbabwe, for instance, women and youth facing business difficulties were the majority of those trained. Two of these participants are the founders of the Women in Agriculture Union. They learned how to keep records of funds received from members, and the advantages of doing so. Young entrepreneurs in agribusiness improved product processing knowledge, leading to expansion and new markets, in Zimbabwe. In Argentina, course participants prefer the online course format, even when their access to the internet is hard, because of the flexibility of time and schedule and the possibility to connect with people across the country. The number of participants is much higher in the online version in Argentina. In Jordan, the online TOT targeted vulnerabilities, such as internet connection and digital literacy. The online delivery was a challenge also from the Empretec centres' perspective. More than three hours of online training was not possible; and the programme is based on learning by doing, i.e., it requires observation of behaviours. The new online tools helped to mitigate this challenge, but they did not always work because of poor IT literacy, people's commitment, and internet connection.

72. The outputs related to the **UNCTAD component on women and cross-border trade**, were delivered in phases 2 and 3 of the Surge project. Evidence indicates **6-day presential workshops**⁹³ delivered in Zambia (36 participants), Malawi (32 participants), Kenya (64 participants) and Tanzania (64 participants), between February and November 2021. They tackled two main critical issues: lack of knowledge about trade rules and customs procedures, and lack of entrepreneurial skills. Workshop beneficiaries were mainly small-scale/informal cross-border traders, especially women, representatives of cross-border trade associations, representatives from the Revenue Authorities, and other authorities based at the borders. Workshop assessments were positive, with more than 45% of the participants rating that their knowledge about trade rules and customs procedures had improved very much or extremely. Most of them acquired confidence in crossing the border through normal channels (>61%) and will be able to formalize within the next 12 months (>54%). Assessment data for Kenya and Tanzania indicated that more than 80% of the participants rated the programme as excellent, the training content as very relevant for running their businesses, and more than 90% indicated the training will help them improve professional behaviour, management skills, business planning skills, establish a network with other business owners, learn about business opportunities and help learn about funding possibilities. The workshop's methodology, content and results are compiled in the activity report⁹⁴ commissioned by UNCTAD. **Country-specific guides** on '*Women in informal cross-border trade: A small-scale trader's guide to trade rules and procedures*' developed by UNCTAD provided tailored information for female traders in Kenya, Botswana, Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia. These guides, except for Malawi and Zambia, contain traders' obligations regarding COVID-19 measures related to crossing the border and a checklist that includes COVID-19 certificates.

73. A 2022 **impact assessment** on project activities carried out by UNCTAD on women and cross-border trade⁹⁵ indicated that 100% of the participants became very or extremely familiar with their rights as cross-border traders, 95% became very or extremely familiar with the obligations of cross-border traders, and 43% acquired considerable knowledge on the use of COMESA and EAC STRs and the SADC Trade Protocols. The enhanced knowledge about the use of official border points was very or extremely helpful for 92% of the respondents. "Some traders reported positive results in terms of increased profits, a larger clientele, and the ability to offer a more diversified range of products" associated with the enhanced use of official border points. Almost all participants (96%) reported that they had adapted their business model. Also, 80% of the respondents considered registering their businesses. Responses were positive on acquiring extremely good or very good understanding of the COVID-related rules (65%). Qualitative data indicated that the training helped trainees to be proactive in protective measures, such as in encouraging customers to wear masks and wash their hands. Regarding new strategies, "some traders turned to digital tools to continue their businesses, including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp groups, and online platforms." **Interviews with trainers** conducted by this independent evaluation indicated that the results of the training for low literacy beneficiaries in cross-border trade were 'amazing', based on a follow-up four months after the training. Proper understanding of the trade rules and procedures, rights and obligations of the traders coupled with upgrading of their entrepreneurship skills helped traders to overcome the adverse trade environment caused by the Covid-19

⁹³ They built on training activities completed by UNCTAD in 2019 in the framework of the project '*Informal cross-border trade for the empowerment of women, economic development and regional integration in Eastern and Southern Africa*'.

⁹⁴ Tigere, F. (December 2021). Phase III Final Report – Global initiative towards post-COVID-19 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector: Kenya and the Republic of Tanzania.

⁹⁵ UNCTAD (2022). Cross-border Trade in the Pre- and Post-Pandemic Environment Evidence from Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. Geneva.

pandemic. Some were able to bounce back and build back their businesses. More information on female traders in cross-border trade is in the specific section on gender and LNOB.

74. The delivery of the **Farming as Business (FaaB) programme** took place in phases 2 and 3 of the Surge project. Adaptation of this programme referred to the online delivery of the TOT, between February and June 2021. Training material does not refer to the pandemic crisis⁹⁶. The English version of the TOT trained 25 male and 28 female small farmers from 13 countries⁹⁷. The French version trained 25 male and 28 female participants from Angola, Benin and Cameroon. The Spanish version trained 9 male and 7 female participants from eight countries⁹⁸. Post-training assessments, available for the English (15 respondents) and French (4 respondents) versions, were positive. On average, 79%, rated the course content as good or very good, 84% found it a useful learning opportunity, and 95% considered the course useful for them to progress as Empretec trainer or trainee trainer. Following the TOT, a grant agreement between Empretec Ghana Foundation and UNCTAD allowed for training of 65 vegetable farmers in Ghana, in November 2021. A report on this training⁹⁹ indicated that 90% of the participants were male and 10% female. There is no reference to resilience in post-COVID-19 recovery.

75. **The Surge project implemented tools that facilitated MSMEs' registration and formalization (outcome 2) through an e-registration platform, policy toolkits for governments on formalization, and virtual workshops for knowledge dissemination.** Under this outcome, UNCTAD delivered the e-registration platform, implemented it initially in El Salvador (cuentamype¹⁰⁰), and expanded implementation to Benin, Cameroon and Mali. DESA developed policy toolkits for the governments of Kenya and The Gambia in streamlining MSME formalization and inclusive delivery of formalization services. The dissemination of these toolkits was with virtual workshops in the two countries. **Survey evidence** from this independent evaluation corroborates the positive assessments observed for individual deliverables, but, because the number of respondents was between 3 and 4, no further conclusions can be drawn from our survey.

76. **Interview** data indicated that the **pilot implementation of Cuentamype** in El Salvador involved private and public institutions, and the signing of an inter-institutional agreement, considered one of the biggest project achievements in the country. It brought together, for instance, social security institutions, the Ministry of Finance, and municipalities, and attracted the interest of financial institutions in relation to providing credit to MSMEs. The preparation of the platform included the organization of sectoral working tables with these institutions, and a pilot, in 2020, with a group of 20-25 entrepreneurs for feedback, for around 3-5 months. After adjustments, the platform launched in a forum where entrepreneurs could learn about the tool. The project trained government technicians as trainers for the end-users of the platform – 3-4 training days of about 15 nationwide professionals. During technical visits to MSMEs (e.g., women's owned beauty salons), specific needs of beneficiaries were identified, such as basic knowledge in accounting and individual monitoring, mostly for women. The answer to these needs included the development of a printed simplified booklet on accounting (i.e., a paper version of cuentamype), follow-up visits for six months, and the creation of a WhatsApp group for direct contact with the registry office (CONAMYPE) to get direct support in interpreting financial analysis outputs and suggest improvements to the platform. Out of about 400 trained entrepreneurs¹⁰¹, CONAMYPE estimates that at least half of them use the tool regularly (about 60% of them are women and covering entrepreneurs from 18 to 70+ years old). The e-registration platform was, then, expanded to Benin, Cameroon (guichet électronique) and Mali (guichet unique) in 2021. The online platform increased MSMEs' registration 91% in Benin (84% women, 181% youth), and 40% in Mali (49% women, 110% youth). Replicating the case of El Salvador, these e-registration platforms are incorporating additional services, such as modifications in business registry and grant applications. Real-time data generated by these platforms have been used to design better entrepreneurship policies.

⁹⁶ The trainer's guides (i.e., coffee and dairy farming), in English and French, were produced before the pandemic and their content was not updated to the new situation. The guide on dairy farming in Spanish was issued in 2021 and reproduces the content of previous guides, also not referring to the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

⁹⁷ Angola, Benin, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Malaysia, Myanmar, Panama, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

⁹⁸ Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

⁹⁹ Empretec Ghana (Feb.2021). Report on training of farmers on the UNCTAD Farming as a Business (FaaB) programme - Organized for vegetable growers in the Ayawaso West municipaliy – Greater Accra region. Ghana.

¹⁰⁰ <https://cuentamype.org/>

¹⁰¹ This included entrepreneurs who could not read or write and were not tech savvy. In these cases, entrepreneurs indicated collaborators to take part in the trainings.

77. **Policy toolkits** issued by DESA considered regional and country-based approaches. A regional toolkit was '*Best Practices: Formalization of Micro-, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in Africa*'¹⁰², a document that covers a wide range of best practices associated with formalization (e.g., institutional frameworks, regulatory environment, supply and value chains, access to finance, human capital development, and social dialogue). It assembles data from African countries' best practices, such as Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe, and benchmarks on examples from countries in other regions, such as India, Sri Lanka, China, Argentina and Colombia. Country-based **policy toolkits** focused on Kenya and The Gambia and included policy documents and virtual or hybrid workshops for knowledge dissemination. In Kenya, the focus was on leveraging policies governing cooperatives of MSMEs, with the issuing of a report¹⁰³, a toolkit with policy recommendations for the formalization and growth of MSMEs through a cooperative model¹⁰⁴, policy guidelines for the formalization of MSMEs in Kenya, modelled on the guidelines for the formalization of cooperatives¹⁰⁵, and the toolkit promotion in a virtual workshop in March 2021. A workshop assessment (responded by 60 participants, 41 male, 19 female from African, Asian and Europe countries¹⁰⁶) indicated that 98% of the participants were satisfied or very satisfied with the event, and 100% considered the event relevant to their work. Later, in 2022, DESA supported an **assessment** of the impact of COVID-19 on MSMEs led by women and youth in Kenya¹⁰⁷ and **stakeholder consultations**, based on these assessments, in a hybrid workshop. For instance, 100% of the 22 respondents (14 male, 8 female) of the assessment of the workshop on the Assessment of the Covid-19 Impact on Women and Youth-led MSMEs in Nairobi, were satisfied or very satisfied with the workshop, and considered it relevant to their work.

78. **MSMEs' access to finance (outcome 3) improved through online training to policymakers and MSMEs (e.g., financial literacy, accounting, SDG reporting), publications, case studies, training of trainers, and national and regional workshops for knowledge dissemination.** Outputs under outcome 3 were carried out by UNCTAD and ESCAP. They produced online training material for policymakers on MSMEs' access to finance, developed training courses for MSMEs for financial literacy and accounting and reporting, including on the SDGs – supported by a guidance –, TOT's courses on accounting and reporting for MSMEs, published a book on MSME finance, developed case studies on accounting and reporting for MSMEs, and delivered national and regional workshops based on the online materials produced. **Survey evidence** from this independent evaluation corroborates the positive assessments observed for individual deliverables, with approval rates above 70% across project dimensions, keeping in mind that the number of respondents is low for robust conclusions and this result needs to be interpreted in qualitative terms (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Effectiveness results of outcome 3 (n=10 respondents).

¹⁰² DESA (2021). Best Practices: Formalization of Micro-, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in Africa.

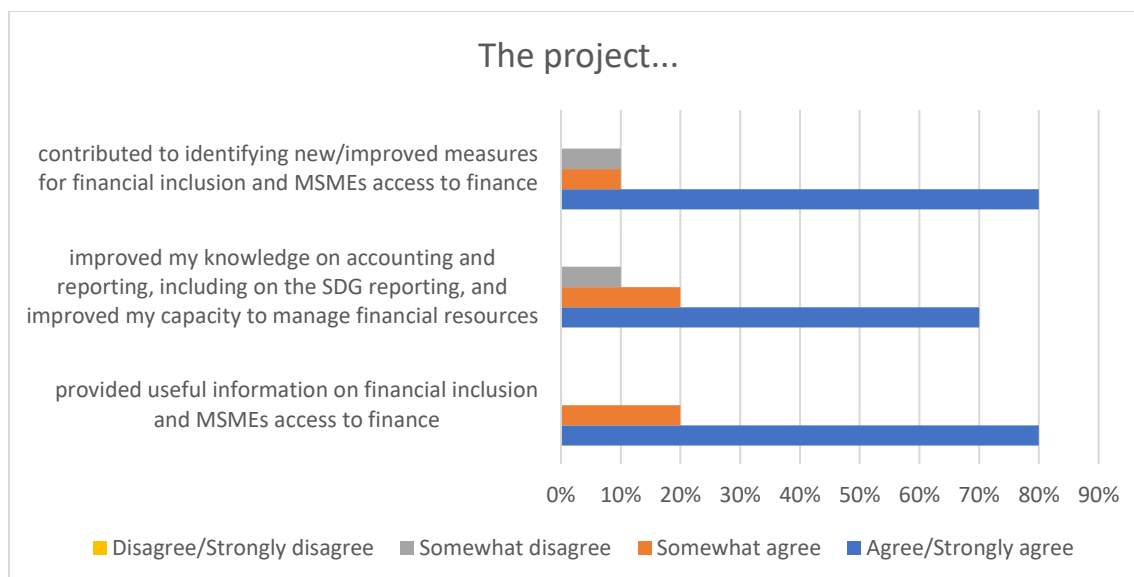
¹⁰³ DESA (2021). Leveraging policies governing cooperatives to encourage the formalization of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Kenya.

¹⁰⁴ DESA (2021). Promoting MSME Formalization through the Cooperative Enterprise Model.

¹⁰⁵ DESA (2021?). Policy guidelines for the formalization of micro-, small and medium enterprises in Kenya.

¹⁰⁶ Kenya, South Africa, Burundi, Tanzania, The Gambia, Lesotho, Morocco, Philippines, Indonesia, Germany.

¹⁰⁷ MSEA (2022). Assessment of the impact of COVID-19 among micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in Kenya and their resilience mechanism. Nairobi: Micro and Small Enterprises Authority (MSEA).



Source: Independent evaluation survey, 2023.

79. ESCAP led the delivery of a **book** that set out a post-crisis policy agenda for MSME finance, in 2021¹⁰⁸. It addresses MSMEs' finance gaps and the financial landscape for MSMEs before, during and after the pandemic crisis. The book draws policy recommendations and practical suggestions in MSME finance in relation to, for instance, business services ecosystem, regulatory sandboxes, supply chain and trade finance, financing women-led MSMEs, multi-stakeholder collaboration for mutual benefits, and regulatory framework for fintech. Two **thematic studies** followed-up, in 2022. One was on the role of banks in Asia in lending to MSMEs¹⁰⁹, and the other on the role of digital payments¹¹⁰, including a topic on women-led MSMEs and SDG 5.

80. UNCTAD developed the **guidance on core indicators (GCI)** 'Implementation of core SDG indicators for sustainability reporting by companies' in English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Chinese and Russian, and corresponding training material in partnership with UNITAR. This guidance supported **GCI workshops** on accounting and reporting for MSMEs in Kenya (23 participants), China (150 participants), Latin America (55 participants, 14 countries), Francophone countries (122 participants, 11 countries) and the MENA (79 participants, 4 countries) and Eurasian (200 participants, 10 countries) regions, between February and November 2021. Across workshop sessions, assessments responded by 246 participants (78 male, 47 female¹¹¹) indicated that more than 90% of them rated the overall course content as good-excellent/satisfied-very satisfied.

81. **MSME's access to technology and innovation (outcome 4) increased through a combination of survey-based reports assessing the impacts of Covid-19 and the Ukraine crisis on MSMEs at country and regional levels, regional seminars for knowledge dissemination and sensitization of policymakers on needs of MSMEs, online courses on the role of technology and innovation for entrepreneurs and policymakers, including on harnessing green technologies, and knowledge products on a range of areas including building linkages between MSMEs and multinational companies.** Activities under outcome 4 were led by ECA, through its Subregional office for Southern Africa, and included surveys circulated to more than 3,000 MSMEs across its 11 member states in Southern Africa, to assess the impacts of the Covid-19 and Ukraine crises on MSMEs¹¹², the development of an online training course for entrepreneurs and policymakers on the role of technology and innovation in addressing this impact (December 2021), an online training course on harnessing green

¹⁰⁸ ESCAP (2021). Rethinking MSME Finance in Asia and the Pacific: A Post-Crisis Policy Agenda. Bangkok.

¹⁰⁹ ESCAP (2022). Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Lending Approaches: The Role of Banks in Asia. MSME Financing Series No. 6. Bangkok.

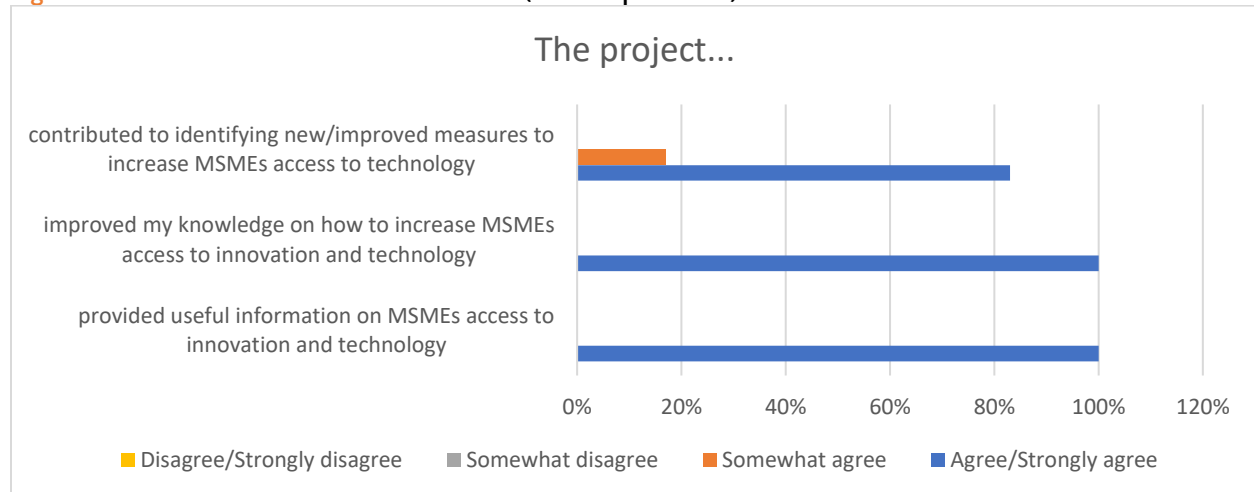
¹¹⁰ ESCAP (2022). MSME Access to Finance: The Role of Digital Payments, MSME Financing Series No.7. Bangkok: United Nations.

¹¹¹ No gender disaggregated information for the Eurasian workshop.

¹¹² The result was 11 country level reports which, at the time of the evaluation, were being finalized and not yet published.

technologies to enhance MSME competitiveness in Southern Africa (August 2022), two side events at the margins on the SADC Industrialisation Week on strengthening linkages between African MSMEs and Southern led MNCs and on the role of technology incubators in MSME development in collaboration with the SADC Business Council Southern Africa¹¹³. At the request of the Government of Mauritius, a regional seminar was organized on “The impact of Covid-19 on MSMEs in Southern Africa: Country Experiences and a Focus on Building Back Better in Mauritius” which was held at the margins of Dubai Expo 2020, in collaboration with the SADC Business Council and the Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives of Mauritius. **Survey evidence** from this independent evaluation corroborates the positive assessments observed for individual deliverables, with approval rates above 83% across project dimensions, keeping in mind that the number of respondents is low for robust conclusions and this result needs to be interpreted in qualitative terms (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Effectiveness results of outcome 4 (n=12 respondents).



Source: Independent evaluation survey, 2023.

82. Evidence from the technical report¹¹⁴ of the **4-week online training** on the role of technology and innovation for African businesses in addressing the impact of COVID-19 indicated that 41 participants attended the course. Out of those who responded to the post-training assessment, 95% noted that the course modules were relevant to their professional needs and 90% felt satisfied with the relevance of the topic and the modules. Regarding the **course on green technologies** for African SMEs, the assessment report indicates that 30% of the 155 registrants completed the course successfully by passing the quizzes. Out of these, 45 responded to the post-course assessment. Results indicated that 93% of respondents rated the quality of the course as good or very good, 93% indicated that the content of the course is relevant to their work, and 100% indicated that they will use the knowledge acquired in this course.

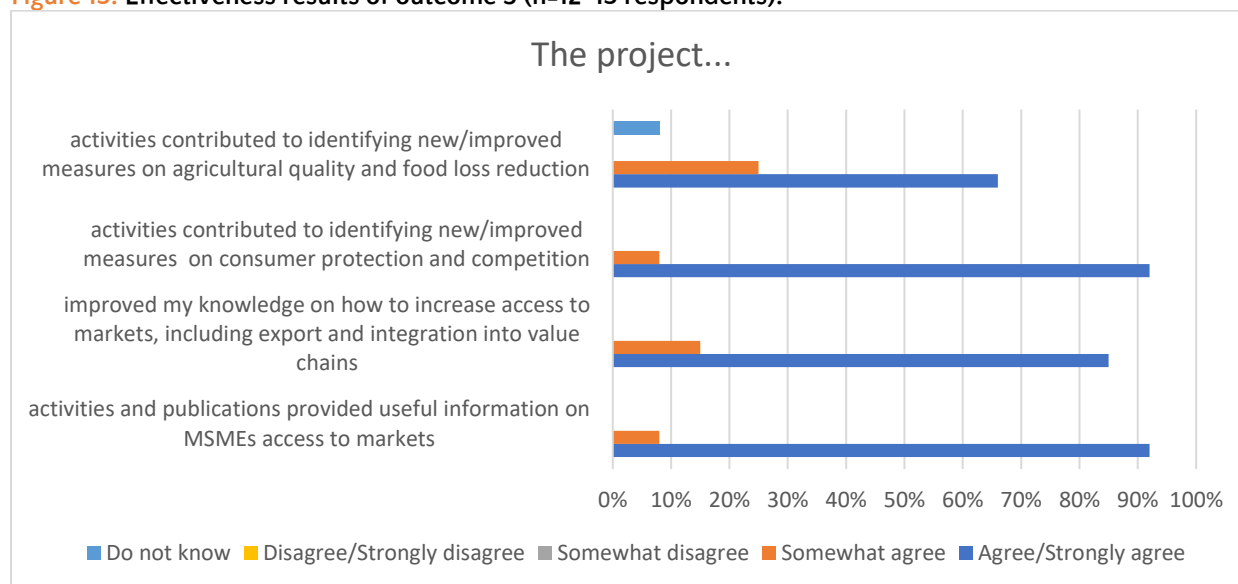
83. **MSME’s access to markets (outcome 5) increased through activities that combined the production of national and regional assessments, studies and reports with online events for knowledge dissemination of findings, and online trainings for policymakers and MSMEs at the regional level on topics such as competition policies and access to markets, agricultural quality and food loss, and the promotion of export capacity.** Outcome 5 is the second in number of outputs planned (n=25) and the first in collaborative deliveries between UNCTAD and the Regional Commissions. Deliverables cover a wide range of activities on competition policies to regulate access to markets during the pandemic crisis and promote the resurgence of MSMEs in post-pandemic recovery. **Survey evidence** from this independent evaluation corroborates the positive assessments observed for individual deliverables, with approval rates above 66% across project dimensions, keeping in

¹¹³ Updated information, received after the finalization of this independent evaluation, indicated that, as of October 2023, the two publications on strengthening linkages between African SMEs and Southern led MNCs and the role of technology incubators for MSMEs development in Southern Africa are completed and being professionally edited. Two other publications, finalized in 2023, are “Opportunities for MSMEs within the Blue and Green Economy: the case of SADC” and “The role of digitalization in MSMEs development in the context of the AfCFTA”.

¹¹⁴ IDEP, ECA (2022). The role of technology and innovation for African businesses in addressing the impact of COVID-19 – Technical report.

mind that the number of respondents is low for robust conclusions and this result needs to be interpreted in qualitative terms (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Effectiveness results of outcome 5 (n=12-13 respondents).



Source: Independent evaluation survey, 2023.

84. A good illustration of coordinated outputs to enhance access to markets to MSMEs is the joint work produced by UNCTAD’s competition and consumer protection policies branch with ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, ECA and ECE. During 2020, multiple **regional preparatory meetings** between UNCTAD, the Regional Commissions and regional stakeholders discussed how to mobilize participation and build collaboration in designing and implementing these dialogues to raise awareness of the role of competition policies for post-pandemic access to markets by MSMEs. The resulting five **online regional dialogues** took place between March and April 2021 and had approximately 650 attendees across regions¹¹⁵. This inter-institutional partnership supported the delivery of a global report on the articulation between competition policy and MSMEs (produced in phase I, between June and September 2021)¹¹⁶. This global report provided a snapshot of the challenges MSMEs faced around the world to deal with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and drew key recommendations centered around levelling the playing field for MSMEs. It was disseminated with a **global policy dialogue**, organized by UNCTAD in partnership with ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA, in December 2021 (phase 3). This global dialogue explored how competition policy could support MSMEs post-COVID-19, with the presence of representatives and officials of government MSME bodies and competition agency representatives from across the world. It was divided into three sections, one with a focus on digitalization, another on access to finance and government support, and the third on inter-agency coordination between MSME agencies and competition authorities. It was delivered in English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, and Arabic.

¹¹⁵ The UNCTAD-ESCAP-ASEAN dialogue was delivered in English, Thai, Burmese, Bahasa Indonesian and Bahasa Malay and had 149 participants. The UNCTAD-ECA dialogue was delivered in English and French and had 97 registrants. The UNCTAD-UNECE dialogue was delivered in English and Russian and had 140 attendees, 30% from outside the UNECE region. The UNCTAD-ECLAC dialogue was delivered in English, Spanish and Portuguese and had 115 registrants. The UNCTAD-ESCWA dialogue was delivered in English and Arabic and had 150 attendees.

¹¹⁶ UNCTAD (2021). How COVID-19 affects MSME access to markets and competition: A review of key issues and recommendations for future action. NOTE: the previous title is in a press release by UNCTAD and the next refers to the report shared with the evaluation as output F7. Alternate title and reference: UNCTAD (2022). The COVID-19 pandemic impact on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Market access challenges and competition policy. Geneva.

85. Other cooperation-based and replicated outputs were the three **country case studies** on the impact of COVID-19 on specific SME sectors in Brazil¹¹⁷, Thailand¹¹⁸ and South Africa¹¹⁹, delivered between March and December 2021. They were implemented with the support of national institutions to ensure a grounded approach in understanding what competition policy is, how it is framed in the country, and how it can impact MSMEs in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. Each case study provided recommendations to competition authorities and representatives and support entities for MSMEs. A **global event** in June 2021, '*DA COVID-19 technical cooperation project on Competition Policy & MSMEs' resurgence*', disseminated the findings of the case studies and promoted policy advocacy on this subject to 238 attendees. Also, five **regional webinars** with competition authorities and MSMEs' institutions delivered on how the recommendations of the global and the three national reports could support the resurgence of MSMEs. A follow-up **hybrid global workshop**, held in Bangkok in 27-28 June 2022, to discuss '*The Contribution of Competition Policy to the Resurgence of MSMEs post-COVID-19*' had panellists from UNCTAD, ESCAP, DESA, ECLAC, ESCWA and African countries. This event covered recommended practices for digital platforms for MSMEs¹²⁰ and presented the guidance document for Thai competition and SME institutions¹²¹ for 534 virtual participants. It was assessed as relevant (>95% of participants) and effective in enhancing skills, regional cooperation and methods for integrating MSMEs into regional value chains (>95%). This workshop presented the newly designed **online course on SMEs and competition policy**, primarily for government officials. The country case studies are cited as having inspired the course showing what capacities SMEs needed to engage in better trade practices. This 5-module course was delivered between November and December 2022 to 141 participants (73 male, 68 female) from 41 countries¹²². The post-course survey indicated that the experience was very/extremely valuable to 98% of the 72 respondents, 81% felt that the course provided them with learning opportunities not available otherwise, 82% felt able to serve the community with what they have learnt, and 68% considered the course relevant to advance in their career.

86. **At the level of the indicators of achievement, despite somewhat lacking in specificity, and the high level of ambition and long-term-orientation for a crisis response, considerable progress is observed.** The elaboration of the project indicators was reported by informants as one of the challenges in the Surge's design phase, given the uncertain pandemic context, the lack of clarity on the resources that would be available for each phase of the project, an understanding that the DA requirements for indicators had to reflect development goals (adequate for longer projects¹²³), and time pressure to deliver as soon as possible. As a result, the management decision was to focus on what would be right for MSMEs' support from each entity's perspective (i.e., separate streams of work), beneficial for countries, and already available as standard indicators for the entities. Reviews of the initial indicators followed advances in the project and the evolution of the pandemic situation. From phase 2 to phase 3, some indicators were revised to become more ambitious, since there was more time and resources available. According to members of the project coordination team, there was awareness of the broad scope of these indicators, that some of them were not crisis-driven, and it would be difficult to achieve them within a year. Nevertheless, there is also the shared perspective that they are needed to track longer-term effects of the project. A mitigation monitoring strategy by project managers used proxies or partial reporting from specific delivered outputs when short-term impact could not be measured. This is reflected in the Surge project's final report, concluded in November 2022. Adding to this

¹¹⁷ UNCTAD (2021). Competition and Market Access Policies in the Resurgence of MSMEs in Post-Covid-19 in Brazil.

¹¹⁸ Charoenrat, T., Harvie, C. (2021). Analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Thailand from competition policy and market access perspectives.

¹¹⁹ Nsomba, G., Tshabalala, N., Vilakazi, T. (2021). Analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in South Africa.

¹²⁰ UNCTAD (2022). Harnessing the interaction between digital platforms and MSMEs: Recommended best practices for digital platforms (RDP).

¹²¹ UNCTAD (2022). Guidance for action: Supporting MSMEs' recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Prepared for the trade competition commission of Thailand.

¹²² Kenya, St. Kitts, Botswana, Philippines, Indonesia, El Salvador, Azerbaijan, Trinidad and Tobago, Kuwait, Belize, Brazil, Barbados, Suriname, Eswatini, Burkina Faso, Peru, Malawi, Côte d'Ivoire, Bahrain, Colombia, Russia, Malaysia, Zambia, Ghana, Jamaica, India, Tanzania, Spain, Grenada, Switzerland, Ethiopia, San Marino, South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, Montserrat, Egypt, Saint Lucia, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Liberia.

¹²³ It is noteworthy that the DA guidance on the expected outcomes for PRODOCs of joint COVID-19 response projects states that "The outcomes (OCs) describe the changes that are expected to occur as a result of the completion of outputs. The OCs should be achievable within the project's timeframe and budget and should be specific enough to be measured by the associated indicators of achievement." Nevertheless, implementers seem to have been driven by an understanding that the PRODOC approval was conditional to a longer-term perspective on outcomes – an understanding that reflected on their indicators too.

evidence, this independent evaluation conducted additional desk review with the support of interviewees who shared the results of the latest outputs delivered, and a survey with relevant stakeholders. This evaluation corroborated comments on the project's final report in relation to finding mismatches between indicators, project phases and some deliverables, as implementing agencies seem to have shifted activities around, repeated the same activities in different outputs or created new ones since the PRODOC. Other activities in the evidence pool were associated with more than one output and are reported here in the output where their content makes more sense. Also, this independent evaluation pooled together evidence from different implementing entities to make an expert judgement of the progress achieved per indicator, not being restricted to the implementing entity associated with specific indicators. This promoted a better global perspective of the results achieved. Importantly, since most quantitative indicators lack a baseline, the baseline used was the number of countries/participants engaged in the activities under that indicator. At a later stage, more evidence on sustainability and impact indicators will be reported in the UNCTAD Division on Investment and Enterprise's Annual Research and Impact Report. Table 8 summarizes the findings per indicator at the time of this independent evaluation.¹²⁴ Out of the 26 indicators of achievement, this independent evaluation located evidence of good progress for 11 of them. Some evidence of progress, from some of the implementing entities involved, but not all, or from a limited number of the beneficiary countries/participants engaged in activities under a specific indicator, was found for other 11 indicators. One indicator showed limited progress and activities related to it are continuing in another project. This independent evaluation could not locate evidence for other three indicators. Overall, this evaluation identified levels of progress for 84.6% of the performance indicators. Indicators under outcome 1A are the ones with more progress reported. Outcome 5 is the one with the most uneven performance in terms of evidence of progress identified by this independent evaluation.

Table 8: Level of achievement of the Surge project indicators.

Expected Outcomes	Indicators (Important: each indicator was planned to reflect the work of one implementing entity and was not designed to cover all participating countries)*	SMART* * criteria covered	Level of progress identified	Source of evidence
<i>OC 1A: To improve national capacities on formulating and implementing enabling policies on green, resilient and inclusive entrepreneurship MSME promotion in post COVID-19 resurgence</i>	IA 1.1. At least 75% of the countries that participated in the project, have adopted and/or implemented a revised/improved policies aimed at building a resilient and competitive MSME sector in post COVID-19 resurgence	MR	Significant progress.	DA 2023W Final report, data from UNCTAD, ESCAP and ESCWA
	IA 1.2. At least 75% of policymakers that participated in the interventions of this component indicated their enhanced capacity on entrepreneurship/MSMEs policies design and implementation in the context of post COVID-19 recovery	MAR	Significant progress.	DA 2023W Final report, data from UNCTAD, ESCAP, ESCWA, survey
	IA 1.3 At least 75% of policymakers and other stakeholders of the ESCWA network indicated their improved access to information on best practices on government support measures for post COVID-19 recovery	SMAR	Significant progress.	DA 2023W Final report, data from ESCWA, survey
	IA 1.4. At least 75% of policymakers, MSMEs and other key stakeholders indicated their improved access to the ESCWA knowledge hub on issues on the MSME post-COVID-19 resurgence	SMAR	Significant progress.	DA 2023W Final report, data from ESCWA
	IA 1.5. At least 75% of users of training materials developed under this component indicated their usefulness for their improved capacities in policy-making for enabling MSME environment	MAR	Significant progress.	DA 2023W Final report, data from UNCTAD and ESCWA
	IA 1.6. Positive feedback of users of publications under this component (assessment reports and other publications)	AR	Some progress.	DA 2023W Final report, data from UNCTAD and ESCWA, survey

¹²⁴ Importantly, the baseline for each indicator was the activity or activities associated with it, rather than the project beneficiaries as a whole.

<i>OC 1B: To improve resilience and competitiveness of MSMEs in post-COVID-19 resurgence</i>	IA 1.7. % of Empretec ¹²⁵ trainees expanding or starting a business venture, disaggregated by country and gender, including by people with low literacy	MAR	Some progress.	DA 2023W Final report, data from UNCTAD and ECE
	IA 1.8. % of Empretec-supported MSMEs able to increase sales in one year, disaggregated by country and gender	MART	Some progress. Gender disaggregated data not available	DA 2023W Final report, data from UNCTAD and ECE
	IA 1.9. Number of new jobs created by MSMEs which participated in the Empretec programme, disaggregated by country and gender	MAR	Some progress. Gender disaggregated data not available	DA 2023W Final report, data from UNCTAD and ECE, interviews
	IA.1.10. At least 75% of participants to the entrepreneurship training courses under this component indicated usefulness of the activities for increasing their entrepreneurship and business skills in the related areas by country and gender	MAR	Significant progress. Lacking data by gender for some of the training courses.	DA 2023W Final report, data from UNCTAD and ECE, survey
<i>OC2: To facilitate MSME registration and formalization</i>	IA 2.1. Increased number of new businesses registering, disaggregated by country and gender of business owner	R	Some progress.	DA 2023W Final report, data from UNCTAD
	IA 2.2. Decreased administrative costs to start a business, disaggregated by country	R	Some progress.	DA 2023W Final report, data from UNCTAD and interviews
	IA 2.3. At least 75% of participants of the workshops on policy guidelines for MSME formalization stated their increased capacity to facilitate MSMEs formalization	MAR	Significant progress.	DA 2023W Final report, data from DESA, survey
<i>OC 3: To improve MSMEs access to finance</i>	IA 3.1. Number of participating MSMEs with improved financial literacy and ability to prepare financial statements, disaggregated by country, and gender	MAR	Some progress.	DA 2023W Final report, data from UNCTAD and ESCAP, survey
	IA 3.2. At least 75% of MSME participants of online training courses state their improved financial literacy in accounting and reporting, including on the SDG reporting, and improved capacity to manage financial resources, by country and gender	MAR	Some progress. Gender disaggregated data not available	DA 2023W Final report, data from UNCTAD and ESCAP, survey
	IA 3.3. At least 75% of policymakers that participated in the workshop state their increased capacity to facilitate financial inclusion and MSMEs access to finance	MAR	Significant progress.	DA 2023W Final report, data from UNCTAD and ESCAP
	IA 3.4. Positive feedback of users of the publication prepared under this component	AR	Significant progress.	DA 2023W Final report, data from UNCTAD, survey
	IA 4.1. Number and type of new/improved adopted measures to increase MSMEs access to technology	MR	Data not available	-

¹²⁵ Empretec is a flagship capacity-building programme of UNCTAD for the promotion of entrepreneurship and micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) to facilitate sustainable development and inclusive growth.

<i>OC4: To increase MSMEs access to Innovation and technology</i>	IA 4.2 Digital community of practice on use of technology and innovation to build resilience to shocks is created with at least 100 members	MAR	Limited progress. ¹²⁶	Data from ECA, interviews
	IA 4.3. Positive feedback from users of online training materials and assessment report on their usefulness for increased access to innovation and technology	AR	Significant progress.	DA 2023W Final report, data from ECA, survey
	IA 4.4. At least 75% of participants of training activities under this component indicated usefulness for their increased access to innovation and technology, by country and gender	MAR	Significant progress. Lacking data by gender on usefulness for training activities.	DA 2023W Final report, data from UNCTAD, survey
<i>OC5: To enhance MSMEs access to markets</i>	IA 5.1 Number and type of new/improved measures endorsed by policymakers on consumer protection and competition disaggregated by country	MR	Data not available ¹²⁷	DA 2023W Final report, data from ECE
	IA 5.2 Number and type of adopted new/improved measures on agricultural quality and food loss disaggregated by country	MR	Data not available	-
	IA 5.3. Increased number of MSMEs in regions targeted by interventions with increased access to markets, including export and integration into value chains, disaggregated by country and gender	R	Limited progress. Gender disaggregated data not available	Anecdotal data from UNCTAD
	IA 5.4. At least 75% of policymakers that participated in the workshops indicated their increased capacity to improve MSMEs access to markets, including by integration into the value chains	MAR	Significant progress.	DA 2023W Final report, data from ECE and ESCAP, survey
	IA 5.5. Positive feedback on usefulness of publications under this component (studies, guidelines, videos, recommendation) by users of these publications	AR	Some progress.	DA 2023W Final report, data from UNCTAD and ECE, survey

Source: Evaluation team analysis of available evidence. *Given that each indicator refers to the work planned by a specific implementing entity, this independent evaluation was bound by the coverage of activities of the corresponding entity. Nevertheless, whenever possible, evidence from other implementing entities on the same content of the indicator was considered as evidence for that indicator. **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound.

87. **The EPF and the cluster-based approach formed an effective framework to organise outputs delivered by different implementing entities under specific outcomes in the Surge Project, and, also, to support the inter-relatedness between outputs whose content cut across different outcomes. Nevertheless, questions remain on the extent to which this approach is suitable for a crisis response (see para. 89).** The EPF and the cluster-based approach were introduced in phase 2 of the Surge project as a strategy to provide a global narrative and weave opportunities for collaboration, mostly evidenced by bilateral partnerships between UNCTAD and respective Regional Commissions, and by collaborations between different UNCTAD divisions (e.g., registration and trade). According to members of the project coordination team, UNCTAD already had the EPF as an agreed menu of best practices to support enterprise development, supported by latest resolutions of the UNGA¹²⁸. Therefore, as the project moved from phase 1 to phases 2 and 3, the EPF components and the cluster-based approach became the design template for the logframe and structured activities around the five outcomes described previously. Activities delivered by different Regional

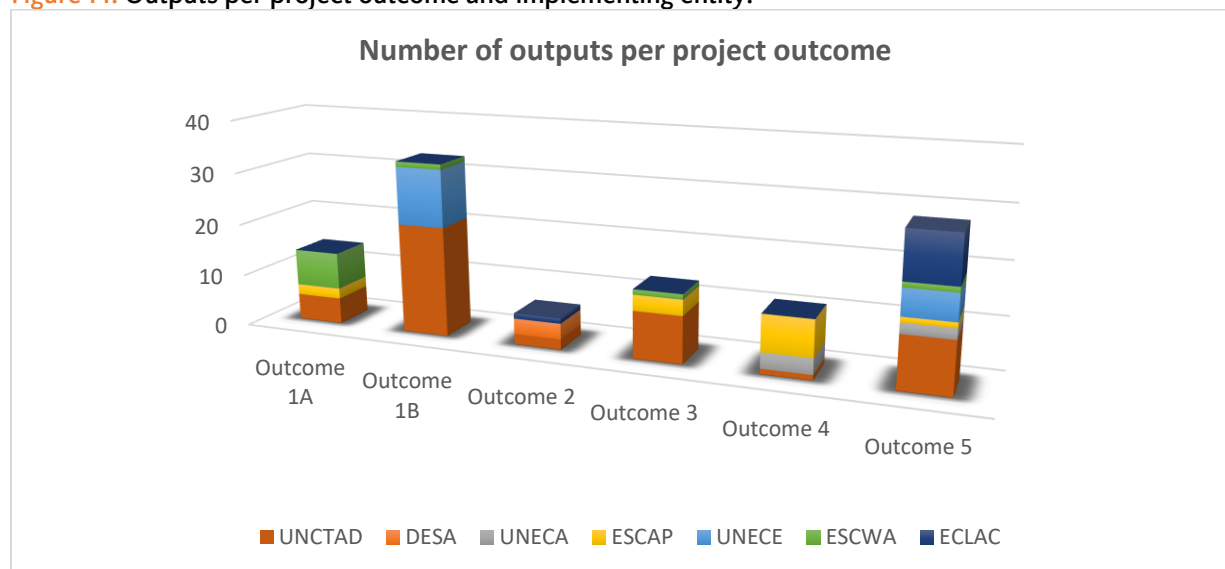
¹²⁶ Update received from ECA in feedback to this evaluation report indicates that this work is continuing under the UNDA13th Tranche project "Innovative approaches for MSME competitiveness to promote trade and inclusive industrialization in Southern Africa in the Post-Covid context".

¹²⁷ There is evidence of national case studies and regional studies collecting measures taken by governments, but these measures do not result from interventions implemented by the project.

¹²⁸ UNGA resolutions /RES/71/221 and A/RES/73/225.

Commissions and UNCTAD's divisions, then, became conceptually connected, providing the UN with a clear picture of how country-level deliverables fit the global framework. As stated by a member of the PCT, "The original idea was to put together the areas of expertise of Regional Commissions and divisions within UNCTAD under the pillars of the EPF, but each pillar is a different type of product." It is acknowledged that only UNCTAD has the capacity to deliver a full EPF project at a global level, as this is its flagship intervention model acknowledged in resolutions of the UNGA. Regional Commissions do not have this global mandate on entrepreneurship policy, so the project benefited from their mandates and expertise on MSME development¹²⁹. Nevertheless, the implementation of the project by the Regional Commissions was constrained by their work programme for the year – previously agreed with governments –, limited staffing resources and online delivery. Figure 14 reflects how the EPF structured the delivery of the project's outputs by different implementing entities.

Figure 14: Outputs per project outcome and implementing entity.



Source: Final report.

88. An example of delivery that cuts across the EPF pillars is ECE's series of guidelines and best practices (located under outcome 1.B) that follow a template that covers topics across the spectrum of the EPF: policy, legal and regulations (outcome 1.A), business facilitation and business registration (outcome 2), access to data, information and knowledge, entrepreneurship skills facilitation, access to finance (outcome 3), access to technology (outcome 4), and market access and logistics and supply chains (outcome 5). Other examples indicate the potential for replicability provided by this framework, such as the national entrepreneurship strategies (outcome 1.A), the e-registration platform (outcome 2), and the case studies on competition and access to markets (outcome 5).

89. **Interview data** with members of the PCT indicates that the Surge's implementation was consistent with the way UNCTAD implements the EPF, by assessing what exists at country level, making practical considerations on what can be done, and responding to countries' demands. A risk of this EPF-centred approach in a global crisis response situation is not building enough synergy with partners and facing implementation difficulties imposed by competing local or regional priorities and uneven competencies on MSMEs. Interview findings corroborate this, with informants referring to challenges in balancing regional priorities and competencies with the delivery of outputs and some focal points in the Regional Commissions reporting a lack of knowledge on the role of the EPF in structuring the project. In these cases, project focal points reported the delivery of what was agreed with UNCTAD on specific outputs and outcomes without a coherent conceptual perspective. Some of them felt that decisions on the project were top-down to create a global response, and delivering under the given circumstances was challenging. Informants from different groups of stakeholders shared the perspective that, for a crisis response, most EPF outputs would be low to medium impact, since they follow a long-term development perspective (e.g., the development of national

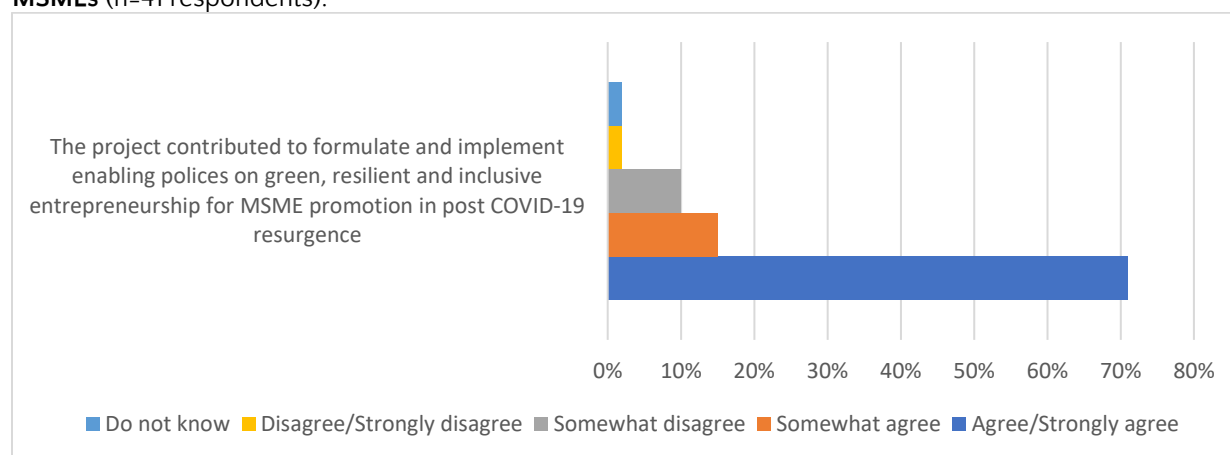
¹²⁹ The Subregional office for Southern Africa, for instance, has a mandate to work on MSME development as contained in the outcome statements of its Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and experts Meetings.

entrepreneurship strategies). So, in future crises, it would be an advantage to know from the start what EPF and MSME development-related outputs are fit for immediate results and how to implement them accordingly.

How did the response contribute to the participating country Governments' responses to COVID-19, especially in the area of MSME resurgence?

90. **The Surge Project contributed to the participating country governments' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis by improving policymakers' capacity to design and implement enabling policies to MSME resiliency and post-COVID-19 resurgence through studies, technical assistance, training, digital tools, and interventions at the regional level. Survey results** from this independent evaluation indicated that 71% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the project contributed to formulate and implement enabling policies on green, resilient, and inclusive entrepreneurship for MSME promotion in post COVID-19 resurgence (Figure 15). Given the small response rate, these findings cannot be generalisable to all project participants and represent the perceptions of those who responded to the question.

Figure 15: Survey responses on the project contributions to formulate and implement enabling policies to MSMEs (n=41 respondents).



Source: Independent evaluation survey, 2023.

91. This was achieved through higher level outputs, such as the Entrepreneurship National Strategies resulting from technical assistance of UNCTAD to the governments of Seychelles, South Africa and Uganda (outcome 1.A) and country-specific case studies with tailored recommendations and follow-up workshops for knowledge dissemination in the Asia and Pacific region (outcome 1.B, see Box 1 below) and Latin America, Southeast Asia and Africa (on the role of competition and consumer policies in Brazil, Thailand and South Africa, outcome 5). The production of assessments on the impacts of COVID-19 on MSMEs at the regional level (Southern Africa in outcome 4, multiple studies in Latin America in outcome 5), followed by policy advocacy supporting inter-institutional partnerships between different areas of government to align policies in efficient and effective ways and learning from exchanges with other countries represent a great contribution to institutional strengthening (e.g., Europe, Latin America). Informants referred to previously 'unthinkable' dialogues, collaborations, and policy alignment between different ministries, with policies for the MSMEs becoming part of the bigger inter-institutional government agenda. In Latin America, interview data referred to how SME policy capacity was initially poorly coordinated with other productive development policies. During the pandemic, however, the same institutions adopted a different working methodology by coordinating with other ministries, such as health, economy, and other productive ministries. The intention was to make the most of the money and avoid dispersed actions. The modalities of policy implementation were a) localized, with targets per sector, or certain geographical locations, b) made flexible and adaptable on a case-by-case basis, according to set targets and sectors most affected, and c) with support from local governments. This was confirmed by government officials in El Salvador and Peru. In Kenya, the survey results supported government action in facilitating access to finance to MSMEs through, for instance, the creation of a targeted fund to increase the access of MSMEs to digital platforms. Now, the new government is focused on MSMEs and DESA is supporting the design of a strategic plan aligned with that. In Zambia, the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises improved the participation of women in business through various cooperatives.

Learning from other countries in webinars and regional dialogues is reported as an additional contribution to building and strengthening government capacities to respond to the crisis.

92. In relation to providing innovative tools to government, the development and implementation of specific tools, such as the e-registration platforms (outcome 2) in El Salvador, Benin, Cameroon, and Mali improved the delivery of public services to MSMEs through this digital technology. Real-time data on the number of businesses, categorization by type of business, locations, main business activity, gender, age, etc., from the e-government platforms, is reported to be used in the design of better entrepreneurship policies (outcome 4). The e-registration platform increased the number of MSMEs formalized by about 90% in El Salvador¹³⁰ and Benin¹³¹, and 40% in Mali¹³², supporting mostly women and youth. Benin became the [fastest country](#) in the world to register a business simultaneously with 5 different public agencies (in less than 2 hours). These positive results led to requests from these countries to expand the functionalities of the platform, e.g., by providing analytical financial statements, modifications in the business registry, grant applications to access financial resources (outcome 3), and access to social security benefits for employers and employees. The Prime Minister in Cameroon is signing a new Decree on entrepreneurship making online business registration mandatory.

93. Another type of contribution, regarding capacity-building, refers to the development of the online training course on accounting and reporting on the SDGs (outcome 3), with a specific guidance in French, Russian, Arabic, and Chinese and training workshops for MSMEs in English, Spanish, French, Russian, Arabic and Chinese. This approach expanded the outreach of these courses to over 600 participants in 39 countries, indirectly contributing to countries' advances on the sustainable development agenda. Having these relevant materials available in more than the three official UN working languages represents an additional contribution to governments, since it may expand opportunities for knowledge uptake through other initiatives in the country.

94. It is noteworthy that contributions to governments often take more time than the project duration, since deeper changes require rounds of consultation and chains of approvals. Hence, challenges to make transformational contributions to governments are often beyond the project's managerial control, such as government's capacities, institutional changes in governments due to shifts in power or political priorities (e.g., Georgia, Moldova, The Gambia, Brazil).

Box 1: ECE's guidelines and best practices – from a general approach to supporting country-specific responses.

In **phase 1**, ECE developed two general guidelines and best practices for MSMEs. One of them was on circular economy and sustainable resource management and critical raw material supply chain solutions¹³³ and the other on delivering energy-efficient products and in providing renewable energy equipment¹³⁴. They refer to the UNFC and UNRMS as a global framework that can help MSMEs to build innovative business models and gain from the new opportunities created by the pandemic crisis. Under **outcome 1.B**, this expanded to cover a wide set of studies and interventions aimed at supporting governments to develop an enabling environment for MSMEs (**outcome 1.A**) in the areas of circular economy and critical raw materials, and energy efficiency and renewable energy. Overall, these country-specific guidelines replicate the same structure of the original documents, allowing for country-specific analysis and recommendations, while providing information comparable between countries and sub-regions within the ECE region. They cover opportunities for entrepreneurs, business development managers, technical experts in existing and potential MSMEs, and financiers on the following topics: business facilitation and business registration (**outcome 2**), policy, legal and regulations (**outcome 1.A**), access to data, information and knowledge, entrepreneurship skills facilitation (**outcome 1.B**), access to finance (**outcome 3**), access to technology (including digitalization, **outcome 4**), market access, and logistics and supply chains (**outcome 5**). Recommendations to governments include providing immediate financial support to MSMEs in the event of a crisis (e.g., temporary tax waivers, temporary tax breaks, national financial programs to support MSMEs, offer payment delays, wage subsidies, line of credit and guarantee free loans to MSME), supporting MSMEs in networking and information gathering, and adopting policies to avoid workforce layoffs (e.g., offer employee development

¹³⁰ In El Salvador, 12,000 new businesses formalized (40% women-led).

¹³¹ In Benin, 52,000 businesses formalized between 2019 and 2021, mostly by young entrepreneurs.

¹³² In Mali, business creations increased from 6,087 in 2019 to 14,796 MSMEs in 2021.

¹³³ UNECE (2020). Guidelines and Best Practices for MSMEs to assure resiliency and progress towards a circular economy in sustainable resource management and critical raw material supply chain solutions. August 2020.

¹³⁴ UNECE (2020). Guidelines and best practices for micro-, small and medium enterprises in delivering energy-efficient products and in providing renewable energy equipment.

programs, such as in digitalization, wage subsidies to cover temporal downsizing and financial support to laid-off workforce). Following the OECD strategic directions for SME development, these recommendations include the development and promotion of 1) **an institutional framework and operational environment** (e.g., coordination mechanisms for SME policy, collect relevant SME statistics and disseminate the results, improve business closure and insolvency procedures, use targeted public procurement for MSMEs, and a specialized clean energy financial institution to enable MSMEs as a driving force to clean and green economic recovery); 2) **access to finance** (e.g., public grants, especially for MSMEs working on low-carbon technologies, supply-side financial skills of banks, demand-side financial education for entrepreneurs, credit guarantee scheme, other non-bank financing for SMEs, with a clear governmental guidance); 3) **skills and entrepreneurial culture** (e.g., training needs assessments, implementation of vocation training policies, access to non-formal training, women's entrepreneurship); 4) **internationalization** (e.g., export promotion activities and export-related skills, SMEs to adapt to DCFTA requirements, financial support to exporting SMEs, and SME integration into global value chains); and 5) **innovation and R&D** (e.g., legal framework for innovation, collaboration between industry and academia, and financial support to SMEs for innovation).

Country-specific guidelines on delivering energy-efficient products and in providing renewable energy equipment were produced for Georgia and North Macedonia in phase 2, and expanded to Armenia Albania, Kyrgyzstan, and Republic of Moldova in phase 3. Likewise, customized guidelines on circular economy in sustainable resource management and critical raw material supply chain solutions were produced for Tajikistan and Ukraine in phase 2 and expanded to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Serbia, in phase 3. Once the guidelines for a country were done, there were regular contacts with the government's agency responsible for that piece, for dissemination and organization of the online training. These were about half-a-day training sessions, sometimes with presentations from the WB, or UNDP. There were a couple of events by the end of the project delivered face-to-face.

Also in phase 3, an updated version of the guidelines and best practices for MSMEs in delivering energy-efficient products and renewable energy was delivered. This update responded to changes in the work environment of MSMEs in this sector in the ECE region, where countries laid out economic recovery through 'green' approaches. A follow-up on the original guidelines' recommendations indicated that "Most of the countries in the ECE region have adopted various economic and operational tools for recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, helping MSMEs in the energy efficiency and renewable energy equipment sector to boost their growth and to bring the clean energy transition across the region. Intervention measures like low-interest financing, innovation grants and funds, operational relief funds, provision of subsidized/common manufacturing units and workplaces, etc. are being issued for supporting MSMEs during the COVID-19 crisis."

The assisted countries can now request technical assistance from the regular programme on technical cooperation to implement the recommendations in these guidelines.

95. **The absence of strong policymakers' networks on policies for MSMEs and of mainstreaming gender- and minority-inclusive approaches hindered the effectiveness of the Surge project in supporting governments' responses to assist MSMEs recover from the COVID-19 crisis.** The two initiatives on building policymakers' networks, one by ESCAP and another by ECA, showed high relevance and appreciation by country stakeholders interviewed. In the case of ESCAP, after three meetings and a set of associated outputs, such as input studies and follow-up meeting reports, interest on the topic of MSMEs faded away and this network seems to be inactive now. In relation to ECA, the plan was to deliver a 'Digital community of practice' (Techni Africa portal) on technology and innovation for SMEs in Southern Africa. Progress was made in developing and validating the digital platform (TechniAfrica) that will host the community of practice, but it had not been operationalized by the closing of the Surge project.¹³⁵ Another tool with potential to support strategic networks of policymakers is the DEPAR portal. Although it has the digital structure and input materials in place (e.g., the ecosystem maps), there seems to be a lack of institutional effort to build and maintain an active network, as a community of practice. Networks of policymakers could sustain mutual and regional learning on policies to support MSMEs in different sectors, including in cross-border trade.

96. The project could have improved its support to government capacities in cross-border trade by involving government officials, i.e., immigration officers, customs and police with crucial roles on CBT, in the training courses, as trainees, or having a dedicated training session for them. Interviewees referred to their lack of knowledge on CBT and business skills and negative attitudes toward cross-border traders as remaining barriers to facilitating cross-border trade, especially for women. This independent evaluation also found that

¹³⁵ Update on the operationalization and launch of this platform was provided by ECA in feedback to this evaluation report. The actual operationalization and launch of the digital platform, titled "TechniAfrica", to be hosted by the SADC Business Council, will be implemented under the UNDA13th tranche project "Innovative approaches for MSME competitiveness to promote trade and inclusive industrialization in Southern Africa in the Post-Covid context".

some sectoral interventions on access to markets were gender-blind by design and they benefited women because a large proportion of workers in those sectors are female (e.g., cocoa and coffee in Peru). Informants referred to a lack of government interest in looking at gender issues amid a pandemic crisis, so implementing agencies, in those cases, focused on their priorities.

What innovative approaches or tools, if any, did the response use, and what were the outcomes and lessons learned from their application?

97. **One of the key institutional innovations in the Surge project was the use of adaptive management through an increased consultative process, and a phased approach.** The COVID-19 crisis was an opportunity for the DA programme to innovate on how it promotes sustainable development. Its orientation remains geared to the long run rather than to crisis responses, but the efforts to make the Surge project and the other COVID-19 response projects work created momentum to stimulate more joint projects, according to interview informants. They refer to the advantages of learning what other regions are doing and the possibilities to connect through digital technologies, reducing the costs of inviting someone from Asia to an event in Latin America, for instance. Informants also acknowledge the constraints to implementing such collaborations, such as distinct programmes of work in different entities, translation costs, time zone challenges, etc., but feel that the project promoted the interest and motivation for more synergies. The emerging benefits of, and new expertise, on joint projects through frequent consultation with DA focal points and relevant stakeholders (e.g., entities' staff working on MSMEs) made this modality a good practice to be considered when planning regular DA projects that could benefit from joint implementation. The streamlining of guidelines¹³⁶ to support the phased approach associated with the Surge project is also an innovative practice. The phased approach was qualified by several UN staff in the implementing entities as 'unique' in DA history and seen as one of the main innovative approaches at the institutional level.

98. **The Surge Project developed innovative approaches and tools to respond to country needs, such as online delivery of trainings and knowledge-sharing events, the introduction of MSMEs into policy discussions in response to the pandemic crisis, and e-government services. Some of these innovative approaches and tools are being incorporated into the daily work of stakeholders.** The most highlighted innovation by relevant stakeholders was the conversion of activities into the online format. Some advantages of this format were the massive extended access to training, inclusive during lockdowns (e.g., e-learning EPF TOT courses delivered, **outcome 1.A**, Empretec TOT courses, **outcome 1.B**, courses on role of technology and innovation and green technologies for MSMEs, **outcome 4**, course on competition policy for MSME resurgence, **outcome 5**), the opening of opportunities for exchanges between implementing entities (e.g., joint events and participation in each other's events, **all outcomes**) and between policymakers (e.g., regional webinars, global conferences, **all outcomes**), and to bring together multiple stakeholders for wider discussions (e.g., webinars on the health economy in Africa, Asia and Latin America, **outcome 1.A**). At the content level, an innovative approach praised by different stakeholders was the focus on MSMEs in the context of competition policies (Latin America) and the inclusion of MSMEs in the existing circular economy and resources management tools (Europe) to answer to a global pandemic crisis. This approach had not been thought about and it was transformative to see it associated with the rapid digitalization of services, such as delivery services, and in policy guidelines on circular economy (**outcomes 1.B and 5**). This brought MSMEs to the mainstream debate on digitalization and competition policies and into ECE's work on energy efficiency. Innovative online tools that generated rapid results were the e-government and e-registration tools (**outcome 2**), since they kept public services working during lockdowns and increased the interaction between MSMEs and public services in a digital one-stop shop that can be accessed by computer or mobile phone and saves on paper for accounting books. An additional gain is improving the digital literacy of users.

99. Respondents to the **survey** conducted by this independent evaluation listed other innovative or unique approaches and tools of the Surge project that they thought the UN should consider replicating or upscaling, with 57 contributions from 48 respondents. Here is a summary of these responses, categorized according to main themes:

¹³⁶ The timeline for concept note and PRODOC development was shortened, and the concept note guidelines were shorter than those for regular tranche projects (as the concept note was only subject to approval by the DA Steering Committee, and not the General Assembly). The PRODOC template still included all the elements of the regular tranche prodoc, and there was an additional Phase 3 budget proposal.

- **Leaving no one behind** (15 comments): reaching out to resource-poor areas in developing countries and seeking cooperation to do so and following up with them; business that clearly accommodates those with disabilities; supporting the local women and youth-led initiatives to increase accessibility of services by women and girls in hard-to-reach communities (e.g., rural areas); promoting and upscaling global entrepreneurship with e-commerce, especially for marginalized and vulnerable groups; considering the triple impact (economic, social and environmental) of women-led businesses; profiling women-led MSMEs was insightful and helped to develop legal amendments supportive to women employability.

"I live in a rural and poorest province in my country. I was impressed by the reach of the project because while my country (the capital city) is hosting many UN regional offices, UN programmes are unheard of in these parts, though I suspect they are visible elsewhere in the country and region."

- **Capacity-building for MSMEs, entrepreneurs and communities** (12 comments): capacitating communities to engage in entrepreneurship; financial literacy training; entrepreneurial training (including on appropriate technology application and innovation); diversification of business opportunity innovations and mentoring of entrepreneurs.
- **Scope of the project and mode of delivery** (9 comments): online activities (i.e., courses, webinars and information dissemination); large-scale multifaceted project allowing for rapid intervention; the combination of independent study, YouTube videos, exercises, moderated online participation and tests facilitated greater engagement with the material, learning from the facilitator, and peer learning; room for project managers to try out new ideas, to innovate; undertaking a needs analysis and developing programs based on the needs of the MSMEs.
- **Access to finance** (5 comments): a simplified micro-lending business method, such as funding local small businesses with a day-to-day transaction of lending to collect daily loan offers with affordable interest rates; innovative digital finance solutions and regulatory frameworks to support both financial inclusion and growth of SMEs, especially those owned and led by women (new perspective for the private sector); increasing non-refundable investment support for SMEs in developing and underdeveloped countries; supporting MSEs to access grants; development of investment attraction mechanisms for the energy system.
- **Institutional capacity-building and national capacities for policymaking** (5 comments): opportunity or skills-sharing from neighbouring countries and building business relationships and Empretec relationships; face-to-face courses for policymakers to support SMEs; improving cooperation between countries; hybrid policy dialogues including the private sector; improving private sector governance to make it an engine of growth.
- **Access to markets** (4 comments): digitalization in a globalized world; reducing border barriers; the role of competition policy in the economic recovery of MSMEs (e.g., MSMEs continue to face challenges related to their interaction with bigger counterparts in the agricultural sector and current competition laws do not present effective solutions); the work dedicated to the analysis of structural barriers to trade helped to identify measures necessary for facilitation of exports in Africa.
- **Guidance for crisis response** (4 comments): recommendations to respond economically to a crisis; emphasis on sustainable and inclusive development; studies might contain innovative and/or unique conclusions and recommendations (should upscale and replicate); the whole approach was innovative, enabling one-stop shop for mechanisms and best practices towards post-COVID-19 resurgence of the MSME sector.
- **Access to technology and innovation** (2 comments): unique in tackling the novelty of COVID-19 for future resilience (upon lessons learned); the project's efforts to leverage technology and digital solutions for MSMEs are forward-thinking.
- **Better policies and government strategies** (1 comment): improving EE/RES (energy efficient/renewable energy) secondary legislation.

100. **Challenges to the institutionalization of some of these innovations include the digital gap and the lack of technological infrastructure and literacy.** Two examples illustrate these challenges. First, the pilot tests of the online version of the Empretec training indicated that, even if online training had worked well in training of

trainers' courses, this is not the case for entrepreneurs. Empretec is a lengthy training programme that includes the observation of behaviour and the performance of team tasks, and the online format does not favour these characteristics of the program. Moreover, the course's online games and activities would not be supported by the bandwidth and the computers the entrepreneurs have access to. Second, the implementation of the e-registration platform in El Salvador required many intermediary – presential and paper-based steps – to include female entrepreneurs of low literacy and technological skills. Implementers developed a paper version of the platform, where entrepreneurs could write down their financial information until they developed the financial and technological skills needed to use the platform. They needed a 6-month follow-up with visits by the implementers and, during training, they would require their help and the help of younger entrepreneurs to, for instance, create an e-mail account and a password and access it afterwards. Another challenge, at the implementing entities' level, is access to digital platforms for large conferences and meetings. ECE, for instance, depended on UNDP to set up Zoom meetings with interpretation or had to hire interpreters, since the tools available to them would not offer this service.

5.4 Sustainability

What measures were adopted to ensure that outcomes of the response would continue after the project ended?

101. **From the perspective of the implementing entities, the Surge project sowed the seeds for joint projects that are being planned or may emerge in the future.** Lessons learned from the responses to the COVID-19 crisis seem to be part of a process of internal reflection by the DA-PMT to support better the design and evaluation of joint projects. The lessons learned from the 5 COVID-19 response projects will be reviewed and discussed at a meeting of the DA Network, as soon as all of these project evaluations are completed. Meanwhile, the management response to the final evaluation of the DA T10 Programme on Statistics and Data¹³⁷, which report¹³⁸ also took into consideration the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, addresses actions to be taken in the course of 2023 and 2024 to improve and develop guidelines on planning, monitoring, and evaluation of joint projects, especially those with budgets above USD 1 million. In June 2023, DA-PMT expressed its intent through interviews to do more joint projects with a long-term view and responding to the evolving world. Since funds are non-earmarked, they can respond to the mandate of UN entities, including by operationalizing the HQ's analytical work by cutting silos. Joint projects currently in the design phase (16th tranche) refer to the triple crisis – food, water, energy – and the food crisis response for Ukraine. The former has a global scope, covering urban resilience, energy security, financing etc., with a regional perspective (e.g., the climate crisis plays out differently in Europe and in Africa). DA-FPs interviewed acknowledge the uptake of learning from the COVID-19 response in the DA call for crisis-response projects. They refer to faster procedures, with an improved system of calls for proposals supporting the development of concept notes, project documents, and improved templates that are simpler and more concise. Reported improvements include clearer and more specific feedback of the DA-PMT to proposals, e.g., details on indicators, countries, logframe, including suggestions for aggregated activities. At the regional level, informants referred to how partnerships between Regional Commissions in implementing the Surge project have promoted learning about what others are doing and raised interest in seeking further partnerships. Some of the key factors that might limit or facilitate such joint initiatives, under regular project planning conditions, are the availability of resources, the Regional Commissions' mandates, and their priorities in a moment in time. Future evaluations of joint projects that are planned under such regular conditions (i.e., not called for to a swift response to a major unpredictable global crisis) might benefit from considering evidence on these and other factors to demonstrate the added value of joint projects under more predictable global and regional contexts.

102. **There is evidence of the sustainability of e-government tools, training activities and regional and national interventions, with measures related to expanding the functionalities of digital tools, training courses and the formalization of agreements between partner institutions.** Across regions, e-registration platforms are being increasingly used by entrepreneurs, mostly youth, with their potential being acknowledged by MSMEs, governments and other relevant stakeholders, such as banks. The result is new requests from different countries to expand the functionalities of these digital platforms and the higher probability that they will remain active in the future. In Cameroon, for instance, the government is signing a decree to make e-registration

¹³⁷ https://www.un.org/development/desa/da/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2023/05/MR_to_Final_Evaluation_Report_1617A.pdf

¹³⁸ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/da/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2023/01/DAT10-Programme-on-Statistics-and-Data-Final-Eval-Report.pdf>

mandatory. Surge's managers referred to the e-government platforms as a tool that can be available in crisis response to keep government offices operational. However, there is awareness that these platforms may not respond to all types of crisis.

103. In Southern Africa, the Surge project strengthened relationships between the ECA's Sub-regional Office for Southern Africa and the SADC Business Council, with joint meetings on MSMEs being held to this day¹³⁹. Recommendations from the side events held at the SADC Industrialisation Week 2021 and funded under the Surge project were incorporated into the key priority areas for stakeholders, including member states, in the Lilongwe Declaration, issued at the 5th Annual SADC Industrialisation Week (November 2021), under the section on SME and local development, gender, and youth.

104. The project raised the opportunity to pilot an UNCTAD/Empretec Farming as a Business training with small-holder vegetable farmers in Greater Accra, Ghana. However, despite the pilot's success in empowering farmers who embraced the improved practices with measured increased yield and income, the sustainability of this pilot is not ensured, since its small scale may prove challenging in sustaining access to markets and pro-poor initiatives. In Nigeria, the Entrepreneurship Training Workshop has been recommended by former participants from the government, bringing in more government agencies and state governments to the program, thus enhancing its sustainability.

105. In Latin America, sustainability is rooted in strengthened links between government officials and their stakeholders, such as MSMEs, business associations, and training centers. Based on the courses of the Surge project, ECLAC has been supporting subregional and national initiatives for training MSMEs, using the tools generated to help and promote greater incorporation and formalization of MSMEs in the region, with special emphasis on those led by vulnerable groups such as women and youth. This follow-up work involves different divisions at ECLAC, such as international trade, social development and gender. Also, as a follow-up to the online generic courses on cross-border trade, ECLAC received sub-regional and country requests for tailor-made courses. This generated a customized course for Central America, organized in collaboration with the Regional Center for the Promotion of MSMEs (Cenpromype), on "the *Development of strategic capacities on public policies for electronic commerce*" (2022¹⁴⁰). This was followed by the planning of a Portuguese version of the course for Brazil.

106. In Thailand, after the end of the Surge project, the SME authority (OSMEP) and the Competition authority (OTCC) signed an agreement in August 2023 that incorporates SMEs into competition policies. This is evidence of the implementation of recommendations from the national case study discussed in the *'Formal consultation between UNCTAD and Thai institutions: OTCC, NESDC, OSMEP, ISMED and SME Development Bank under the UN COVID19 Project: SME resurgence'* in which representatives of these two institutions were present.

107. **The beneficiaries' perspective on the potential impact and sustainability of results at the MSME level of the Surge project indicates potential long-lasting effects on resilience and competitiveness in post-COVID-19 resurgence, through high-level achievements in each project outcome. MSMEs and government officials report on implementing activities learned during capacity-building, advantages of the new registration facilities, improved management practices, access to knowledge, empowerment of women and youth entrepreneurs, preparedness to respond to crises through innovation, access to finance and markets, and improved capacities of policymakers.** Across the board, 73% of 106 survey¹⁴¹ respondents agree or strongly agree that the project contributed to improving the resilience and competitiveness of MSMEs in post- COVID-19 resurgence (Figure 16). Given the small response rate, these findings cannot be generalisable to all project participants and represent the perceptions of those who responded to the question.

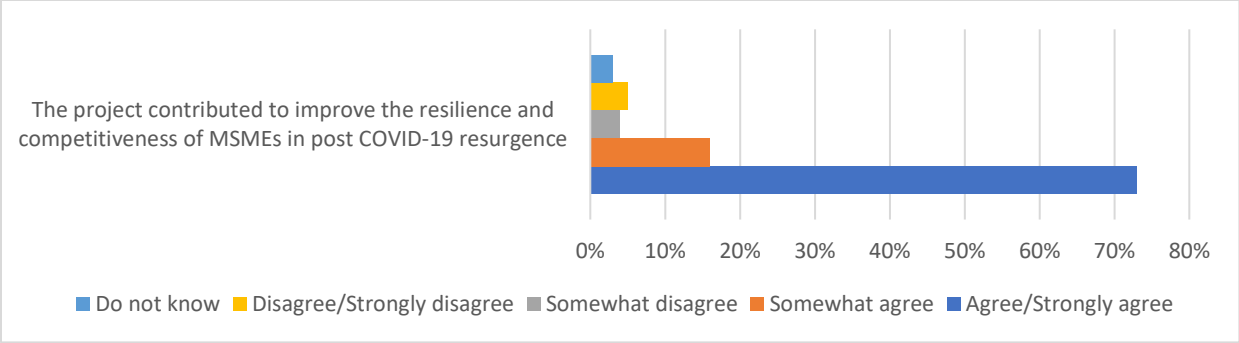
Figure 16: Contribution of the project to improve the resilience and competitiveness of MSMEs in post-. COVID-19 resurgence in a sustainable way (n=106 respondents).

Source: Independent evaluation survey, 2023.

¹³⁹ The latest one was a 3-day regional meeting, held in June 2023. [ECA partners with SADC Business Council on technology and innovation for MSMEs in Southern Africa | United Nations Economic Commission for Africa \(uneca.org\)](#)

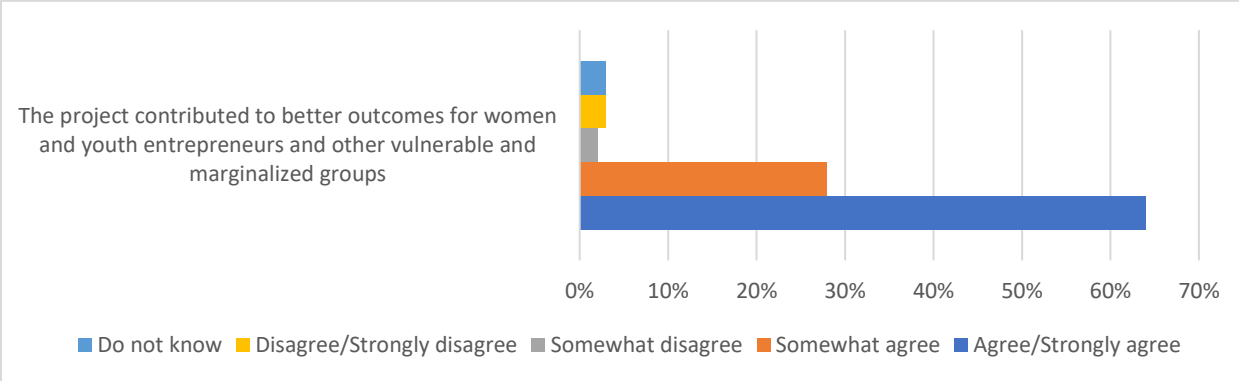
¹⁴⁰ 136 participants mainly from Belize, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panamá.

¹⁴¹ Survey conducted by this independent evaluation in July–August 2023, responded by government, MSMEs, and other private sector-related stakeholders (e.g., business associations, commercial registry offices).



108. Most of these respondents also agree or strongly agree that the project impacted on better outcomes for women and youth entrepreneurs and other vulnerable and marginalized groups (64%) (Figure 17). Given the small response rate, these findings cannot be generalisable to all project participants and represent the perceptions of those who responded to the question.

Figure 17: Contribution of the project to better outcomes for women and youth entrepreneurs and other vulnerable groups in a sustainable way (n=105 respondents).

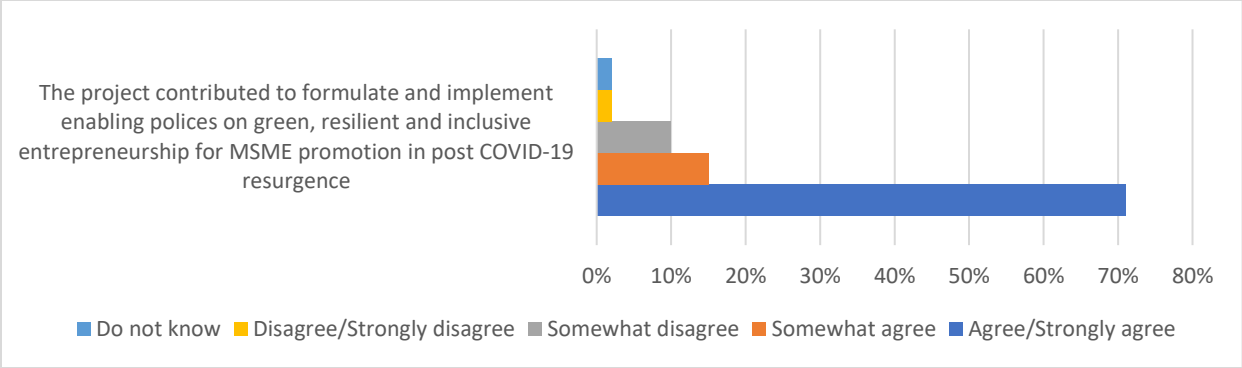


Source: Independent evaluation survey, 2023.

109. Survey results confirm the predominance of positive assessments of the potential impact of the project in each outcome. Because of the low number of responses in outcome 2 (between 2 and 3 respondents), outcome 3 (9 respondents), outcome 4 (11 respondents) and outcome 5 (between 8 and 9 respondents) to the questions on the potential impact of the Surge project, these results are considered as qualitative information that reflects the assessments of those who responded and do not represent a robust finding in quantitative terms.

110. Figure 18 presents the survey results for the impact of outcome 1.A, where 71% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the project contributed to the formulation of better policies for MSMEs.

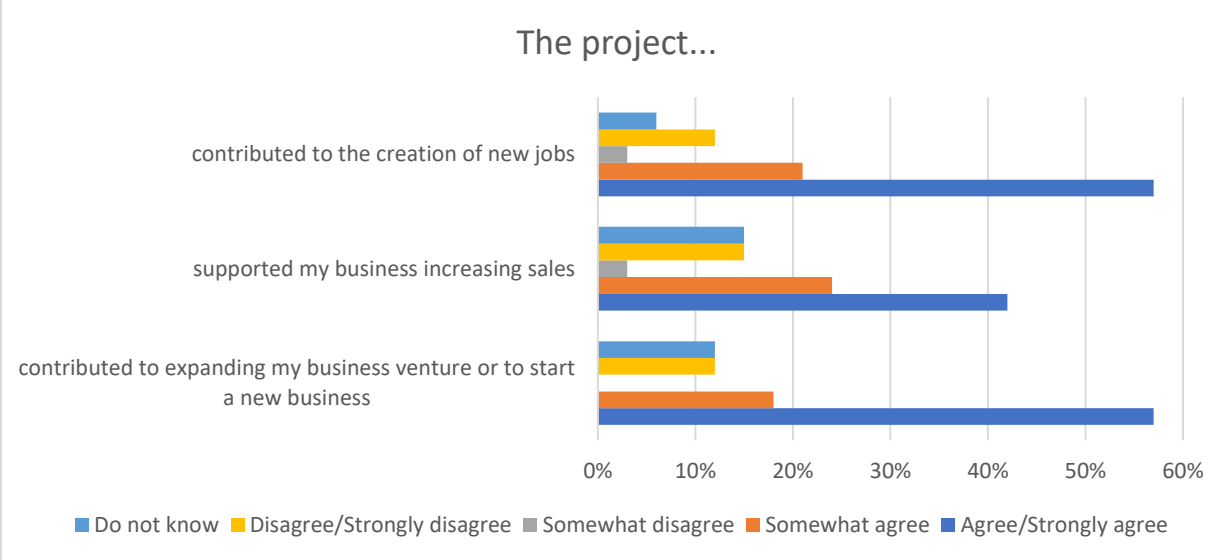
Figure 18: Contribution of the project to formulate and implement enabling policies for MSME post-COVID-19 resurgence in a sustainable way (n=41 respondents).



Source: Independent evaluation survey, 2023.

111. Figure 19 shows moderate impact of the project on creation of new jobs, increases in sales, and creation of new or expansion of existing business ventures, with between 42% and 57% of the survey respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the survey statements (outcome 1.B).

Figure 19: Contribution of the project to improve the resilience and competitiveness of MSMEs in post-COVID-19 resurgence in a sustainable way (n=33 respondents).



Source: Independent evaluation survey, 2023.

112. Qualitative survey responses regarding the potential impact and long-lasting effects of the project for beneficiaries were mostly about gains to MSMEs’ resilience. Out of 47 comments, 25 referred to impacts for MSMEs. They cover multiple ways in which the project supported MSME’s survival and resilience. The main service of the Surge project was **capacity-building for entrepreneurs**, such as in relation to registration, internal management practices, good guidelines towards circular economy, knowledge sharing about critical issues (e.g., market dynamics and export opportunities and barriers), empowerment of women (incl. women with disabilities) and youth to do business, access to support mechanisms, and contribution to community development (incl. on green technology), and preparedness to respond to crises through innovation and reaching out to consumers. Regarding MSMEs’ operation, comments refer to increased **access to finance and support programs**, economic improvement through **income generation** activities, methods to improve **access to markets** and supply chains through innovation, facilitation of business operation through **e-commerce and digitalization**, and contribution to increase the number of MSMEs. The 16 comments on the results of the project that were beneficial to **governments** covered policy advice on national MSME policies (e.g., e-commerce, law enforcement, sustainable development, gender-responsive support, MSME formalization,

new support schemes for MSMEs), e-registration, stimulus to public-private partnerships, awareness of the leveraging power of ICTs for MSMEs, awareness of the role of rural areas for development, and grounded work through project's partnerships with local institutions.

113. Another source of evidence for sustained results was the survey responses on the ways in which beneficiaries use the knowledge or skills acquired through the project. Three main categories of knowledge/skills use emerged out of 71 comments:

- **Use of knowledge or skills to improve MSME policy** (22 comments): project beneficiaries reported that they had been raising MSMEs' issues in new projects to respond to the COVID-19 crisis (e.g., introduction of entrepreneurial training, business counselling and access to credit), improving policies for youth employment and community development, incorporating MSMEs' challenges in accessing markets and finance into work in competition law, mainstreaming sustainability principles in MSMEs' development initiatives, supervising partnerships between MSMEs and larger companies, onboarding MSMEs to the e-commerce platform, easily assessing women's problems in farms, establishing priority policies for women-owned, female-intensive businesses and social enterprises, using analytical tools (E-view, SPSS, GIS) to identify policy trends and priorities for MSMEs, sharing best practices within the organization and with other partners (e.g., the critical role of cooperatives in formalization). An unexpected impact was on increased exchanges between policymakers and the UN through presentations of the work they have done, and another was on changing cultural relationships with the environment:

The ocean economy is not very well explored in my area. The ethnic groups have always avoided water out of cultural and spiritual reverence. My development programmes never included the ocean economy until after this project. I have started an awareness initiative that presents the ocean as a possible and lucrative source of livelihood. I believe the initiative is making a breakthrough because locals (though still very few) are beginning to lodge applications for fishing licenses to the authorities.

- **Use of knowledge or skills to strengthen MSME resilience** (24 comments): project beneficiaries reported that they have been applying their new knowledge in supporting and mentoring MSMEs in topics such as financial literacy, sustainability and ecological concerns, product exportation, and diversification of business opportunities. These consulting services have been assisting family enterprises too. MSMEs reported that they have been applying the new knowledge in their business growth plans and accounting systems, in designing and upscaling projects within the circular economy and the energy sector, creating an association to buy larger volumes from suppliers, applying entrepreneurship competencies to avoid fraud, diversifying production with facial masks for COVID-19, improving production by reducing pollution, implementing biosecurity protocols, and using digital technologies to reach out to prospective clients, do business marketing, expand collaboration with partners to participate in tenders and expand the business activities. Two unexpected impacts were a beneficiary who started an NGO to focus on climate change, and another who installed wi-fi internet in his village using solar panels to ensure that they could continue working remotely.
- **Use of knowledge to take training forward** (25 comments): beneficiaries reported that they are taking training forward either by taking further training (e.g., on green technologies, computer training) or by training others (e.g., teaching at vocational courses, designing new courses for MSMEs about internationalization and digitalization, and sustainable development, developing new training material for national counterparts, business development services' offers). They had also been using what they learned to explain to work colleagues how to operate more effectively and efficiently, to do female entrepreneurship advocacy to other women entrepreneurs, and to protect their families from COVID-19.

114. **Challenges for beneficiaries to use their new knowledge or skills refer, mostly, to lack of financial resources, follow-up mentoring, and a favourable business environment.** Fifty-three survey respondents indicated their difficulties in making use of the knowledge or skills acquired through the Surge project. The main difficulties were around unfavourable business environment for MSMEs in the country or weak business ecosystems, lack of local resources (policies, technologies, access to remote regions), financial constraints

(including barriers to access financial resources by entrepreneurs and governments), turnover of government officials, low political interest and commitment from senior management, limited technical skills and resources, lack of country data for effective policy analysis, lack of education for sustainable development, lack of entrepreneurial mindset in the community and among small business owners, lack of skilled workers, lack of post-training follow-up and mentoring, how to transfer knowledge to complex country situations, challenges to coordination and synergies between relevant agencies, and internet costs.

115. **Beneficiaries' suggestions for ways in which the UN could support MSMEs in their countries covered continuing to invest in capacity-building activities, facilitating access to finance, supporting inter-institutional coordination inside the country's government bodies, and increasing interventions at the local level.** Survey respondents suggested numerous ways in which the UN could support MSMEs in their countries (72 comments). They can be grouped into the following main categories: **continue developing capacities** of all actors (i.e., governments, MSMEs, other national partners, such as chambers of commerce and business development services) through training, mentoring and webinars, **strengthen or contribute to facilitating access to finance** for the MSMEs (including seed money, grants, access to credit, etc.), support improving the **coordination across ministries of MSMEs-related policies**, and increase **interventions at local level** (i.e., supporting NGOs and MSMEs outside of the main cities, supporting the organization of cooperatives, launching communication campaigns for information dissemination), conducting more **regional and country-specific studies** (e.g., policy papers, sectoral approaches), and provide tools to support **internationalization of MSMEs** (e.g., network program). There is great emphasis, both in terms of number of comments as well as in relevance for inclusive and sustainable development, on the inclusion of women, youth, persons with disabilities and rural entrepreneurs across these suggestions.

5.5 Gender, Human Rights, and Leave No One Behind

116. This section explores the extent to which gender equality, human rights and leaving no one behind perspectives were considered in the design and implementation of the project.

To what extent were perspectives on gender equality, protection of human rights and reaching underserved groups integrated into design and implementation of the project? What results can be identified from these actions?

117. **The Surge Project's design was guided by two key UN documents that provided clear direction for the integration of gender, human rights, and LNOB: The UN Secretary-General's Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity report and the UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19.** The Global Solidarity report¹⁴² provided overall guidance by recognizing that the most vulnerable were the hardest hit by the pandemic, stating the UN's commitment to help people and societies, especially the most vulnerable, and emphasizing the need for full respect of human rights, ensuring no one is left behind. Aiding in implementation of the Global Solidarity's guidance, the Framework¹⁴³ outlined detailed responses to the pandemic with specific deliverables and activities related to gender dimensions, human rights and Leave No One Behind (LNOB). Particularly, the relevant responses including the assessments were expected to be gender-responsive and involve a human rights-based approach to data collection with disaggregated data such as age, sex, migratory status, health status, socio-economic status, place of residence and other factors. The analysis of the human rights and gender impacts would then inform the design of policies that address these risks considering gender aspects and disability-inclusive responses. The Framework also provided a set of indicators to monitor and assess the human rights implications of the COVID-19 crisis, including socio-economic impacts and LNOB aspects. In addition, the Guidelines for the Preparation of Project Document for the Development Account¹⁴⁴ required the applicants to outline how the project would contribute to gender equality and the enhancement of human rights, with particular emphasis on "leaving no one behind", taking into consideration how the specific needs of groups such as youth, persons with disabilities, older people, refugees, migrants, the poor, and others would be addressed.

¹⁴² Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. March 2020.

¹⁴³ A UN Framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. April 2020.

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/da/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2022/07/T15-Project-Documents-Guidelines-vf.docx>

118. **In line with the guiding UN documents, the Surge Project aimed at supporting the MSMEs that were considered the most vulnerable to COVID-19 within the private sector, highlighted the gender, HRBA and LNOB perspectives and fairly covered the gender aspects. Youth and other vulnerable groups were also covered, though to a lesser extent.**¹⁴⁵ Given the larger number of vulnerable groups working in the informal MSMEs- particularly women and youth – the project was developed to contribute to inclusive growth during the economic resurgence after the pandemic¹⁴⁶. As highlighted in the project document, most informal MSMEs are led by the working poor, women, youth and other marginalized and vulnerable groups who need to be integrated into an inclusive economic resurgence after COVID-19 and who are at most risk of falling into poverty and being left further behind. The initial project document included a brief section on the assessment of vulnerable groups such as the women traders involved in cross-border trade, and initiatives benefiting the vulnerable groups, especially women and youth. The second phase proposed a coherent approach towards MSMEs, with the purpose of reaching out to the most affected target groups, including women and informal workers. A specific section on mainstreaming gender equality and human rights aspects including social protection was developed to outline the project approach, and intended to ensure a gender perspective, LNOB aspects and HRBA would be integrated into the activities of different clusters across preparedness, response, and recovery stages. The project document¹⁴⁷ further provided a brief assessment of the gender issues and made reference to youth and vulnerable groups under each cluster and stated that the project interventions would address issues in an inclusive manner leaving no one behind. The 3rd phase project document also referred to the project approach of reaching out to the most affected target groups, including women and informal workers¹⁴⁸. Specific activities **integrating gender and youth** were also covered including capacity-building workshops for national government officials and informal MSME entrepreneurs, **especially youth and women**, an entrepreneurship training workshop to assist **entrepreneurs from vulnerable backgrounds** and to deliver support to MSMEs in the region, placing its efforts on supporting the **poorest, marginalized and women-led micro and SMEs**. The result frameworks included specific outputs mainly benefiting women entrepreneurs such as training initiatives for cross-border traders (almost all female traders) and outcome-level indicators covering gender-disaggregated data as well as COVID-19 impact assessments. However, the project document covering the initial phase only mentions persons with disabilities in relation to the project's links to the SDG targets 8.5 and does not specifically outline disability-inclusive responses. Furthermore, some of the outcome indicators include gender-disaggregated data but do not propose effective data collection methods to capture other vulnerable groups and vulnerabilities or gender dynamics beyond the limited quantitative data.

119. **In addition to the key guidelines provided by the UN Secretariat, it was unclear to what extent internal procedures and programming guidance for each UN partner on gender mainstreaming, gender equality or LNOB played a role in the integration of all aspects in the design and implementation of the Surge project.** Although the overall project was designed with a strong alignment to the UN guiding documents on HRBA and gender, the integration of these cross-cutting components in the implementation within each UN partner's activities was less consistent. As an informant from one of the implementing UN entities stated, "gender mainstreaming and reducing inequality are part of their [the staff's] DNA in all they do." On the other hand, another claimed that due to many partners involved and the urgency of the situation, internal clearance processes regarding gender aspects for DA projects were not necessarily followed for the Surge project. Also, it was implied by yet another informant that with additional resources (i.e. human, financial, and time) then gender responsiveness, HRBA, and LNOB could have been better integrated into the implementation of the project components.

120. **There was limited evidence available of systematic sharing of experiences, capacity, or lessons learned related to the integration of the cross-cutting themes, which might have enhanced leveraging synergies among the UN partner organizations or with other relevant agencies, such as UN Women.** One example of a good practice was in the Republic of Moldova where UNECE worked closely with the UN Country team and UN Women contributed to the development of a gender-sensitive roadmap for the government based on a study on MSMEs conducted by the Surge project. One of the survey respondents further

¹⁴⁵ UN. COVID-19 Response. July 2020. Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 MSME sector: MSME Surge Project. Phase II Project Proposal.

¹⁴⁶ UNCTAD. 2020. Concept note: Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 MSME sector Phase I.

¹⁴⁷ UN. COVID-19 Response. July 2020. Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 MSME sector: MSME Surge Project. Phase II Project Proposal.

¹⁴⁸ UN. COVID-19 Response. February 2021. Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 MSME sector: MSME Surge Project. Phase III Project Proposal.

emphasized that the project was largely complementary to the work of a few agencies – such as UNDP, UNCTAD and UN Women – and helpful in the process of the CCA analysis and gender assessment. UN Women was also involved in supporting a regional conference on women in the Latin American region. Collaboration with Empretec enabled the development of a training programme for people with low literacy and the Farming-as-a-Business training, facilitating participation and empowerment of the vulnerable groups in the sector. Reflecting on the available documentation and evidence, the collaboration and sharing of experiences among project partners or other UN organizations regarding the integration of gender, HRBA and LNOB perspectives were limited to some cases as outlined above and not systematic across the project clusters.

121. **The level of integration of these cross-cutting themes by the main counterparts depended on the counterpart's understanding, willingness, and priorities.** The UN partner organizations worked with the governments, including corresponding ministries and officials, as their main counterparts. One informant stated that as a DA initiative, their main counterparts were governments and they looked at how governments shifted their policies to support women in SMEs. Under cluster 5, one of the governments was not interested in women's studies, mentioning that they wanted everyone to benefit without discriminating against men or women-led enterprises. It was also challenging to receive inputs in places where there was no institutional structure dealing with gender issues or women's empowerment such as in Cluster 5 or to ensure women's participation, as it was reported that government counterparts were responsible for selecting participants for the Latin American and the Asia and the Pacific regions. The Bangladesh Start-up Ecosystem Assessment Report integrated gender aspects but the women participation at the follow-up panel was low. In Brazil, as reported by an informant, there was a presence of women in the webinars but no gender parity¹⁴⁹. Even if there was a supportive government in Moldova where a roadmap for MSMEs covering gender aspects was developed, new priorities, the crisis in the region and limited funding were cited as reasons why there was very limited follow-up to the government roadmap or recommended actions in the project study supported by the Surge project.

122. In Gambia, however, the government considered youth and women as the main target beneficiaries, given that they made up the largest portion of the informal MSMEs sector in the country and looked at how to revitalize this sector and address their needs. As another example, in Malaysia, as a local counterpart, the National Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Malaysia (NAWEM) helped support women entrepreneurs and ensure women participation through engaging in the webinars. Furthermore, the Cross-border Trade Associations, together with the governments, were involved in selecting the participants, who were almost all women as the activities were targeting women as main stakeholders, for the training programs organized as part of the UNCTAD component on Women and Cross-border Trade, including in Malawi and Zambia. One informant suggested that a key lesson learned for the success of the overall cross-border trade and gender initiative was to collaborate closely with the government authorities and ensure their buy-in and support for the activities.

123. **Several needs and impact assessments integrated gender and human rights impact of the pandemic among MSMEs to varying degrees.** Under different clusters, several assessments of the impact of COVID-19 on MSMEs particularly focusing on gender aspects were conducted to inform design of project interventions including policy recommendations aiming at leaving no one behind. UN DESA conducted a study on the impact of COVID-19 among MSMEs in Kenya and their resilience mechanisms. The assessment included youth and women organizations, focused on the impact of the pandemic on women and youth-led entrepreneurs and provided specific recommendations for vulnerable groups like the elderly, widowed and orphans in Kenya. UN ESCAP Bangladesh Startup Ecosystem Assessment Report¹⁵⁰ included a detailed gender analysis and highlighted the importance of integration of gender and inclusivity angles in the funding opportunities to support the ecosystem by bringing in women, people with disabilities, and people from underrepresented and marginalized groups. UN ECE rapid impact assessments on MSMEs were undertaken in the region with a view of informing gender-responsive trade policies. The assessment reports covered gender gaps, gender-disaggregated data, and strategic priorities to achieve women equality including gender-responsive trade policies.¹⁵¹ UNECA through its Subregional office for Southern Africa 11 countries in Southern Africa to assess the impacts of the recent crises on their MSMEs. Almost all the reports cover gender and/or youth aspects

¹⁴⁹ The participants list of the region does not have gender disaggregated data to confirm the informant's statement.

¹⁵⁰ [Bangladesh startup ecosystem assessment report | ESCAP \(unescap.org\)](#)

¹⁵¹ UNECE. The impact of COVID-19 on the trade and business development prospects of female-owned enterprises in the Republic in Armenia. 2021; and The impact of COVID-19 on the trade and business development prospects of female-owned enterprises in the Republic in Armenia. Available at: <https://unece.org/trade/studies-regulatory-and-procedural-barriers-trade>

while the study conducted in Eswatini only indicated that the gender details in terms of ownership were not provided by the state. Furthermore, ECLAC reviewed policies to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SMEs in nine Latin American countries¹⁵² and identified government measures with special emphasis on employment opportunities for women, people with disabilities and youth. The global report of the UNCTAD on COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises: Market Access Challenges and Competition Policy identified gender inequalities, provided disaggregated data for gender, age, minorities, persons with disabilities, and recommendations for entrepreneurs and MSMEs from vulnerable backgrounds particularly affected by the digital divide. The national studies on analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on MSMEs in South Africa and Thailand covered gender issues and gender aspects and proposed recommendations for women, youth and vulnerable groups. The national study on competition and market access policies in the resurgence of MSMEs in post-pandemic in Brazil, however, has no reference to gender, human rights or LNOB aspects.

124. The majority of assessments were gender responsive and primarily focused on gender aspects and on the impact of the pandemic on women-led MSMEs. While several assessments included youth aspects, only a few studies and data analyses covered people with disabilities. When asked, two informants expressed an awareness that other vulnerable and marginalized groups were more rarely covered, though they did not explain why. Despite this limitation, the studies were well received and helped identify the needs of those vulnerable groups. When the survey respondents were asked if the project activities and the content reflected the perspectives of women, youth, people with disabilities or other vulnerable groups, the majority (68%) responded positively. The work dedicated to profiling women-led MSMEs was found insightful to develop legal amendments supportive of women employability, according to one survey respondent. Another respondent mentioned that the research on women's entrepreneurship was considered helpful for policymakers and ministerial staff in Member States to improve their understanding of how support given to women in business pays off.

125. **The degree of integration of gender, human rights and LNOB aspects and implementation of assessment recommendations varied across clusters.** In a number of cases, documentation was lacking about how those assessments or policy documents were followed up and to what extent the issues pertaining to vulnerable groups were addressed. Even if the assessments were conducted to identify needs and actions were proposed to address those needs of the vulnerable, there were cases where the evidence showed implementation of the actions was lacking or limited. The Project readiness report on the development of a digital platform on technology and innovation by SMEs in Southern Africa required that users and partners consider women, youth and environmental issues. However, the output report of the digital platform did not cover engagement with women, persons with disabilities or other vulnerable groups or aspects. While the Bangladesh Startup Ecosystem Assessment Report¹⁵³ included a detailed gender analysis, one of the informants stated that "there was a section on gender, that's all." There was no systematic follow-up on how the project-funded studies were utilized. Another informant stated that gender mainstreaming is often on paper and not in reality.

126. On the other hand, in Moldova, the recommendations based on the gender-responsive assessment were translated into a roadmap, in collaboration with the government and UNCT. The government stakeholders considered the study as a big input. However, as one informant described, only some of the recommendations were able to be followed up, such as cross-border transit physical capacity and e-commerce funded by USAID, due to the crisis in the region and limited funding opportunities, among other challenges. In Kenya, the rapid impact assessment findings on women and youth-led entrepreneurs informed the planning of another initiative integrating gender and youth aspects with funding from a project. The project team worked closely with the government and linked their funding streams to increase the overall impact. As informed, none of the proposed activities were stand-alone, but rather aligned with the results chain – cross-cutting vertical and horizontal. Entrepreneurship policy review informed the new MSMEs strategy in Uganda. For the first time, with the support from the Surge project and building on the existing partnership with UNCTAD, Uganda included migrants and refugees in the high-level strategic plan, in addition to women and youth as vulnerable groups, according to an informant. The strategy serves as a framework to mobilize resources to realize different pieces. Another informant described that recently the government launched a strategy to help refugee communities.

¹⁵² Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, and Uruguay

¹⁵³ [Bangladesh startup ecosystem assessment report | ESCAP \(unescap.org\)](#)

127. Building on the “Informal Cross-border Trade for the Empowerment of Women, Economic Development, and Regional Integration in Southern and Eastern Africa” project of UNCTAD’s Trade, Gender and Development Programme, the capacity-building activities were designed based on the existing gender responsive programme which was then tailored to address emerging needs of women traders during the pandemic in Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia. Given the urgency and time limitation, an informant said this component was adapted and implemented very quickly by including COVID-19-related considerations. As highlighted by another informant, it was relatively easy because of the existing relationship with the stakeholders. The training content was revised to include new trade regulations and address needs of different vulnerable groups to enhance knowledge of their rights and obligations, regional trade rules, and on the formalization and registration of business. In partnership with Empretec, training contents were tailored both for participants with low literacy and high literacy levels, enabling engagement with the most vulnerable communities. Gender considerations specific to women traders including harassment were mainstreamed into the activities. Beyond the training activities, the initiative brought together the border officials and authorities dealing with immigration and customs to raise the issue of harassment against women traders. In addition to raising the gender issues, as highlighted above (para 96), the project could further enhance its support to government capacities in cross-border trade by involving government officials, including border officials, in the training courses, as trainees, or having a dedicated training session for them. The majority of the participants who responded to the workshop surveys found the workshops useful and relevant for their businesses. The policymakers and other stakeholders who attended the regional policy dialogue on women and cross-border trade considered the workshops successful at providing a forum to discuss the challenges faced by women informal and small-scale cross-border traders, and formulate practical solutions to improve their situation and enhance the contribution of cross-border trade to economic development and regional cooperation (Box 2).

Box 2: UNCTAD Cross-border Trade and Gender Initiative.

This initiative is a good example of integrating gender responsiveness in the Surge project interventions in extremely vulnerable communities facing additional challenges due to the impacts of the pandemic. Building on the pre-existing programming, the Trade and Gender initiative was adapted quickly to respond to urgent and emerging needs of the cross-border traders, primarily women.

The cross-border trade and gender component of the Surge project replicated the training activities for informal and small-scale cross-border traders of the previous UNCTAD initiative “Informal Cross-border Trade for the Empowerment of Women, Economic Development, and Regional Integration in Southern and Eastern Africa” which was implemented from 2016 to 2019. The training workshops were based on the tailored Empretec programme by adapting an existing methodology to meet emerging needs of women traders during the pandemic. The expected results of this initiative included increased awareness of trade rules and procedures, improved knowledge of their rights and obligations, enhanced use of official border posts and trade through formal routes, ability to adapt the businesses and developed strategies, and awareness of COVID-19 measures. Under this initiative:

- ✓ Almost 300 cross-border traders participated in the workshops, almost all were women.
- ✓ 9 in-person workshops (6 days each) with two components organized: training on cross-border trade rules and development of entrepreneurial skills.
- ✓ Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia covered.
- ✓ Project partners included relevant ministries, trade authorities and Cross-border Trade Associations of the respective countries.
- ✓ Over 90% of the participants found the workshops useful and relevant.
- ✓ 95% of the participants of the regional policy dialogue considered the workshops successful.
- ✓ Five traders’ guides “Women in informal cross-border trade: A small-scale trader’s guide to trade rules and procedures” tailored for Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania.

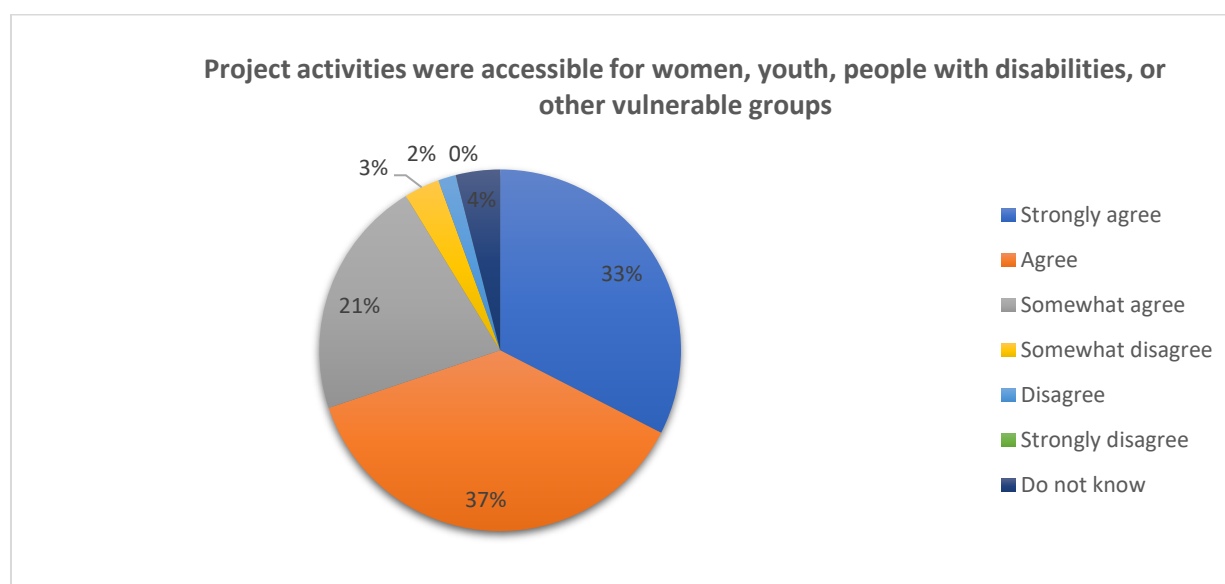
128. Another project initiative primarily focusing on gender aspects was the ESCWA’s Women Empowerment for Technology and Entrepreneurship (AWETE)¹⁵⁴ programme which was launched through the DEPAR platform to address the national challenges hindering women empowerment in technology and

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.unescwa.org/news/boosting-women%E2%80%99s-empowerment-technology-and-entrepreneurship>
<https://depar.unescwa.org/regional/awete>

entrepreneurship across the Arab region. AWETE provides a community space for female entrepreneurs, innovators, and professionals to share knowledge and build new partnerships. Under this initiative, the project developed women empowerment ecosystem maps for 22 Arab counties¹⁵⁵ and organized a series of five roundtable discussions in the region, bringing key experts and stakeholders advocating for women’s rights.

129. **The majority of the survey respondents had the perception that the project activities were accessible for women, youth, people with disabilities, or other vulnerable groups, although the document review identified limited data in project reporting and other relevant sources referring both to cases with varying degree of gender parity and others with no data on gender or other aspects.** The ability to assess comprehensively the participation of vulnerable groups is limited to available documentation that mostly covers gender and no other vulnerabilities. In some cases, the data indicated that the events successfully facilitated the engagement of women, ensuring gender parity. The online Empretec TOTs organized in French, English and Spanish for low-literate people reached out to around 100 people, 49% women. Whereas the workshops/courses/webinars on circular economy reached out to 600 participants, only one-third of them women. In other cases, the information on gender or other aspects is not available to make a comprehensive assessment covering all project interventions. However, the majority of survey respondents (70%) believed that the project activities were accessible for women, youth, people with disabilities, or vulnerable groups (Figure 20). The respondents also mentioned that the project included or supported women, youth, people with disabilities or other vulnerable groups through empowering vulnerable groups especially women and supporting their access to funds.

Figure 20: Perceived accessibility of project activities for women, youth, people with disabilities or other vulnerable groups (n=126 respondents).



Source: Independent evaluation survey, 2023.

130. **Adapting to COVID-19 restrictions enabled the engagement of the vulnerable groups to some degree, particularly women entrepreneurs in the project activities while, in some cases, their participation was hindered due to the lack of access to technology, selection process of beneficiaries, location of events, or the pandemic impacts and restrictions that made it difficult to bring people together.** Going virtual equalized those who were able to participate in project activities and built bridges across countries and regions. However, participation was limited to only those with physical and financial access to the necessary technology, and ensuring participation was challenging as there were too many online initiatives from a range of development partners. Given the pandemic restrictions, most of the interventions particularly in the early stages of the pandemic including workshops and training programs were organized online, and online portals enabled free access to everyone with access. As reported by one of the informants, NGOs could follow some of Empretec’s work online, particularly vulnerable groups and women on the ground. Empretec’s TOT workshops were

¹⁵⁵ <https://depar.unescwa.org/regional/awete/ecosystemmaps>

revised, and short videos were developed to better serve the vulnerable groups including rural entrepreneurs, farmers and low-literacy entrepreneurs¹⁵⁶. One informant believed that having everything online helped people from diverse populations to link across groups and locations in the country. The final report of the project also highlighted that the skills development was facilitated thanks to the online workshops increasing delivery efficiency and accessibility with specific attention to vulnerable groups and people with low literacy levels¹⁵⁷. In addition, the online regional policy dialogues on the role of competition policy in supporting MSME's economic recovery in the post-COVID-19 crisis were new, in the sense that they were online and open to all stakeholders from governments to MSMEs covering several countries at once. Although the online platforms provided unique opportunities and, in some cases, the only way to reach out to the vulnerable communities, they hindered the engagement of those marginalized groups with no financial and technological access.

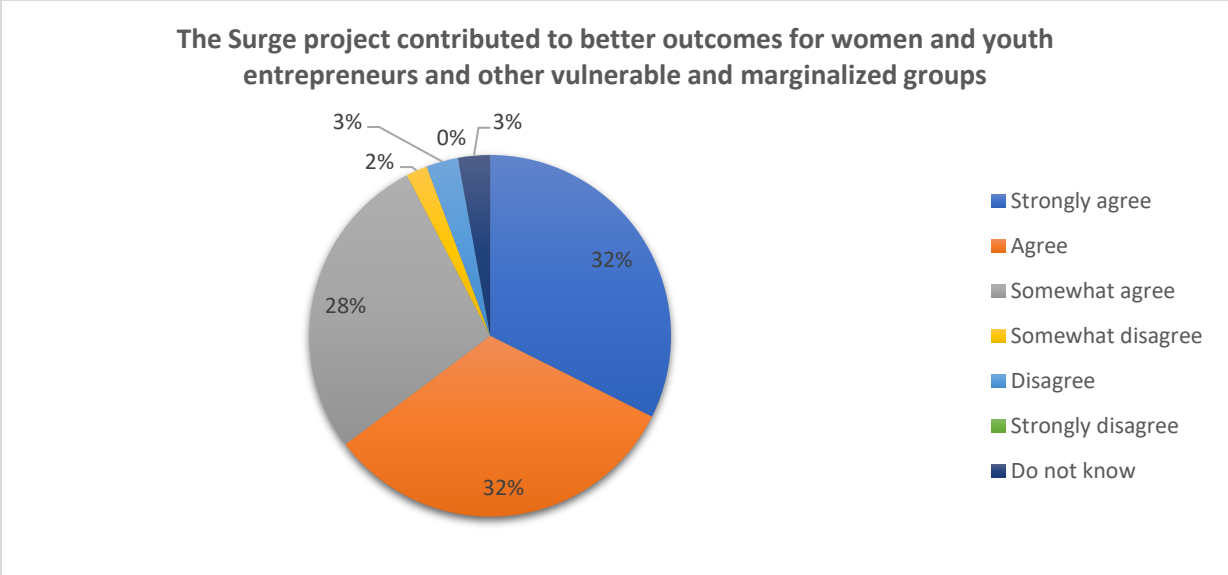
131. Additionally, cases were also found of implementation modalities limiting participation of some vulnerable groups. For example, selections of cross-border trade workshop participants, almost all women traders, was the responsibility of the governments in collaboration with the Cross-border Trade Associations. In the Latin American region, it was reported that there were challenges to ensuring the participation of women or other vulnerable groups since it was the governments that conducted the selection of participants. In addition to the selection processes, it was reported that criteria in a few training programmes limited the participation of the most vulnerable. . When translation was provided in another aspect of the Surge project, it was indicated that the translation was difficult to understand, which limited the effectiveness of reaching out to the most vulnerable. In most cases, there was no reporting on participants' self-identifying with a range of vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, making it difficult to assess the extent of engagement in the Surge project by various vulnerable groups. It was indicated by an informant that they had no way to measure how many and with which vulnerable group the participants identified. The locations of some of the events, such as holding them only in the capital city, were also considered as inhibiting participation from diverse groups and regions.

132. **A few impact assessments point towards positive outcomes particularly for women.** Overall, 64% of the survey respondents felt that the project contributed to better outcomes for women and youth entrepreneurs and other vulnerable and marginalized groups (Figure 21). The survey respondents revealed that the relevant areas on which the project has contributed to the resurgence of MSMEs, policy or economic improvements, or advancing sustainable development included improved inclusion of vulnerable groups with a special reference to women entrepreneurs, funding opportunities for women, addressing the needs and supporting women-led MSMEs. Capitalizing on the knowledge or skills acquired through the project, some survey respondents reported that they facilitated priority policies for women-owned and women-responsive businesses, development of female entrepreneurship, and access to credit for women entrepreneurs and women capacity-building.

Figure 21: Perceived contribution of the project to better outcomes for women and youth entrepreneurs and other vulnerable and marginalized groups (n=105 respondents).

¹⁵⁶ Under the Surge project, Empretec offered in-person, hybrid as well as online training activities to respond to the different needs and COVID-19 restrictions of various contexts.

¹⁵⁷ UNCTAD. September 2022. Final Report: Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 resurgence of the MSME sector.



Source: Independent evaluation survey, 2023.

133. The UNCTAD component on Women and Cross-border Trade delivered solid results in terms of enhancing cross-border traders' capacity, mostly women. The impact assessment on the cross-border trade in the pre- and post-pandemic environment covering 2019–2021¹⁵⁸ indicated that the training workshops that were attended by almost all women helped women entrepreneurs become more effective cross-border traders. The impact assessment further outlines how the initiative helped enhance the knowledge and abilities of the cross-border traders to benefit from greater business resilience (Please see the effectiveness section of this report for assessment findings). The initiative also contributed to the formalization of the businesses of the cross-border traders. As reported by an informant, female traders were informal but now most of the training participants have registered their businesses.

134. The impact assessment on the Empretec workshops (ETWs) which assessed the economic impact of the ETWs on the participant entrepreneurs in selected project countries indicated positive results for women entrepreneurs, only for those areas where gender disaggregated data was provided¹⁵⁹. Based on the findings, the number of women in business after the ETW increased by 15% in Benin, 7% in Ghana and 9% in Nigeria.¹⁶⁰ The F/M TEA ratio (Female and male, Total Early Stage) also demonstrated positive outcomes in Benin (15% higher¹⁶¹), Cameroon (13% higher), Gambia (57% higher) and Zimbabwe (20% higher).¹⁶²

The project was also effective in facilitating women and youth-led MSME registration and formalization. UNCTAD helped facilitate e-registration and formalization of MSMEs in El Salvador, Benin, Cameroon and Mali through an e-registration portal. In Benin, the portal increased business registration by 91%, with 84% increase in women-led MSMEs and 181% increase in youth-led MSMEs. A similar trend was observed in Mali where business registration increased by 40% including 49% increase in women-led MSMEs, and 110% in youth-led MSMEs.

135. **In contrast to survey respondents' perceptions, the available data on inclusion of vulnerable groups and vulnerabilities is limited and hinders the evaluation's ability to assess the degree to which gender, HR and LNOB aspects were integrated into the Surge project.** Of the data that is available, it is mostly for the gender-

¹⁵⁸ UNCTAD (2022). Cross-border Trade in the Pre- and Post-Pandemic Environment Evidence from Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. Geneva.

¹⁵⁹ The assessment provided limited gender disaggregated data and did not cover any other cross-cutting dimensions.

¹⁶⁰ UNCTAD. MSME Surge Project. Empretec: Impact Assessment Survey Report. 2023.

¹⁶¹ In Benin, for instance, the ratio 0,8/1 referring to 8 MSME businesses opened by women to every 10 MSME businesses started by men – at Empretec the ratio is 0,92:1 (15% larger).

¹⁶² The F/M TEA (Total Early Stage) (Female / Male TEA ratio, applying only to early-stage businesses) is an indicator of how Entrepreneurship may be used as a tool for equity and women empowerment, especially in traditional male dominated societies as usually verifiable in Africa.

disaggregated information for the project beneficiaries with no or limited information on age, persons with disabilities or other characteristics. As reported by one informant, the initiative focused on female youth but there was no record on how many female youth entrepreneurs were reached. In some cases, the gender-disaggregated data was only available for those who responded to the event's survey and not for all the participants, making it difficult to assess the gender parity¹⁶³. The data collection tools were mostly not designed to collect information necessary to assess the cross-cutting dimensions. For example, one of the workshop evaluation forms used under cluster 1 did not have any questions to identify issues related to gender, age, disabilities, and other vulnerabilities of specific groups. This is also observed across clusters covering various project initiatives.

136. Furthermore, the project results framework mainly captured quantitative gender-disaggregated data, but did not capture the degree of the project's contributions to different vulnerable groups and vulnerabilities. There was also limited follow-up to assess the impact of the training or other initiatives from gender and human rights perspectives. As one informant observed, follow-up monitoring should have been included to assess the impact of the training programs and nobody was doing it.

137. One of the exceptions was the Impact Assessment on the Empretec Workshops (ETWs) covering 6 African countries between 2020 and 2022, namely Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, The Gambia and Zimbabwe. The assessment on ETWs did not capture all the cross-cutting aspects comprehensively but provided gender-disaggregated data for the number of women in business after ETWs. Another assessment was conducted for the capacity-building activities organized by the UNCTAD Trade and Women initiative in Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia aimed at small-scale and informal cross-border traders, mainly women. The impact assessment covered the capacity-building activities carried out from 2019-2021 at selected border posts, including previous analytical work carried out by UNCTAD's Trade, Gender and Development Programme since 2016 under a 10th tranche DA project¹⁶⁴. The compilation of success stories of women entrepreneurs who received Empretec training - such as the story of how four women in Malaysia built success during COVID-19¹⁶⁵- also helped provide anecdotal evidence on the project's contributions to women empowerment and inclusive growth.

¹⁶³ The number of participants of the UNCTAD Webinar Series on SDG Reporting by companies, including MSME-The adaption of "Guidance on core indicators for entity reporting on contribution towards implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (GCI)" in China was 150 while the gender-disaggregated data is only available for 26 survey respondents.

¹⁶⁴ The Development Account project "Informal Cross-border Trade for the Empowerment of Women, Economic Development, and Regional Integration in Southern and Eastern Africa", implemented during 2016-2019.

¹⁶⁵ <https://unctad.org/news/how-four-women-malaysia-built-success-during-covid-19>

6. Conclusions

138. Based on an analysis of the findings, the evaluation formulates the following conclusions.

Conclusions

Relevance

The project responded to the needs of Governments and MSMEs. Interventions contributed to and were informed by needs and impact assessments. Recipients of project interventions were often involved in or contributed to the design and delivery of project activities and outputs. On various occasions, project outputs were tailored to the needs of target users and beneficiaries, being countries or vulnerable groups. The relevance of the interventions was somewhat mitigated by the mandates and capacities of the implementing UN entities. The latter are equipped for supporting medium- and long- term policy changes rather than immediate crisis responses. Other challenges included the restrictive Covid-19 measures and the short time frame for implementation of the project. Nonetheless, on the whole, the implementing UN entities exercised adaptive management to ensure high relevance of their interventions. The phased approach, in particular, provided the opportunity to introduce new activities not foreseen at an earlier stage.

Coherence

The project was anchored in the mandates and comparative advantages of the implementing UN entities. Selected interventions followed previous work and specific requests from member States and were often coordinated with or complementary to existing activities. At conception, the target of the project was to address specific constraints faced by MSMEs. It was designed around the Entrepreneurship Policy Framework to show the complementarities across interventions that each implementing UN entity would deliver in response to regional priorities and capacities. Some collaborations between implementing UN entities were pursued and complementarities established, but on a limited level. A few synergies in the form of joint outputs were integrated in the 3rd phase of the project. By design, technical task forces created through the project were expected to bridge the implementing UN entities. However, this proved difficult to launch and sustain, owing to several constraints, including a highly ambitious objective given the global crisis and competing priorities within each agency. Nevertheless, the coordination and complementarities established by the project among the implementing entities contributed to expanded dissemination and outreach of outputs, avoided overlaps between them, and allowed significant knowledge exchanges aligned with and supportive of a "One UN" system. On the other hand, collaboration of the implementing UN entities with other UN organisations, including UNCTAs, was limited. Despite this shortcoming, at national level, target recipients of project outputs found the interventions complementary to those of other UN agencies.

Efficiency

Project coordination was complex and demanding, involving seven UN entities and the target delivery of around 100 outputs, of which some were composed of many activities. Nevertheless, the coordination of the project was found to be efficient overall given the circumstances and resources available. The coordination of the design phase of the response was actively supported by the DA-PMT. Coordination of project implementation was led by UNCTAD in collaboration with a Steering Committee that met on a regular basis, most often bi-monthly. UNCTAD's Budget and Project Finance Section (BPFS) produced the project's financial monitoring table every month, which included the expenditure data of UNCTAD as well as the other implementing entities. A monitoring dashboard was created by UNCTAD to facilitate the tracking of UNCTAD's project delivery. Data from some of the other implementing UN entities was added, when provided, at two reporting points during the lifetime of the project.

The project would have benefited from the allocation of more resources towards the coordination and monitoring of overall implementation. Across the implementing UN entities, the project was considered complex and hard to follow outside of the interventions under their direct control. Some staff perceived that there were too many participants in the coordination meetings, that the project lacked a Theory of Change, and that it was primarily a compilation of activities rather than a cohesive and mutually reinforcing bundle of interventions supporting in depth any given country. Some staff in the UN Regional Commissions questioned the efficiency cost of a global or inter-regional response versus regional responses. The project was implemented in three phases, which were supportive of adaptive management and perceived by staff as the most rational approach considering the circumstances. However, it was also pointed out that clearer visibility

from the onset on the funding available for future phases would have facilitated planning and the search for synergies.

Effectiveness

The Development Account programme, as a funding modality, was quick to respond and adapt to the COVID-19 crisis. The prompt availability of resources and rapid orientation toward a global response contributed to the rapid launch of a wide range of interventions. However, questions remain as to its adequacy for addressing the immediate needs of a crisis in comparison with other UN agencies and mechanisms with a mandate for humanitarian response. The governance of this project, with DA-PMT's oversight, the management structure with UNCTAD in the lead coordinating role, and each implementing entity leading the operational implementation at the regional level, ensured the global and regional scope of project delivery. At the operational level, implementing entities relied more on partnerships with local and regional institutions rather than coordination within the larger project management structure. The project governance and management mechanisms evolved in tandem with the COVID-19 crisis and the project's emerging needs. The result was a high delivery rate but with limited inter-agency collaboration in the process. Yet, despite limited collaboration, this independent evaluation identified that the project was effective in producing identifiable results at the outcome level.

Overall, the project delivered 85% of the planned outputs. Phase 3, particularly, delivered the highest number of outputs but had the lowest outcome effectiveness rate, mostly because of budget cuts and some outputs still in progress at the time of this evaluation. There is evidence of the effective improvement of national capacities on formulating and implementing enabling policies on green, resilient and inclusive entrepreneurship and MSME promotion (outcome 1.A) [such as the adoption of a revised entrepreneurship strategy by South Africa, Uganda and Seychelles]; improved resilience and competitiveness of MSMEs (outcome 1.B) [for example with 64.5% of participants opening a new business after attending Empretec-based training]; facilitated MSME registration and formalization through e-platforms (outcome 2) in El Salvador, Benin, Cameroon and Mali; improved access to finance, including upskilling in financial literacy (outcome 3) [for example with 97% of the MSMEs in Latin America that attended trainings reporting improved financial literacy in accounting and reporting and also improved capacity to manage financial resources]; increased MSME access to innovation and technology (outcome 4) [including through capacity development on green technologies for SMEs in Southern Africa]; and increased access to local, regional and international markets through digitalization and non-tariff measures (outcome 5) [for instance with case studies and on competition in Thailand, South Africa and Brazil, followed by webinars and the creation of an online course on SMEs and competition policy, primarily for government officials].

In relation to the project indicators, the assessment of their effectiveness was based on limited information, proxies, and expert judgement since they often lacked SMART criteria. It was possible to infer that 85% of them showed some level of progress, either through objective measures (e.g., sales increase) or proxies (e.g., post-training satisfaction assessments and survey responses). The high effectiveness results can be partly attributed to the conceptual framework provided by the EPF, as well as the cluster-based approach with each cluster addressing specific regional constraints and responding to demand from member States. In addition to clustering about 100 outputs from seven implementing entities into 5+1 outcomes, the EPF provided a coherent thread to relate outputs that cut across outcomes. Further analysis would be needed, however, to clearly identify which of those outputs are the most suitable or adaptable for a crisis response.

The project improved the capacity of policymakers in designing and implementing policies supportive of MSMEs, especially in terms of contributing to a country's government responses, country-specific studies, technical assistance, training courses, and the development of digital tools and regional interventions. This improved capacity is reflected in beneficiaries' reports of how they have been considering the needs of MSMEs, including those led by women and youth, in their daily work. These results could become more transformative and sustainable with more institutional support to networks of policymakers and communities of practice for mutual and regional learning on supportive policies for MSMEs, as well as by mainstreaming gender and Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) approaches in government officials' capacity-building.

Sustainability

The project developed approaches, tools and capacities that are being transferred at multiple levels. At the policy level, the addition of more functionalities to e-government tools, expanding training courses to more countries, and the establishment of agreements to implement the project recommendations are all strong

evidence of the sustainability of the project's achievements. At the behavioural level, beneficiaries are applying new knowledge and skills to their daily work, be it by including MSMEs' issues in policy making or by improving MSMEs' management, performance, outputs and, by extension, resilience. Challenges to this transfer of knowledge relate to the lack of financial resources, need for follow-up mentoring, and lack of a favourable business environment.

Gender, human rights, and disability

The overall project design was well aligned with the two key UN documents that provide clear direction for the integration of a human rights-based approach, which include addressing the aspect of gender equality and Leaving No One Behind. Although these aspects were well-articulated in the project documents, strong follow-through and documentation of their implementation was limited to a few project components. For those components that did include these aspects, gender was more commonly integrated and youth to a lesser degree. There was very little evidence of the outreach, participation, or impact of project activities for people with disabilities or other vulnerable groups. The UNCTAD component on Women and Cross-Border Trade targeting five countries in Africa was a good practice in how to design and implement this type of intervention with a strong reflection of the needs of some of the most vulnerable women across border areas.

7. Recommendations

132. Based on the evaluation findings and conclusions, the following recommendations could be considered by the implementing UN entities and the DA-PMT.

139. **Recommendation 1: (i) UNCTAD should further leverage the experience gained through the project to map out how components of the Entrepreneurship Policy Framework relate to and can be best positioned to support MSMEs in their recovery from different types of crises and (ii) DESA and the Regional Commissions should add their analysis of how their work can contribute towards the objective.** UNCTAD, DESA and the Regional Commissions could build on the project to map their areas of intervention in support of the MSME sector, as well as capacities and knowledge on the implementation of the EPF components, including in a crisis context, and opportunities for broadening the uptake of EPF components at the regional level based on national needs. UNCTAD, DESA and the Regional Commissions could further consider identifying areas of joint interventions that would trigger complementarities and synergies between the agencies. This could involve collaborating on the development of capacities of all national and sub-national actors, i.e. Governments, MSMEs, other partners (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Business Incubators, etc.) in line with United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (SDCF) in respective countries; strengthening or contributing to facilitate access to finance for the MSMEs (including seed money, grants, access to credit, etc.); improving the coordination of MSMEs related policies across ministries; increasing interventions at the local level, such as by supporting NGOs or MSMEs outside of the main cities. The application of a human rights-based approach, gender responsiveness and inclusion of other vulnerable groups (LNOB) should be ensured.

140. **Recommendation 2: UNCTAD should continue building on the momentum generated by the project to continue fostering knowledge exchanges and promoting the Entrepreneurship Policy Framework.** UNCTAD, DESA and the Regional Commissions should identify means to more meaningfully continue to share good practices and lessons learned on the demand-driven support they provide to the MSME sector, including on areas such as green/circular economy; innovation policies and ecosystems; MSME formalization and strengthening MSME capacities for the empowerment and leadership of women, youth and groups in vulnerable situations. UNCTAD and the Regional Commissions could also propose organizing regional events and/or a global conference to promote entrepreneurship policy and further advance the goals and impact of the Surge project. Furthermore, learnings from the experiences with the Surge about external partnerships should encourage UNCTAD to promote the EPF and entrepreneurship development to other UN agencies also engaged in this area (e.g. ILO, FAO, UN Women, etc.), to development banks, or to related initiatives such as the recent Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection. UNCTAD could also consider joining and supporting events that promote the achievement of SDG 8.3 as an avenue to further promote the EPF.

141. **Recommendation 3: The DA-PMT should develop a clear framework for assessing the costs and benefits of implementing a global or inter-regional project versus regional projects.** As a global crisis can affect regions and countries differently, global or joint projects should be developed only when there are clear benefits of joint implementation. Thus, a global or inter-regional vs. regional response would not be a priori decision, but a result of a clear assessment. A specific guideline or framework should be developed for this. Some of the assessment criteria could include the need or demand from member States for an integrated response; the range of common versus entity-specific activities and added value of complementary interventions (i.e. in terms of geographical coverage, reach of the target population, capacity, and/or coverage of multiple reinforcing technical areas, or networks and partnerships); capability to execute joint interventions (e.g. in terms of time, resources, logistics, and flexibility to pivot interventions without bureaucratic procedures); coordination costs (which increase with the number of participating UN entities); project inception modalities and governance and knowledge management requirements to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing; scaling and sustainability plans; expected results of spreading resources versus concentrating on fewer countries; and so forth. The time taken to conduct such assessments will increase project coherence and effectiveness and facilitate the identification of the financial and human resources needed for project implementation. The network of DA Focal Points is a key existing asset for this assessment.

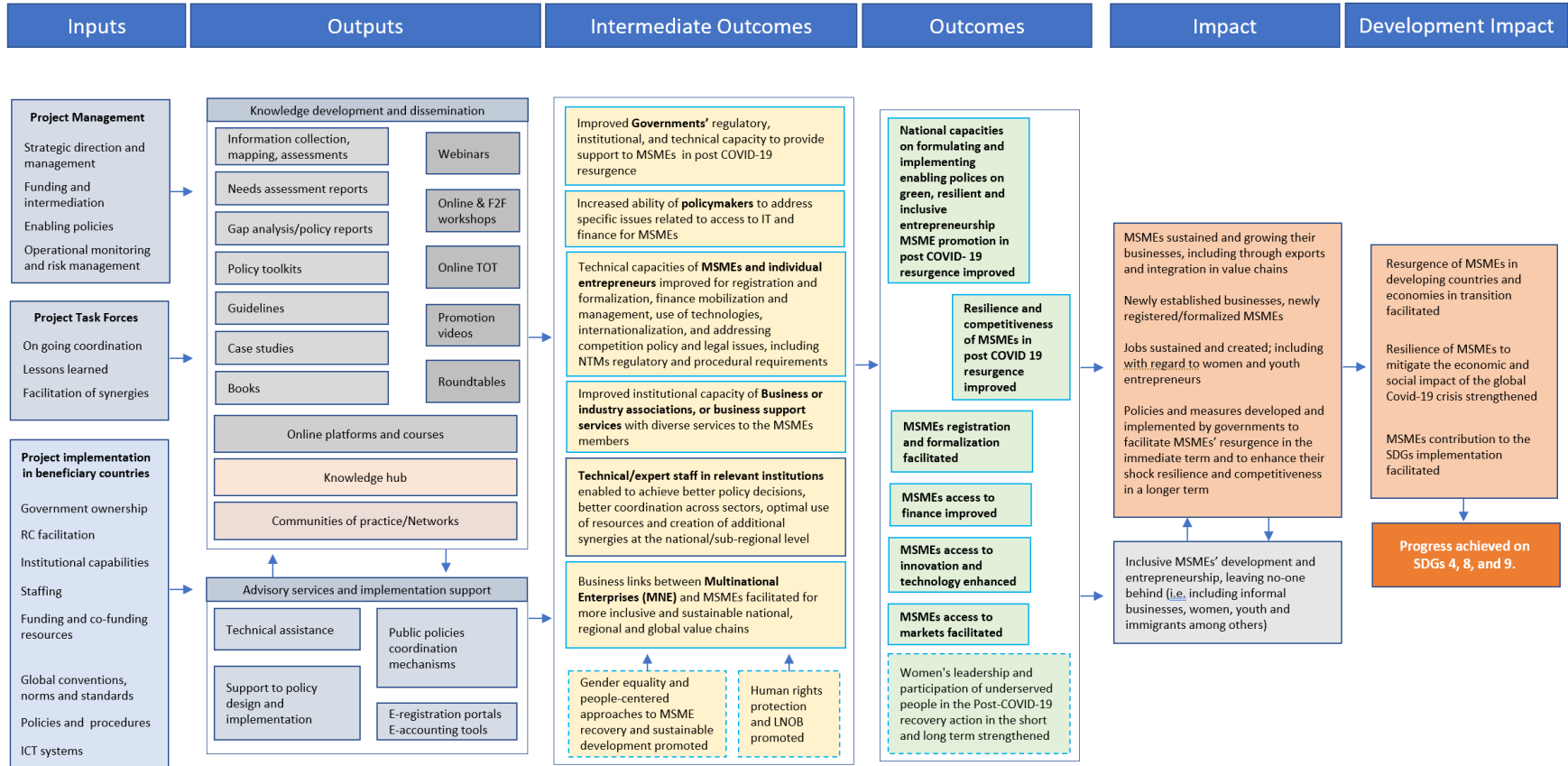
142. **Recommendation 4: Implementing UN entities should ensure that they have a comprehensive Results Framework for the entire project as well as an adequate monitoring plan, with indicators that are designed to support the ongoing monitoring.** The results framework should have one objective and ideally have one outcome per cluster/workstream. The objective should state the intended goal of the project, describe the overall achievement targeted by the project, involving a process of change aimed at meeting the needs of identified beneficiaries, and reflect the overall funding available to the project. Each objective should include reference to the project's beneficiaries and its substantive focus. The objective should not attempt to explain the ways in which the project intends to achieve the objective (i.e. it should not include the word 'through' or describe the internal work of the UN using verbs such as 'support', 'facilitate' or 'contribute'). The outcomes (OCs) should describe the changes that are expected to occur as a result of the completion of outputs. The OCs should be achievable within the project's timeframe and budget, and should be specific enough to be measured by the associated indicators of achievement. The indicators of achievement (IAs) should provide measures for monitoring progress towards achieving the OCs and reporting on them after completion of the project. Every indicator needs to provide clearly defined baselines, units of measurement and targets, detailing the quantity, quality and timing of expected results. The monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) system should also be designed to capture HRBA, gender and LNOB aspects. In phased interventions or during project execution, any changes in the logframe if/when pivoting activities should be clearly explained to the wider team.

143. **Recommendation 5: Implementing UN entities should ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to project coordination, technical collaboration, and partnership building.** The absorption capacity of implementing entities can be challenged by crisis response projects which add to the planned programme of work. This is further compounded by projects that come with an extensive UN partnership and a global scope. Sufficient resources should be dedicated to global coordination and to building global partnerships with strategic stakeholders (e.g., UN organisations engaged in supporting the MSME sector; development banks). Capacities should also be directed to supporting technical collaboration and the staff implementing interventions, including towards synergy or liaison with the UNCTs. When designing the project, implementing UN entities should consider featuring coordination and partnership-building in the Theory of Change or logframe of the project. Tools to support continuous connections and knowledge exchange, and to ensure institutional memory should be part of the response package, such as a project website, SharePoint space for all team members, and a Yammer network or Teams channel. The integration of cross-cutting aspects (HRBA, gender responsiveness, LNOB) also requires expertise with sufficient and dedicated time and resources. Guidance could be development to project managers on how to do this.

Annexes

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Annex 1: Project's Theory of Change



Annex 2: Evaluation matrix

Relevance		
Key questions	Suggested measures or evidence	Suggested sources and methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was the project designed to target the new needs and priorities of participating countries as a result of COVID-19? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of needs assessments (surveys, reports, minutes from consultations, workshop reports, etc.). Country contexts. Reference to the Surge project in country, programmes, or COVID-focused UN evaluations. Reference and opinion of UN staff and partners. Opinion of staff from the implementing UN entities, including Project Design Team, Project Steering Committee, and Task Forces. Opinion of external partners, including other UN organizations, Governments, other partners and stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Desk review</u>: surveys, minutes from consultations, workshop reports, country assessments, sectoral analysis, SERPs. <u>Interviews</u>: UN staff and partners. <u>Survey</u>: UNCTs, external partners and stakeholders. <u>Case study</u>: UNCT staff and partners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was the project aligned with the COVID-19 socio-economic responses of the participating countries (e.g. COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference to SERPs in project progress reports and outputs. Reference to the Surge project in UN PRODOCS and in country, programmes, or UN/UNCT annual reports. Reference to the Surge project in country, programmes, or COVID-focused UN evaluations. Opinion of UN staff and external partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Desk review</u>: Progress reports, project outputs, SERPs. <u>Interviews</u>: UN staff and partners. <u>Survey</u>: UNCTs, external partners and stakeholders. <u>Case study</u>: UNCT staff and partners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coherence 		
Key questions	Suggested measures or evidence	Suggested sources and methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was the project complementary to, and coordinated with, other work undertaken by the implementing entities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of collaboration or joint outputs with other UN departments or programmes; evidence of other UN departments or programmes referring to or using MSMEs project's outputs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Desk review</u>: Strategies and workplans of participating UN

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evidence of synergies between implementing UN entities and overlaps avoided; evidence of joint activities. ● Evidence of the project being mainstreamed in the workplans of other departments or programmes within implementing UN entities. ● Evidence of the project being reflected in the annual workplans and time commitments of staff from implementing UN entities. ● Opinion of staff from the implementing UN entities, including Project Design Team, Project Steering Committee, and Task Forces. ● Opinion of external partners, including other UN organizations, Governments, other partners and stakeholders. ● Reported instances of improvements in the coordination of the response to the COVID crisis by implementing UN entities. ● Evidence of adaptive management and adjustments in the course of project implementation. 	<p>entities, PRODOCs, progress reports, evaluations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Interviews</u>: Staff from participating UN entities, UNCTs. ●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To what extent has the project been coordinated with, and complementary to, the response of other UN entities (Secretariat and non-Secretariat) to COVID-19 in delivering socio-economic support to Member States? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number and types of other UN agencies contributing to project implementation. ● Evidence of partnerships with other UN agencies; evidence of collaboration or joint outputs with other UN departments or programmes; evidence of other UN departments or programmes using outputs from the MSMEs project. ● Evidence of the project being mainstreamed in the workplans or programmes of other UN agencies. ● Opinion of staff from other UN agencies, including UNRCOs and UNCTs. ● Opinion of external partners, including Governments and other stakeholders. ● Reported instances of improvements in the coordination of the response to the COVID crisis by other UN agencies. ● Evidence of adaptive management and adjustments in the course of project implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Desk review</u>: Strategies and workplans of participating UN entities, PRODOCs, progress reports, evaluations. ● <u>Interviews</u>: UN staff and partners. ● <u>Survey</u>: UNCTs, external partners and stakeholders. ● <u>Case study</u>: UNCT staff and partners.

- **Efficiency**

Key questions	Suggested measures or evidence	Suggested sources and methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well coordinated was the process for the response among the entities implementing the joint project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of project monitoring meetings; technical meetings of the project task Forces. • Evidence of joint activities, synergies between participating UN entities, overlaps avoided; project mainstreaming in participating UN entities' workplans. • Opinion of UN staff, including Project Design Team, Project Steering Committee, Task Forces, UNRCOs and UNCTs. • Opinion of external partners, including Governments and other partners and stakeholders. • Reported instances of improvements in the coordination of the response to the COVID crisis by participating UN entities. • Time taken to develop and deliver planned outputs; evidence of delays. • Evidence of adaptive management and adjustments in the course of project implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Desk review</u>: Meeting minutes, progress reports, workplans, PRODOCS. • <u>Interviews</u>: Staff from participating UN entities (e.g. Project Design Team, Project Steering Committee, Task Forces), UNCTs, external partners. • <u>Case study</u>: UNCT staff and partners. •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the three-phase budgeting and programming approaches impact the efficient delivery of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reported impact according to project monitoring meetings; technical meetings of the project task Forces. • Opinion of UN staff, including Project Design Team, Project Steering Committee, UNRCOs and UNCTs. • Opinion of external partners, including Governments and other partners and stakeholders. • Speed of implementation; time taken to develop and deliver planned outputs; evidence of delays. • Evidence of adaptive management and adjustments in the course of project implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Desk review</u>: Meeting minutes, progress reports, workplans, PRODOCS. • <u>Interviews</u>: Staff from participating UN entities (e.g. Project Design Team, Project Steering Committee, Task Forces), UNCTs, external partners. • <u>Case study</u>: UNCT staff and partners.

- **Effectiveness**

Key questions	Suggested measures or evidence	Suggested sources and methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the programme (Development Account) and project governance and management structures and processes enable, or hinder, the effective implementation of the joint project and the achievement of its results? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of project monitoring meetings; technical meetings of the project task Forces. Programmes and projects monitoring and evaluation reports. Opinion of SHS staff, partners, and stakeholders; Evaluators' expert judgement drawing on all evidence sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Desk review</u>: Meeting minutes, progress reports, workplans, PRODOCS. <u>Interviews</u>: Staff from participating UN entities (e.g. Project Design Team, Project Steering Committee, Task Forces), UNCTs, external partners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the project contributed to the expected outcomes as enunciated in the project document? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of project outputs and reference to project's outputs in policies, SDG related reports, and other national publications on MSMEs and entrepreneurship (e.g., UN, private sector, CSOs/NGOs, etc.). Outcome indicators: All; level of achievement of planned outcomes. Programmes and projects monitoring and evaluation reports. Opinion of UN staff, partners, and stakeholders. Evaluators' expert judgement drawing on all evidence sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Desk review</u>: Project outputs, progress reports, assessment questionnaires, evaluations, Empretec centers data and reports, data collected by UNCTAD via its e-regulation and e-registration portal. <u>Interviews</u>: UN staff and partners. <u>Survey</u>: UNCTs, external partners and stakeholders. <u>Case study</u>: UNCT staff and partners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did the response contribute to the participating country Governments' responses to COVID-19, especially in the area of MSME resurgence? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of uptake, use, and influence of project outputs. New approaches and policies adopted and capacity and resources to sustain these. Reported country level uptake and institutionalisation of new approaches introduced as a result of ILO COVID response. Opinion of UN staff, Governments, and other partners and stakeholders. Evaluators' expert judgement drawing on all evidence sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Desk review</u>: Project outputs, progress reports, assessment questionnaires, evaluations. <u>Interviews</u>: UN staff and partners. <u>Survey</u>: UNCTs, external partners and stakeholders. <u>Case study</u>: UNCT staff and partners.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What innovative approaches or tools, if any, did the response use, and what were the outcomes and lessons learned from their application? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use made and outputs of innovations such as online or blended modalities at country level, gamification and other interactive techniques. • Engagement in short term measures outside of normal activities. • Outcome indicators: IA 4.1., IA 4.2. • Opinion of UN staff, Governments, and other partners and stakeholders. • Evaluators' expert judgement drawing on all evidence sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Desk review</u>: Project outputs, progress reports, assessment questionnaires, evaluations. • <u>Interviews</u>: UN staff and partners. • <u>Survey</u>: UNCTs, external partners and stakeholders. • <u>Case study</u>: UNCT staff and partners.
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• Sustainability

Key questions	Suggested measures or evidence	Suggested sources and methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What measures were adopted to ensure that outcomes of the response would continue after the project ended? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reported contribution made through the project towards impact in each of the outcome areas for intended beneficiaries and in shaping national policies • Governments and other beneficiaries' perceptions of impact/likely impact • Governments and other beneficiaries' perception of strengthened capacity. • New approaches and policies adopted and capacity and resources to sustain these. • Reported country level uptake and institutionalisation of new approaches introduced as a result of ILO COVID response. • Evidence of new arrangements, partnerships and funding being put in place to support the scaling up of work implemented or given new prominence as a result of the pandemic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Desk review</u>: Project outputs, progress reports, assessment questionnaires, evaluations. • <u>Interviews</u>: UN staff and partners. • <u>Survey</u>: UNCTs, external partners and stakeholders.

• Gender, human rights and disability

Key questions	Suggested measures or evidence	Suggested sources and methods
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To what extent were perspectives on gender equality, protection of human rights and reaching underserved groups integrated into design and implementation of the project? What results can be identified from these actions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proportion of vulnerabilities disaggregated surveys, assessments. ● Evidence of human rights conventions and strategies (e.g. CEDAW, CRC, CESC, CRPD, etc.) referred in progress monitoring reports. ● Evidence of project outputs mainstreaming HRBA principles and LNOB. ● Extent to which partnership agreements and project activities include specific measures advancing gender equality, inclusion, human rights. ● Evidence of vulnerable groups or their representative organisations involved in project implementation and monitoring. ● Outcome indicators: IA 1.5, IA 1.6, IA 1.7, IA 1.8, IA 2.1, OP 3.1, IA 3.2, IA 5.3; level of achievement of planned outcomes. ● Opinion of UN staff, Governments, and other partners and stakeholders. ● Evaluators' expert judgement drawing on all evidence sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Desk review</u>: Project outputs, progress reports, assessment questionnaires, evaluations. ● <u>Interviews</u>: UN staff and partners. ● <u>Survey</u>: UNCTs, external partners and stakeholders. ● <u>Case study</u>: UNCT staff and partners.
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Annex 3: Data collection instruments

Relevance					
Key questions	Interview questions for UN staff from partner entities	Interview questions for implementing partners (UNCTs, Empretec, etc.)	Interview questions for target beneficiaries (Governments, MSMEs, etc.)	Survey questions for target beneficiaries (Governments, MSMEs, etc.)	Comments
1. To what extent was the project designed to target the new needs and priorities of participating countries as a result of COVID-19?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the project been articulated with countries' priorities to respond to the COVID-19 crisis? How did you identify the needs for the project activities or products you delivered in target countries? Did you specifically assess the needs of women and vulnerable groups? If positive, how? Is there any evidence of such needs (e.g. demands from Member States, surveys, minutes from consultations, workshop reports, market assessments, past evaluations)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the project been articulated with countries' priorities to respond to the COVID-19 crisis? How were the needs of national beneficiaries identified? Did you specifically assess the needs of women and vulnerable groups? If positive, how? Who was consulted and what evidence is there (e.g. surveys, minutes from consultations, workshop reports)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the Surge Project respond to a national or sectoral agenda or priority? Were your needs assessed and did they inform project activities? If positive, how? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the training activities, knowledge products, or technical support delivered by the Surge project respond to your learning needs? To what extent were the training activities, knowledge products, or technical support delivered by the Surge project relevant to your work? To what extent did the training activities, knowledge products, or technical support delivered by the Surge project provide you the opportunity to share your knowledge and skills with other participants? Were you overall satisfied with the training activities, knowledge products, or technical support 	

				delivered by the Surge project?	
2. To what extent was the project aligned with the COVID-19 socio-economic responses of the participating countries (e.g. COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did the Surge project's products and activities align with the SERPs? To what extent was the project aligned with UN priorities to LNOB by reaching the most vulnerable and the protection of human rights? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did the Surge project's products and activities delivered in your country respond to the SERP? To what extent was the project aligned with UN priorities to LNOB by reaching the most vulnerable and the protection of human rights? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was the project aligned with UN priorities to LNOB by reaching the most vulnerable and the protection of human rights? 		Would be primarily assessed through a desk review of a sample of SERPs.

Coherence

Key questions	Interview questions for UN staff from partner entities	Interview questions for implementing partners (UNCTs, Empretec, etc.)	Interview questions for target beneficiaries (Governments, MSMEs, etc.)	Survey questions for target beneficiaries (Governments, MSMEs, etc.)	Comments
3. To what extent was the project complementary to, and coordinated with, other work undertaken by the implementing entities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What were the other key activities that your department or other departments in the organization carried out to support MSMEs during the period 2020-2022? Which departments implemented those activities? How did you synergize these activities with the Surge project? Is there any evidence of joint activities or outputs? Is there any evidence of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did you cooperate with different departments from the project UN entities? If positive, did these UN entities synergize their inter-departmental collaboration while working with you? What were the good practices? What could have been done differently? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did you receive support (<i>from different departments of the implementing agencies or</i>) from several implementing entities? If positive, is there any evidence of complementary activities designed to maximize synergies and avoid overlaps? What were the good practices? What could have been done differently? 		

	complementary activities designed to maximize synergies and avoid overlaps?				
4. To what extent has the project been coordinated with, and complementary to, the response of other UN entities (Secretariat and non-Secretariat) to COVID-19 in delivering socio-economic support to Member States?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were there any other UN organisations outside of the core project partners that carried out activities to support MSMEs during the Covid crisis (2020-2022)? Which ones and how did you synergize these activities with the Surge project? • To what extent did the project support other efforts by UN entities to support Member States intending to mitigate socio-economic impacts of COVID-19? • Is there any evidence of joint activities or outputs? Is there any evidence of complementary activities designed to maximize synergies and avoid overlaps? What were the good practices? • What could have been done differently? Are there any UN partners with which complementarities could have been strengthened (e.g. ILO, UNDP)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent did the project support other efforts by UN entities to support Member States intending to mitigate socio-economic impacts of COVID-19? • Among the range of activities that your organization carried out in the country to support MSMEs during the period 2020-2022, did you synergize any of these interventions with the Surge project? • Is there any evidence of joint activities or outputs? Is there any evidence of complementary activities designed to maximize synergies and avoid overlaps? What were the good practices? • What could have been done differently? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you receive support from other UN organisations? If positive, is there any evidence of complementary activities designed to maximize synergies and avoid overlaps with the project's implementing entities? What were the good practices? • What could have been done differently? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your opinion, how do you assess the level of synergies and complementarity of the project with the interventions of other UN organisations in the country? (Likert: 6 levels) • In your opinion, were there any UN organisations with which the Surge project could have increased synergies or avoided overlaps at country level (if positive, please specify which UN organisations): (Open ended). 	

Efficiency

Key questions	Interview questions for UN staff from partner entities	Interview questions for implementing partners (UNCTs, Empretec, etc.)	Interview questions for target beneficiaries (Governments, MSMEs, etc.)	Survey questions for target beneficiaries (Governments, MSMEs, etc.)	Comments
5. How well coordinated was the process for the response among the entities implementing the joint project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did you coordinate project activities with the other entities? Were there any opportunities for any joint work contributing to reducing implementation costs or scale benefits? To what extent did the project benefit from resources (structure, personnel, partnerships) made available by ongoing projects? What were the good practices in terms of coordinating the Surge project? What were the challenges? What could have been done differently? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the UN entities coordinate adequately project implementation? What were the good practices? What could have been done differently? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did you receive support from several implementing entities? If positive, is there any evidence of complementary activities designed to maximize synergies and avoid overlaps? What were the good practices? What could have been done differently? 		
6. How did the three-phase budgeting and programming approaches impact the efficient delivery of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the phased approach come with a sufficient level of predictability to ensure synergies with the work of your agency? Did the phased approach prevent the project from formulating a long-term vision? Did the phased approach facilitate the formulation of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the activities of the UN entities sufficiently predictable to ensure proper synergies with the work of your agency at country level? Did the phased approach facilitate any adaptive management? What were the good practices? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were project activities sufficiently predictable to ensure proper synergies with your organisation's agenda of work? Could you properly plan the collaboration and joint work with the UN entities? Did you have a clear vision about what the UN 		

	<p>interventions across a pathway from crisis response, to recovery, and development?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the phased approach facilitate any adaptive management? What were the good practices? • What could have been done differently? What lessons learned from each of the three phases supported the continuation and continuous improvement of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What could have been done differently? 	<p>entities intended to deliver and the expected effects of their interventions?</p>		
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Effectiveness

Key questions	Interview questions for UN staff from partner entities	Interview questions for implementing partners (UNCTs, Empretec, etc.)	Interview questions for target beneficiaries (Governments, MSMEs, etc.)	Survey questions for target beneficiaries (Governments, MSMEs, etc.)	Comments
<p>7. To what extent did the programme (Development Account) and project governance and management structures and processes enable, or hinder, the effective implementation of the joint project and the achievement of its results?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the programme modality (Development Account) adequate to respond to a crisis? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the programme modality (Development Account) in a crisis context? • What were the challenges faced by the project's governance and management structures and processes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you assess the project governance and management structures and processes? • What worked well? Are there any good practices that could be systematized? • What could have been improved/what would you propose doing differently next time? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you assess the project governance and management structures and processes? • What worked well? Are there any good practices that could be systematized? • What could have been improved/what would you propose doing differently next time? 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the good practices and lessons learned from project implementation? 				
8. To what extent has the project contributed to the expected outcomes as enunciated in the project document?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you highlight as the most significant outcomes of the project in the following areas (as relevant)? (i) Improving national capacities on formulating and implementing enabling policies on green, resilient and inclusive entrepreneurship MSME promotion in post-COVID-19 resurgence; (ii) Improving resilience and competitiveness of MSMEs in post-COVID-19 resurgence; (iii) Facilitating MSMEs registration and formalization; (iv) Improving MSMEs access to finance; (v) Increasing MSMEs access to innovation and technology; (vi) Enhancing MSMEs access to markets. • What examples or evidence would demonstrate such outcomes? • Who were the primary beneficiaries of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you highlight as the most significant outcomes of the project in the following areas (as relevant)? (i) Improving national capacities on formulating and implementing enabling policies on green, resilient and inclusive entrepreneurship MSME promotion in post-COVID-19 resurgence; (ii) Improving resilience and competitiveness of MSMEs in post-COVID-19 resurgence; (iii) Facilitating MSMEs registration and formalization; (iv) Improving MSMEs access to finance; (v) Increasing MSMEs access to innovation and technology; (vi) Enhancing MSMEs access to markets. • What examples or evidence would demonstrate such outcomes? • Who were the primary beneficiaries of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you highlight as the most significant outcomes of the project in the following areas (as relevant)? (i) Improving national capacities on formulating and implementing enabling policies on green, resilient and inclusive entrepreneurship MSME promotion in post-COVID-19 resurgence; (ii) Improving resilience and competitiveness of MSMEs in post-COVID-19 resurgence; (iii) Facilitating MSMEs registration and formalization; (iv) Improving MSMEs access to finance; (v) Increasing MSMEs access to innovation and technology; (vi) Enhancing MSMEs access to markets. • What examples or evidence would demonstrate such outcomes? • Who were the primary beneficiaries of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways did the training activities, knowledge products, or technical support delivered by the Surge project influence your perspectives? • To what extent did the training activities, knowledge products, or technical support delivered by the Surge project enhance your skills and/or knowledge of the subject matter? • To what extent did the training activities, knowledge products, or technical support delivered by the Surge project enlarge your professional network? • Were you able to use/apply in your work the knowledge or skills acquired through the training activities, knowledge products, or technical support delivered by the Surge project? • Were there measurable changes in your activities and performance when you got back to your workplace that you can attribute to the training 	

				<p>activities, knowledge products, or technical support delivered by the Surge project?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have the changes in your performance and new level of knowledge or skills sustained over time? 	
<p>9. How did the response contribute to the participating country Governments' responses to COVID-19, especially in the area of MSME resurgence?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What examples would you highlight showing that the project contributed to any of the following achievements (as relevant): (i) MSMEs sustained and growing their businesses, including through exporting and integration in value chains; (ii) Businesses newly established, newly registered/formalized MSMEs; (iii) Jobs sustained and created; including with regard to women and youth entrepreneurs; (iv) Policies and measures developed and implemented by governments to facilitate the MSME resurgence in the immediate term and to enhance their shock resilience and competitiveness in a longer term. • What were the unintended positive and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What examples would you highlight showing that the project contributed to any of the following achievements (as relevant): (i) MSMEs sustained and growing their businesses, including through exporting and integration in value chains; (ii) Businesses newly established, newly registered/formalized MSMEs; (iii) Jobs sustained and created; including with regard to women and youth entrepreneurs; (iv) Policies and measures developed and implemented by governments to facilitate the MSME resurgence in the immediate term and to enhance their shock resilience and competitiveness in a longer term. • What were the unintended positive and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What examples would you highlight showing that the project contributed to any of the following achievements (as relevant): (i) MSMEs sustained and growing their businesses, including through exporting and integration in value chains; (ii) Businesses newly established, newly registered/formalized MSMEs; (iii) Jobs sustained and created; including with regard to women and youth entrepreneurs; (iv) Policies and measures developed and implemented by governments to facilitate the MSME resurgence in the immediate term and to enhance their shock resilience and competitiveness in a longer term. • What were the unintended positive and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have the knowledge and skills you acquired through the training activities, knowledge products, or technical support of the Surge project contributed to improving the performance or results of your organization? • To what extent did the knowledge and skills you acquired through the training activities, knowledge products, or technical support of the Surge project contribute to your ability to advance sustainable development. • In what ways have the training activities, knowledge products, or technical support delivered by the Surge project contributed to: (i) Improving national capacities on formulating and implementing enabling 	

	negative effects of the project?	negative effects of the project?	negative effects of the project?	<p>policies on green, resilient and inclusive entrepreneurship MSME promotion in post-COVID- 19 resurgence? (ii) Improving resilience and competitiveness of MSMEs in post-COVID 19 resurgence? (iii) Facilitating MSMEs registration and formalization? (iv) Improving MSMEs' access to finance? (v) Increasing MSMEs' access to innovation and technology? (vi) Enhancing MSMEs' access to markets? (vii) Engaging and sustaining women and youth entrepreneurs and other vulnerable and marginalized groups?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please, share concrete examples of the types of policy or economic improvements, contribution to advancing sustainable development, or other entrepreneurship impacts that resulted from the skills and knowledge you acquired through the training activities, knowledge products, or technical support 	
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				delivered by the Surge project	
10. What innovative approaches or tools, if any, did the response use, and what were the outcomes and lessons learned from their application?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In which areas was the Surge project innovative? What were the most promising practices that participating UN entities should consider institutionalizing or replicating? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In which areas was the Surge project innovative? What were the most promising practices that participating UN entities should consider institutionalizing or replicating? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was there anything innovative or unique with the Surge project that participating UN entities should consider institutionalizing or replicating? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was there anything innovative or unique with the Surge project that participating UN entities should consider replicating or scaling? (open ended) 	

Sustainability

Key questions	Interview questions for UN staff from partner entities	Interview questions for implementing partners (UNCTs, Empretec, etc.)	Interview questions for target beneficiaries (Governments, MSMEs, etc.)	Survey questions for target beneficiaries (Governments, MSMEs, etc.)	Comments
11. What measures were adopted to ensure that outcomes of the response would continue after the project ended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the project advanced partnerships amongst project participants, national institutions and the MSMEs in support of sustainable results? How did the project contribute to leveraging funding and financing of government and other resource partners (multilateral, bilateral, etc.)? What were the enabling factors that contributed to making the project transformative? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the project advanced partnerships amongst project participants, national institutions and the MSMEs in support of sustainable results? How did the project contribute to leveraging funding and financing of government and other resource partners (multilateral, bilateral, etc.)? What were the enabling factors that contributed to making the project transformative? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the project advanced partnerships amongst project participants, national institutions and the MSMEs in support of sustainable results? How did the project contribute to leverage funding and financing of government and other resource partners (multilateral, bilateral, etc.)? Do you find that UN entities managed adequately the need for immediate response and the search for longer-term effects? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the Surge project contribute to promoting better preparedness for future crisis? (Likert scale) 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the enabling factors that contributed to make the project transformative? • To what extent did the project contribute to promote better preparedness for future crisis? 		
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Gender, human rights, and disability

Key questions	Interview questions for UN staff from partner entities	Interview questions for implementing partners (UNCTs, Empretec, etc.)	Interview questions for target beneficiaries (Governments, MSMEs, etc.)	Survey questions for target beneficiaries (Governments, MSMEs, etc.)	Comments
12. To what extent were perspectives on gender equality, protection of human rights and reaching underserved groups integrated into the design and implementation of the project? What results can be identified from these actions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have women and other vulnerable and marginalized groups engaged, including outreach and selection process, types of leadership roles, decision-making, among others? • To what extent have project activities been designed and implemented with particular attention to the needs and contexts of women and other vulnerable and marginalized groups? • To what extent have Member States engaged and integrated human 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have women and other vulnerable and marginalized groups engaged, including outreach and selection process, types of leadership roles, decision-making, among others? • To what extent have project activities been designed and implemented with particular attention to the needs and contexts of women and other vulnerable and marginalized groups? • To what extent have national partners engaged and integrated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have women and other vulnerable and marginalized groups engaged, including outreach and selection process, types of leadership roles, decision-making, among others? • In what ways have the activities affected women and other vulnerable and marginalized groups in their lives? • In what ways were women and other vulnerable and marginalized groups affected by COVID-19 restrictions and how was 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have women and other vulnerable and marginalized groups benefited from the training activities, knowledge products, or technical support delivered by the Surge project? (Likert: 6 levels) • Any comments? (open ended) • Disaggregated analysis of survey data 	

	rights protections in their project activities?	human rights protections in their project activities?	that addressed in the project's efforts? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent have national partners engaged and integrated human rights protections in their project activities?		
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Annex 4: List of documents reviewed

- Callo-Müller M. V. 2020. *Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and the digital economy*. ESCAP. Bangkok.
- ECLAC. 2020. *Sectors and businesses facing COVID-19: Emergency and reactivation, Special Report n.4*. Santiago, Chile.
- ESCAP. 2021. *Rethinking MSME Finance in Asia and the Pacific: A Post-Crisis Policy Agenda*. Bangkok.
- ESCAP. 2021. *The Role of Competition Policy in Strengthening the Business Environment for MSMEs in the ASEAN Region*. 11 February 2021. Bangkok.
- ESCAP. 2022. *Bangladesh Startup Ecosystem Assessment Report*. Bangkok.
- ESCAP. 2022. *MSME Access to Finance: The Role of Digital Payments, MSME Financing Series No.7*. Bangkok.
- ESCAP. 2022. *Policy guidebook for MSME development in Asia and the Pacific, 2nd edition*. Bangkok.
- ESCAP. 2022. *Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Lending Approaches: The Role of Banks in Asia. MSME Financing Series No. 6*. Bangkok.
- ILO. 2020. *COVID-19 and the impact on agriculture and food security*. Geneva.
- ILO. 2018. *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture, Third Edition*, Geneva.
- ILO. 2020. *Contagion or starvation, the dilemma facing informal workers during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Geneva.
- ILO. 2021. *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Seventh edition. 25 January 2021*. Geneva.
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- ILO. 2022. *Independent High-Level Evaluation of ILO's COVID-19 response 2020-22*. Geneva.
- IMF. 2020. *World Economic Outlook Update: A Crisis Like No Other, An Uncertain Recovery*. Washington.
- IMF. 2021. *World Economic Outlook Update. January 2021*. Washington.
- OECD. 2020. *Global Outlook on Financing for Sustainable Development 2021*. Paris.
- UN OCHA. 2020. *Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19*. Geneva.
- UN Women. 2020. *Guidance Note for Action: Supporting SMEs to Ensure the Economic COVID-19 Recovery is Gender-Responsive and Inclusive*. UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. Bangkok.
- UNCTAD. 2020. *Concept note: Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 MSME sector Phase I. April 2020*. Geneva.
- UNCTAD. 2020. *COVID-19 Response. Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 MSME sector: MSME Surge Project. Phase II Project Proposal. July 2020*. Geneva.
- UNCTAD. 2020. *COVID-19: Firmer Action Needed to Better Protect Consumers*. Geneva.
- UNCTAD. 2021. *COVID-19 Response. Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 MSME sector: MSME Surge Project. Phase III Project Proposal. February 2021*. Geneva.
- UNCTAD. 2021. *Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 resurgence of the MSME sector. MSME surge project - Addendum Phase 3 Project Proposal*. Geneva.
- UNCTAD. 2021. *How COVID-19 affects MSME access to markets and competition: A review of key issues and recommendations for future action*. Geneva.
- UNCTAD. 2021. *Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on trade and development: Recovering, but unevenly - Situation as at 31 March 2021*. Geneva.
- UNCTAD. 2022. *Cross-border Trade in the Pre- and Post-Pandemic Environment Evidence from Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia*. Geneva.
- UNCTAD. 2022. *Entrepreneurship & innovation in the new health economy*. Geneva.
- UNCTAD. 2022. *Final Report: Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 resurgence of the MSME sector. September 2022*. Geneva.
- UNCTAD. 2022. *Guidance for action: Supporting MSMEs' recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Prepared for the trade competition commission of Thailand*. Geneva.
- UNCTAD. 2022. *The COVID-19 pandemic impact on micro, small and medium sized enterprises: Market access challenges and competition policy*. Geneva.
- UNCTAD. 2023. *MSME Surge Project. Empretec: Impact Assessment Survey Report*. Geneva.
- UNDESA. 2018. *Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) and their role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals*. New York.
- UNDP. 2020. *UNDP Briefing Note Gender COVID-19*. New York.
- UNECA. 2022. *The role of digitalisation in strengthening capacities of Micro, Small and Medium-Size Enterprises (MSMEs) in Southern Africa to take advantage of the AfCFTA*. ECA Sub-Regional Office for Southern Africa (SRO-SA) & ECA Digital Centre of Excellence. Addis Ababa.
- UNECE. 2020. *Guidelines and best practices for micro-, small and medium enterprises in delivering energy-efficient products and in providing renewable energy equipment*. Geneva.

- UNECE. 2020. *Guidelines and Best Practices for MSMEs to assure resiliency and progress towards a circular economy in sustainable resource management and critical raw material supply chain solutions. August 2020.* Geneva.
- UNECE. 2020. *The Impact of COVID-19 on trade and structural transformation in Georgia.* Geneva.
- UNEG. 2008. *Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system.* New York.
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- UNIDO. 2020. *COVID-19, Implications and Response : Digital Transformation and Industrial Recovery.* Vienna.
- United Nations Moldova. 2020. *COVID-19 Socio-economic Response and Recovery Plan.* June 2020. Chisinau.
- United Nations. 2017. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 21 December 2016. 71/221. Entrepreneurship for sustainable development. A/RES/71/221. General Assembly.* New York.
- United Nations. 2019. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2018. 73/225. Entrepreneurship for sustainable development. A/RES/73/225. General Assembly.* New York.
- United Nations. 2020. *A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. April 2020.* New York.
- United Nations. 2020. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 2 April 2020. A/RES/74/270. General Assembly.* New York.
- United Nations. 2020. *Shared Responsibility, Global solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. March 2020.* New York.

Annex 5: List of individuals interviewed

Redacted for confidentiality purposes.

Annex 6: Evaluation surveys

The evaluation carried out six external surveys to inform the assessment of the relevance, coherence, and effectiveness of the project and its contribution to outcomes for women and youth entrepreneurs and other vulnerable and marginalized groups. The surveys targeted participants to project activities and beneficiaries. The lists of contacts were provided by UNCTAD, DESA, ESCAP, ECLAC, UNECA, and UNECE. The surveys were composed, for some part, of questions that were common to all six questionnaires, and for other parts, of questions specific to each of the 5+1 project outcomes. The questionnaires were made available in English. They were translated in Spanish for outcomes 3 and 5 as target recipients were primarily in the Latin America and Caribbean region. The surveys were anonymous and remained open for 2 weeks, from Thursday 20 July to Friday 4 August. Two reminder messages were sent to increase the response rate.

The surveys were launched to a combined list of 1454 persons, with 89 messages bouncing back. Altogether, the surveys compiled feedback from 133 respondents. All survey questions were optional. Questionnaires partially completed were kept in the batch of results when they contained information that was judged relevant, credible and meaningful. Statistics were calculated on the basis of the number of valid responses per question and not on the basis of the overall number of respondents to the surveys. The overall response rate to the email surveys is circa 9.7%.

The surveys present the opinion of those who responded but not of the entire list of recipients of the questionnaires nor of all the beneficiaries of the project.

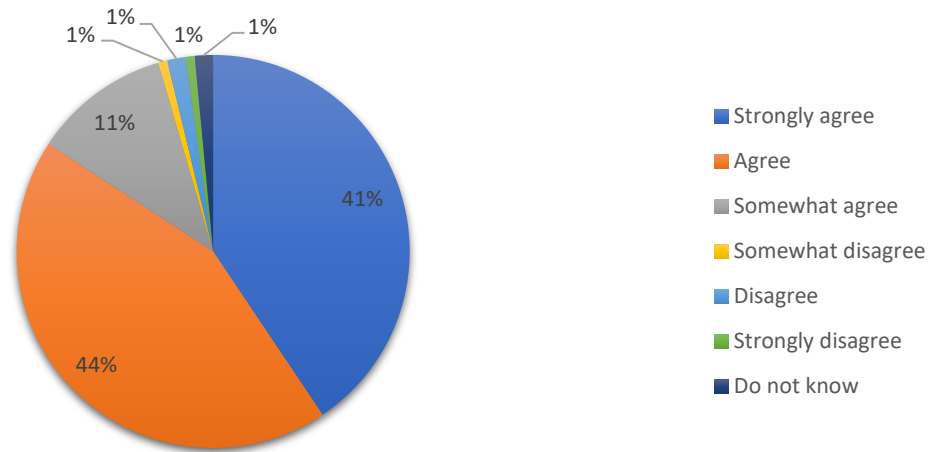
Outcome	Email addresses	Bounced back	Valid email	Valid responses	Percentage
1A	574	38	536	52	9.70%
1B	258	24	234	40	17.09%
2	21	0	21	4	19.05%
3	219	4	215	11	5.12%
4	98	1	97	13	13.40%
5	284	22	262	13	4.96%
Total	1454	89	1365	133	9.74%

Relevance of the project

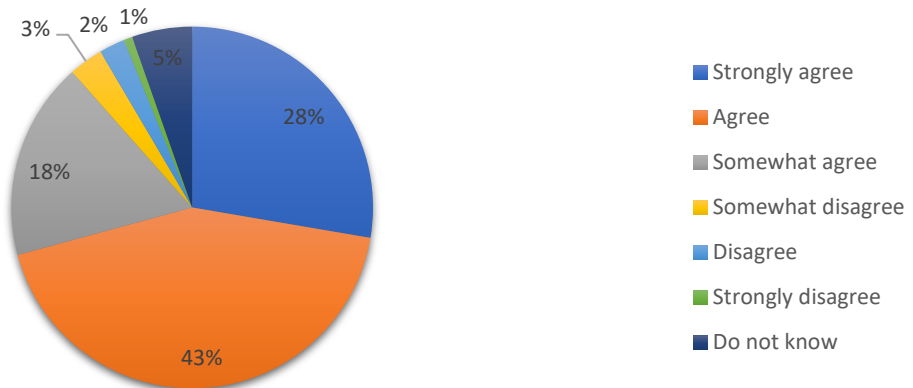
1. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know	Total
The project activities responded to my priorities and were relevant to my work	54	58	15	1	2	1	2	133
The project complemented interventions by other international organizations working in my country/region	36	56	23	4	3	1	7	130

The project activities responded to my priorities and were relevant to my work



The project complemented interventions by other international organizations working in my country/region



2. Did the project increase synergies or avoid overlaps with other agencies/entities working in this area? Please explain.

- A lot of organizations were conducting projects regarding COVID, however this one was the only one providing actual information on practical ways to mitigate some challenges arising from the pandemic.
- As every and each project in Armenia there are overlaps
- **Aumentaron las sinergias, al publicarse reformas las leyes laborales y fiscales.**
- **Aumento mis criterios previos al proyecto**
- **Aumentou a sinergia com outras entidades à medida que deixou bem clara a importância das parcerias.**

● Have no detail information
● Here, it is more of overlaps with other agencies.
● I am not aware that there was good mutual communication between the job holders during the execution of the project.
● I believe the project will increase synergies and complement other initiatives in place
● I can say that any project makes an effort to enhance synergies and do away duplications if there is to optimize the resources and maximize the positive impact.
● I did not see avoiding of overlaps with other agencies working in this area especially at country level.
● I think the project definitely increased synergies with other domestic agencies / entities working in each specific area.
● I think this project increase synergies with other project
● IDEP; PNUD HUB REGIONAL DAKAR
● Increased synergies
● It created synergy as Seda provided a number of virtual trainings which is still continuing to date.
● It focused on areas that affected our common clients. However, there is need to make a follow up and implement the recommendations.
● It increase synergy because from my view point I think the manpower strength of this organisation will stand out if the y are innovative ,
● It increased synergies
● It increased synergies and avoided overlaps
● It increased synergies in the sense that it adequately complemented what had been on the ground by the activities of other agencies.
● It increases synergies
● It is still in progress.
● It really increase synergy fill in gaps in the others
● It was helpful for avoiding overlaps
● Like womens ministry
● more strategic alliances
● Neither yes or no because I have seen it or positive impact on me
● No
● No awareness
● No comment
● No it did not
● No.
● Nos proporcionó elementos para poder considerar el comportamiento en éste tipo de eventualidades temporales
● Not sure. Communication between agencies is not always the best.
● Not yet because the understanding among the companies and leaders is not concrete to work hand in hand however strengthen the relationship and strong collaboration among the companies is still under consideration
● Our country SME office
● Partnerships and cooperation within the different parties involved was evident. This includes Donors, Investors, Grant Managers, Incubators, Accelerators, Chambers of Commerce, Hubs, the UN and the Governments of the various countries involved.
● Permitió por sobre todo tomar conocimiento de las realidades regionales de las pymes, y sus dificultades u oportunidades para la mirada exportadora y las herramientas y brechas existentes

como barreras a superar y que en la mayoría de los casos es posible extender los casos de éxitos o superaciones de un país a la región
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project increase synergies, gives hope especially with the financial support. It was really helpful. Covid -19 severely damaged the whole life emotionally, physiologically, financially. It was really good that this project was there during the Covid-19 difficult times.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● project increased synergies with and complemented internal activities in own company
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project never visible in the communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Se dieron conexiones y nuevas sinergias que resultaron muy positivas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Se evitó solapamientos, ya que se cuidó esta parte en la capacitación.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● si porque nos ayuda a tomar decisiones para formular proyectos para las Mypes en nuestro país
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong synergies were evident, probably due to strong collaboration between the Agencies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The inter-institutional cooperation is important.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project activities can not overlap even if having similar set of objectives since it is a needed necessity for developing countries.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project avoids overlaps with other agencies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project did create synergies and was generally applicable to many situations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project encouraged synergies with other agencies including the ILO in supporting and promoting formalization as well as the UNDP in supporting private sector development and SMEs resilience building.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the project has increase synergies with other agencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project has increased synergies rather than overlapping other activities in this area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project increase the synergies of the efforts with other agencies and entities by focusing areas of intervention and rationalizing resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project increased synergies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project increased synergies with between Government Agencies and the Private Sector whereby innovative ideas were explored and cutting edge solutions were developed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project increased working relationships with other agencies. The project also covered some of the areas which Government might have resources to reach.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project looked at all the problems of the MSMEs and contributed to the summary of information in one place.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project was avoid overlaps with other agencies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project was not only important source of information for the Moldova's Government, but also it was largely complementary to the work of few agencies, such as UNDP, UNCTAD, UN Women etc and was helpful in the process of CCA analysis, Gender assessment etc. Particularly, the project recommendations were presented during the Socio-Economic task force chaired by UNDP , the Economic Council under Prime-Minister and development partners coordination platform co-chaired by the UN and World Bank Group in Moldova. some of the findings were further adopted as activities under the UNCTAD and UNDP projects (notably regarding customs procedures and SME support).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the project was used to make recommendations as part of a study on the MSME business environment in Madagascar
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project was very important session
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This programme increased the synergies amongst the relevant ministries/institutions that works on MSMEs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To build capacities to MSM"s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To considerable extend did avoid overlap, what is important is to bring MSME center stage especially in developing economies and that unique role has been played by this attempt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● we had synergies and networking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● yes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● yes great synergies avoiding overlapping between UN RECs and DESA in NYC created new partnerships within and outside UN system
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● yes it did
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes it did. Our collaboration with Regional Economic Commissions of the UN was very helpful, UNESWA and UNECLAC were already incorporating some aspects of competition work and SMEs and this project enabled us to collaborate more and share our expediciencies like never before. We also closely collaborated with UNESCAP in their SMEs and also to organize the DA project closing event in Bangkok.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● yes it increased synergies with other agencies working in that area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes it increases synergies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes it was complimentary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes right
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes the project enhanced synergies with other agencies through collaborations and partnerships to provide relevant support to MSMEs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes the project increases the synergies of Empretec Centre Benin and chamber of commerce and Industry in Benin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, it did and help a lot
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, it did increase synergies. Especially with NGOS who are impacting on skills acquisition, they also made impact but UNTACD surpassed them all
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, it did. Information on the issues of access to markets and disruption of supply chains supported competition agencies in enforcing the law to support MSME sustainability.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, it increased synergies since several agencies were involved to implement the project.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, it was structured in a close coordination with other implementing agencies and key national counterparts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, MSME is the most hit by COVID-19 and need special focus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, proper planning of involved actors boosted synergies and avoided overlaps.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, since it was implemented in close collaboration with the UN Regional Economic Commissions and with the member States counterparts fully involved.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, the project increased synergies and the multi partner approach worked well.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, the project increased synergies. It created a platform where women who make up the majority MSMEs in developing countries are able to access technology at an affordable cost to enhance their businesses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, the timing of the project was excellent, while businesses and other agencies were cautiously distanced due to Covid-19 lockdown, the project was empowering us as development practitioners to prepare for a come back to assist us in supporting our clients recover from Covid-19.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, it's created prioritisation, definitions and specificities toward gaps and overlaps.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes. Maximize the use of resources in the area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes. Because the entrepreneurship is an issue that relates to all the agencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes. It led to knowing how one could use the current computer advancement in pushing business including customers participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes. The project complemented other studies conducted at national level for specific target group.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes. The project was specific to the needs of women entrepreneurs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes. In some ways.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes... increased synergies and helped to strengthen actions.

Usefulness of the project

3. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Outcome 1A	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know	Total
The project provided access to information and best practices on government support measures for post COVID-19 recovery	35%	39%	18%	2%	4%	2%	0%	51
The project improved my knowledge on entrepreneurship/MSMEs policies design and implementation in the context of post COVID-19 recovery	39%	39%	12%	4%	6%	0%	0%	51
The project contributed to identifying new/improved policy measures for MSME promotion in post COVID-19 resurgence	43%	33%	14%	6%	4%	0%	0%	51

Outcome 1B	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know	Total
The project provided information useful for starting a new business or expanding a business venture	36%	41%	8%	3%	8%	0%	5%	39
The project improved my knowledge on entrepreneurship and business development	32%	45%	11%	3%	5%	0%	5%	38
The project contributed to identifying new/improved measures to increase business sales	42%	26%	18%	3%	5%	0%	5%	38

Outcome 2	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know	Total
The project provided useful information on MSMEs formalization/registration	36%	41%	8%	3%	8%	0%	5%	3
The project improved my knowledge of how to increase the number of businesses registering	32%	45%	11%	3%	5%	0%	5%	3
The project contributed to identifying new/improved measures to decrease the administrative costs of starting a business	42%	26%	18%	3%	5%	0%	5%	4

Outcome 3	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know	Total
The project provided useful information on financial inclusion and MSMEs access to finance	30%	50%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10
The project improved my knowledge on accounting and reporting, including on the SDG reporting, and improved my capacity to manage financial resources	50%	20%	20%	10%	0%	0%	0%	10
The project contributed to identifying new/improved measures for financial inclusion and MSMEs access to finance	40%	40%	10%	10%	0%	0%	0%	10

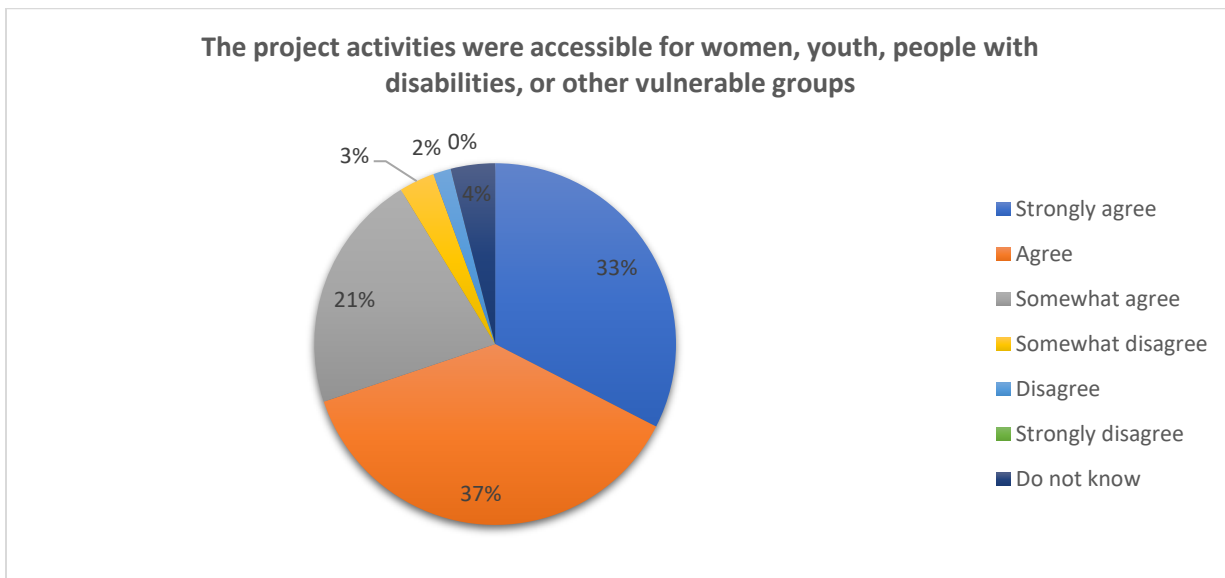
Outcome 4	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know	Total
The project provided useful information on MSMEs access to innovation and technology	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	12
The project improved my knowledge on how to increase MSMEs access to innovation and technology	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	12
The project contributed to identifying new/improved measures to increase MSMEs access to technology	50%	33%	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	12

Outcome 5	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know	Total
The project activities and publications provided useful information on MSMEs access to markets	38%	54%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	13
The project improved my knowledge on how to increase access to markets, including export and integration into value chains	54%	31%	15%	0%	0%	0%	0%	13
The project activities contributed to identifying new/improved measures for consumer protection and competition	46%	46%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	13
The project activities contributed to identifying new/improved measures on	33%	33%	25%	0%	0%	0%	8%	12

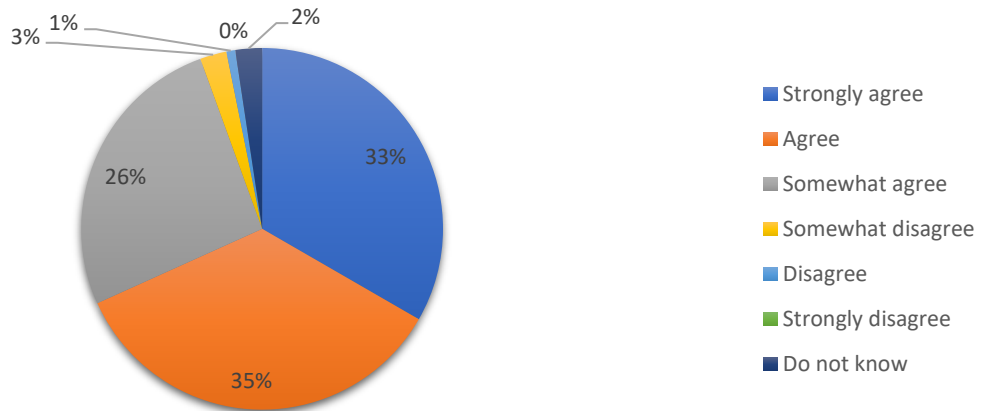
agricultural quality and food loss reduction								
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3-B. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know	Total
The project activities were accessible for women, youth, people with disabilities, or other vulnerable groups	33%	37%	21%	3%	2%	0%	4%	126
The project activities and content reflected the perspectives of women, youth, people with disabilities, or other vulnerable groups	33%	35%	26%	2%	1%	0%	2%	126



The project activities and content reflected the perspectives of women, youth, people with disabilities, or other vulnerable groups



4. What (if anything) would you describe as innovative or unique from the project that the UN should consider replicating or upscaling? Why?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A simplified micro lending business method, such as funding a local small businesses with a day to day transaction of lend to collect daily loan offer with affordable interest rate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ampliar programas de apoyo a zonas de vulnerabilidad a terceros países, o buscar cooperación es que llegue a los más necesitados e ir dándoles un acompañamiento
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As women are involved with this project, so UN should consider replicating.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business that clearly accommodate those with disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacitance communities to engage in entrepreneurship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considero que debe darle continuidad a las capacitaciones para que los usuarios hagamos mejor uso de la información financiera
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue supporting the local women led and youth led initiative to increase accessibility of services by women and girls in hard to reach communities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct training to entrepreneurs on appropriate technology application and innovation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification of business opportunity innovations and mentoring of Entrepreneurs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During project designation, the target beneficiaries were not fully involved hence still some gaps which need more attention. some of the areas are...; Sustainability component is not there and exit strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-Commerce, promoting and upscaling global entrepreneurship especially for marginalized and vulnerable groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everything is good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • excellent actions in the SDGs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding, after training participants, small fund should be made available to start practicing what was learnt in the class
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good governance in private sector to make engine of growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government should already implement what has been proposed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't know

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I live in a rural and the poorest province in my country. I was impressed by the reach of the project because while my country (the capital city) is hosting many UN regional offices, UN programmes are unheard of in these parts, though I suspect they are visible elsewhere in the country and region.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implementation of capacity-building training manpower , creativity to this various group,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● improving capacity-building
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improving EE/RES secondary legislation for all countries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Innovation simply means new methodology in doing things but on the aspect of activities of international organization in a particular country, the people that benefit almost everything are people at high, not people at lower, and whereas people at the lower class is most needed in the programme.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● innovations from women
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Innovative digital finance solutions and regulatory frameworks to support both financial inclusion and growth of SMEs, especially those owned and led by women. It is a new perspective for private sector.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Innovative or unique from project that UN should consider they must teach also at local high school to give light to our future leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● it is an innovation project as it has increased women participation in business activities post-covid 19 era.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is necessary to give a valid and uniform assessment of the data (through the UNFC and UNRMS system), which is necessary for planning and understanding the issues in the preparation of strategic documents. Therefore, the application of the UNFC and UMRMS system for all resources, at the national level.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● la digitalizacion en el mundo globalizado
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● La inclusión de jóvenes, para el fortalecimiento de sus habilidades y destrezas con una temporalidad más temprana.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Large scale multifaceted project allowing for rapid intervention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Las recomendaciones para tratar económicamente este tipo de eventualidades
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Let's the poor BREATHE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Los emprendimientos liderados por mujeres, con criterios de triple impacto: Económicamente rentable, socialmente inclusivo y medioambientalmente amigable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More online activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need to upscale countrywide best practices to encourage or handhold MSME as an information brochure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nothing at all, the project was very satisfying
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nothing to say
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunity or skills sharing from neighbouring countries. Forging business relationships and Empretec relationships.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● organize face-to-face courses for policymakers to support small and medium enterprises
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Our company benefited from Covid-19 by contracting testing & certification of medical Covid facial masks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Platform or some sort of reimbursement for under privileged individuals who want to be part of this initiative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● policy dialogues hybrid dialogue inclusion of private sector
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Practically of the topics that were discussed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reducing border barriers, increasing non-refundable investment support for small and medium-sized enterprises in developing and underdeveloped countries, and improving cooperation between countries

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Should highly concentrate on youth and women empowerment especially on agricultural technology since the unemployment rate in the country is still high and is one of the sector which can help to reduce poverty yet still considering the best practices to reduce pollution of the environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Still figuring out on that
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Supporting small business for access to grants and Entrepreneurship training.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Targeting people with disabilities and the vulnerable groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The best practices of project outcomes delivered in other countries should be supported and encouraged for adoption in other countries.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The combination of independent study, YouTube videos, exercises, moderated online participation and tests facilitated greater engagement with the material, learning from the facilitator, and peer learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The cost of tools and others types for calculate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The focus on MSMEs and the practical approach undertaken allowed for impactful outcomes, which is not always the case of other technical cooperation projects.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The global initiatives towards post covid 19 resurgence...its unique in tackling the novelty covid 19 and should be improved upon for future resilience and R n D by UN and lessons learn should be noted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The number of times the trainings are done
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The online courses, webinars, and information dissemination.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The opportunity for the usage of online tools for the dissemination of EMPRETEC programme to impact large participants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project, I interacted with was on formalization of MSMEs through the Cooperative business model and to small extent topics on Enterprise development were touched.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project's focus on capacity-building and skill development for MSMEs is vital for their sustainable growth, emphasis on sustainable and inclusive development, and the project's efforts to leverage technology and digital solutions for MSMEs are forward-thinking.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The role competition policy in the economic recovery of MSMEs. Reason: MSMEs continue to face challenges related to their interaction with bigger counterparts. For instance, suppliers of agricultural produce to bigger multinational buyers. Traditional competition law rules do not present effective solutions. Consider issues of abuse of superior bargaining power and abuse of buyer power.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The studies might contain innovative and/or unique conclusions and recommendations, so the UN should consider the best ones for replicating or upscaling.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The training exercises to improve knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The uniqueness of this project, time span and evolution was specially in terms of allowing us as project managers to bring in new ideas and try them out. I have done projects before and also tried to implement new ideas, but this project was a clean slate and a lot of room for innovation. it was challenging but very enlightening. Such room to introduce ideas should be considered in projects as opposed to straight jackets. In the spirit of the new normal, projects should evolve and fit with the times.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The whole approach was innovative, enabling one stop shop for mechanisms and best practices towards post-Covid-19 resurgence of the MSME sector.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the work dedicated to the analysis of structural barriers to trade was very relevant and helped to identify measures necessary for facilitation of exports. Specifically, conducting flash studies to maintain evidence-based feedback from MSMEs on barriers to trade and access to external markets is crucial, especially in the context of current supply chain deterioration context in ECA region caused by the war in Ukraine. Furthermore, the work dedicated to profiling of women-led MSMEs was insightful and helped to develop legal amendments supportive to women employability.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UN Projects

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UN should consider upscaling the Empretec behavioural approach to entrepreneurship skills development due to its high impact on motivation and confidence of participants and success of their business ventures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Undertaking a needs analysis and developing programs based on the needs of the MSMEs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Upscaling new starts ups and contribute to identifying new/improved measures to increase businesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Upscaling the development of investment attraction mechanisms for energy system
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use of online platforms. It helps people in MSME sector to even participate whilst near work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Women entrepreneurship can be upscaled to more people living in rural areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● YES ; SDGs is my occupation professional

Since completion of the project

5. Please share examples on how you were able to use the knowledge or skills acquired through the project in your work.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to information in one place was important to me.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Acquired the best practices to the use and reduction of pollution while maintaining high level of Production
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An important project that I worked on, I highlighted key issues that are vital for the MSMEs whereby we provided entrepreneurial training, business counselling support and access to credit facility which helped the business to survive during and past the COVID pandemic.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As a housewife and a farmer, The acquired knowledge is helping me
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As an import-export retail business that I'd like to develop, I haven't yet applied the acquired knowledge toward my business.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● as part of my consultancy activities and with my students, including public administration officials in vocational training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Asesorias a pequeñas empresas y personas físicas empresarias, par dar cumplimiento a sus obligaciones fiscales y de información financiera para la obtención de financiamientos. Cumplimiento en disposiciones de actividades con enfoque a la sustentabilidad y cuidados ecologicos.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aun no he realizado un proyecto percé que haya sustentado las capacitaciones pero si comparto los conocimientos
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Better appreciation of challenges of MSMEs in accessing markets and finance which I incorporated into my analysis of competition law cases.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By explaining deeply for the people at work how opportunity is being made use of effectively and efficiently.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● coming up with easy women's problems in farms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● COMPLETION AND CAPACITY KNOWLEDGE GREEN TECHNOLOGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conducting surveys and interviews with entrepreneurs, especially in rural areas, gave a deeper understanding of the existing problems of small businesses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● De várias formas, uma delas seria a busca de parcerias com outras órgãos e entidades para assistir as micro e pequenas empresas no processo de exportação
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Desde la academia, socializo los temas tratados y como se puede adoptar soluciones de otras latitudes, previa adaptación a nuestro entorno o país. En el ámbito de las consultorías damos a conocer a clientes que en su gran mayoría no solamente son pymes sino también empresas familiares, respecto a los desafíos, puntos de nivelación necesarias y oportunidades para la

<p>exportación de sus productos. Esto de de vital importancia habida cuanta que estamos en una region tri nacional, conocida como las tres fronteras. Ciudad del Este, Paraguay; Foz de Iguazú, Brasil y Puerto Iguazú Argentina.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Design and implementation of new courses for MSME about internationalization and digitalization in my country
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Diversification of business opportunity innovations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● education for sustainable development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● En mi trabajo mejoro mis criterios de aplicación de la normativa
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● En mis proyectos de crecimiento empresarial.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish priority policies for women-owned and female-intensive businesses and social enterprises
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● For future errands
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Giving charities to the needy people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Goal setting was one of my best Pec, after the training I set meaningful , reasonable and achievable goals, . My friend invited me to join and play an online that will pay double in 30 days but I remembered being taught how to take calculated risk, I turn it down only for the scheme to fail after two weeks, my business money remained intact because I apply what I learn.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Health and safety should be our own responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I am developed with accounting method
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I attended training & workshops
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I have attended the training and applied through my independent business development consultancy assignments by providing further trainings, information, and advice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I have been able to design and upscale my projects within the circular economy space
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I have learned to utilize the E-view and SPSS analytical tool in identifying policy trends and priorities in the MSME sector in The Gambia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I have not.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I incorporated the skills into my organisation policies to advance youth meaningful employment and community development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I just established an NGO which focuses on Climate change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I learnt on how to reach out to prospective clients through the use of technology such as phone and internet to advertise my small business using whatApps.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I managed to access GIS software and intend to use it in agribusiness interventions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I managed to understand the key problems that arise in the supply chain of critical mineral raw materials during crisis situations (pandemics, etc.), especially in conditions when there is no uniformity in their available data (in terms of quantities, availability, import-export, needs, etc.).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I see solutions in any problems or situations. And it has improved my working abilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I was able to protect my self from covid and help my family gain from my skill too
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implementar protocolos de bioseguridad en las asociaciones o empresas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Important to use skill acquired especially for women entrepreneurs and employees how easily converging can enable to get them credit , skill up gradation and special needs yet being in competitive world.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improved my appreciation of synergies and partnerships in development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased the level of communication using internet. More active collaboration with partners to create consortium and participate in new tenders in area we didn't participate before. Expand area of activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Information sharing om border formalities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Innovation and best practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Installed wifi in my village home using solar to ensure I continued working in spite of remote location and lack of electric grid

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introducing net metering for PV Autoproducers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It enabled me to go for computer training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Like Business Development Service (BDS) Centre, all knowledge acquired through the project will continuously impact the delivery in terms of training for the capacity-building of MSME in Benin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Looking for innovation to solve emerging society issues is a tool for success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Material generated through the project was of sufficient interest to Member States that it resulted in multiple invitations to present the work at various forums, and this enhanced links between policymakers and the UN.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mothers in headhouse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● My contribution has been in Energy Sector (SME)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No capital to invest on the knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● online course
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Only in small entities that need prepare financial statements to share to Banks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Our company benefited from testing and certification of Covid-19 related facial masks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Por mi actividad profesional, revisamos información de varias actividades económicas y las divulgaciones de los efectos del covid no pueden ser generales, porque a unas actividades económicas la pandemia hizo crecer sus operaciones comerciales
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Programme development and management - applied the knowledge and skills gained in initiatives crafted for MSME development for nationwide implementation Mainstreaming sustainability principle - sustainability principles were embedded in several MSME development initiatives of the office, ensuring that environmental, social, and economic considerations are integrated into our frameworks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Propagation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Report findings were publicly disseminated amongst Development Partners (via different modalities and platforms) and were subsequently incorporated into their project design. The key findings were included in the CCA while certain policy recommendations utilized to provide inputs for EU annual report.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Roll-out new training material developed during the project and disseminated through ad-hoc online sessions to national counterparts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Several included mechanisms were subsequently utilized on certain level in my work environment and daily activities, for example, available state support for the MSMEs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shared as a best practice to other partners that we are working with and rallied the critical role of Cooperatives in formalization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● sharing my knowledge with women entrepreneurs to uplift their businesses..
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support decision-makers in the country in the elaboration of initiatives, and measures for the development of female entrepreneurship.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The analytical study generated policy recommendations, business operations, communication, and financing options that might be used in future work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The examples of businesses, how they adjusted to the situation gave me new ways of thinking how to improve during challenging times.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The knowledge gain was highly considered helpful in the areas health emergencies and livelihood survival greatly & the should shared through the programme help migat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The knowledge has been of great help in sourcing, grouping and keeping up with marketing. And secondly, it has greatly improved my view on record keeping.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The ocean economy is not very well explored in my area. The ethnic groups have always avoided water out of cultural and spiritual reverence. My development programmes never included the ocean economy until after this project. I have started an awareness initiative that presents the ocean as a

possible and lucrative source of livelihood. I believe the initiative is making a breakthrough because locals (though still very few) are beginning to lodge application for fishing licenses to the authorities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The online training course was a good example to highlight . It was possible to gather participants in an area which has not been covered before., the link between competition and SME policies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The products developed correspond to useful tools when supporting MSMEs in specific areas, such as competition law and policy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project provided references to us in supervising the partnership between MSME and large/medium companies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The study helped us refocus on the new needs of MSMEs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Through training.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To be able to conduct trainings online, has been my best rewarding experience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To teach students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We are able to understand and tackle similar challenges in future as we are better informed. We are more resilient and adaptable than before.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We have organized workshops in relation to the UNCTAD MSME project in Thailand both national and regional agencies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We organizing all of training and expos by online and conducting IT technology for our operations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We used the skills learned in undertaking needs analysis to undertake a needs analysis for our capacity-building programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Women capacity-building is important to acquire skills through knowledge.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Working with FAO and UNDP in developing National Horticulture and Agro Processing Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes onboarding some companies to ecommerce platform. This initiative was lead by my self through skilled gained in the training

6. What are the challenges, if any, in applying the knowledge or skills acquired through the project to your work?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of support from the body at the end of the training. So the knowledge is not practicable in the wider market
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some of the policy and technology that was discussed cannot be accessed locally
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to full process of the project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to new suppliers was difficult, as they require higher quantities to be requested. Creation of association facilitated to solve the issue.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accessibility to the most under developed rural areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ampliar el conocimiento y plasmarlo en proyectos factibles de acuerdo a la realidad de cada pais
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Application is always not easy at first but I pull through
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● beyond an online evaluation like what is currently done here, set up an on-site follow-up programme after the training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Budget constraints in implementing initiatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Business environment in my country with limitations for MSME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Capacity-building, adequate financial support and mentoring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Changing of focal points in government counterparts and partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coming back to business after a long vacation is terable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● education for sustainable development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Falta de conocimiento de terceros u a la vez creen que no sería necesario
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Few institutions/enterprises/decision-makers/experts contribute and facilitate sharing of good practices.

● Financial access
● finding buyers of the product
● For me about the job description in every profession
● For Thai MSMEs, it is required a number of knowledge and skills to confront the obstacles of doing business in the post Covid.
● Funding is the biggest challenge. I am unable to go as far as I wish to because even pitching a request for funding is time consuming with too many technical requirements.
● Get the community mindset on board
● Getting gadget to use especially on disabilities peoples
● Governments and professional colleagues are not interested.
● GREEN ECOMIE GREEN INDUSTRIAL PROCESS ...
● Healthy is our daily routine for every I our capacity-building
● If skill training will not be available.
● Information availability, financing models
● Insufficient guidance and strategic planning by senior management.
● It was a unique situation, people were in finding difficult to normal the new social behaviour as results of covid nigh
● It's still premature to outline any challenges.
● lack of funds to be able to reach out to all of the entrepreneurs.
● Lack of infrastructure & unskilled people merged to work with me slow down the job
● Limited country data availability to conduct analysis for effective policy decision-making process
● Limited resource envelope and lack of practical skills.
● Limited resource in undertaking effective surveys that will be used to guide a programme design
● Limited resources
● Limited resources and skills to implement strategies to the full capacity
● Logistics
● Los cambios bruscos que se tienen que efectuar para atender oportunamente este tipo de eventualidades de acuerdo con las necesidades de las empresas
● Los retos es cambiar la manera de hacer el trabajo aplicando los lineamientos de la niif para pymes
● Low competencies of SMMEs in adopting new technologies for attaining quick recovery from the effects of the Pandemic. Many SMMEs still look up to Government for support.
● Mainly the biggest challenge is the financial aspect of new startups.
● Master the tools
● N/A
● Need of repository of country-wise concessions or hand holding for MSMEs at one place
● No challenges
● No difficulties
● no problem
● Non
● None
● None so far.
● None.
● Not accessed
● not really
● Not yet

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● O maior desafio seria a criação de um ambiente colaborativo para a implementação de políticas públicas voltadas ao incentivo das exportações para micro e pequenas empresas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One challenge was to promptly adjust the lab equipment and train staff for testing medical facial masks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunity seeking and taking initiative, I have seen an opportunity I would have taken the initiative but financial challenge caused a set back.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Our governments intervention about policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● project didn't finish
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Que sea útil en la toma de decisiones.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resources to reach more traders on how they can do business the time of COVID -19.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Societies of womens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some business shuttered when the COVID hit the world.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Subsidies process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Technical and financial capacity limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Technical facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The biggest challenge was persuading respondents to provide factual data and answer the questionnaire.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The challenge is we raised high expectations from our member states to do activities together and with no funds for the continuation of the work, it is frustrating both ways.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The challenge was to classify critical raw materials in a uniform and recognizable way through the realization of the project and make an assessment regarding their availability and needs for the health sector, which was realized most often in conditions of insufficient available data.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The challenges are coordination and synergies amongst relevant agencies/entities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The cost of internet charges is currently high in my home country. high internet intermittent or rather bad internet signal.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The main challenge concerns the establishment of strong partnership for the funding to support the delivery of EMPRETEC programme in developing countries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The only challenge derives from the very specific focus of the work programme I coordinate, which doesn't necessarily allow for extensively addressing general and broad MSMEs challenges.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The only challenge is funds.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The policy recommendations were not costed that creates difficulty in promoting their implementation amongst UN agencies or other development partners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Their uselessness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Total y plenamente posible desde el ámbito académico estoy proponiendo temas que hacen a la necesidad de la potenciación de las pymes, desde sus digitalización, formalización y actualización en temas claves para fomentar la exportación. Y desde el ámbito de la consultoría y desde la cámara de empresarios de Ciudad del Este y Alto Paraná estamos promoviendo un Diplomado en Comercio Exterior dirigido a empresarios pymes y empresas familiares.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training Ministries, Agencies and Regulatory bodies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trasmitir adecuadamente los conceptos de sustentabilidad.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We have been able to apply the knowledge.

7. Please share examples, if any, of how the project included or supported women, youth, people with disabilities or other vulnerable groups.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accounting and budges

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All projects that will be implemented has to include Gender and Development (GAD) and must be inclusive.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All socially and economically advantaged groupings such as the women have encouraged to form cooperatives and access funds constituency development funds to alleviation and improve their welfare.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By spreading the information to people in need of it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CIRCULAR ECONOMIE OF RECYCLE WASTE SOLID
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community project on understanding the need for non pharmaceutical adherence practice., proper information about the viral nature, the strains ,transmission of covid and also fight disinformation due to lack of information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Como complemento a la mirada exportadora y desarrollo digital de las pymes, también impulsamos y socializamos los criterios de sostenibilidad con triple impacto: económico, social y ambiental, como política de las empresas privadas y dentro del mismo se enfatiza la oportunidad inclusiva para mujeres, jóvenes, y personas con discapacidad, u otros grupos vulnerables.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● conscientization in education for sustainable development (SDG5 , SDG10)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Differently able were able to seek required skills and seek for sustainable employment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Diversification of business opportunity innovations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Door to door activities, service was brough close to people and hence elder and disable women and girls and men were able to access it
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Empowerment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhanced business models and resilience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● gender equality in panel discussions inclusion of gender dimension in report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have no detailed information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Humanity and responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I don't know because I can see any positive update on us
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● lam vice chairperson and cofounder of Autism Rwanda so here I tried to educate women's and men's in this organization how to use devices for people with disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I'm looking forward to get disabled volunteers and include the in creating a clean society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In Benin the selection of the beneficiaries includes creterias which has eased the inclusion of women, youth and other vulnerable groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In rural surveys and surveys, more than 50% of the building materials trade is run by women
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It increased the level of knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It was important to invite women-in-bussness in our activities . A PhD student used our output to finalize a thesis of women in finance, in Moldova.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge and technical skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● La invitación fue generalizada, sin condicionar condiciones.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New tools to support to MSME owned by women
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No aplica
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No los hubo.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No tengo conocimiento cuantas mujeres incluyo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not in my cooperative sector
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● not really
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One of key targets of the project was to ensure at least 30% of women participation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Our testing lab for testing and certification of medical facial masks included female staff

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Over 50 per cent of participants in activities supported by this project are women
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personally as a woman, I was really empowered, I saw myself as a redefined entrepreneur, I had become more efficient in my work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Por la pandemia y la falta de movilización libre, propicio innovar estos medios de divulgación que facilitó la divulgación de este tipo de información
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Priority will be given to support first and the level of support will be higher than that of a regular business
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project participants got starter packs and were able to uplift their livelihoods.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project supported women, youth and vulnerable families by promoting EE/RES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proyectos privados con PERU LNG en Peru se viene ejecutando productos productivos y con nuevas propuestas para mejorar la comercialización y articulación
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research on women's entrepreneurship enabled policymakers and ministerial staff in Member States to have a better understanding of how support given to women in business pays off.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Still doing researches on that
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The innovative aspects of doing things was the best part of the training, with Data your market will sell.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the necessary trainings given to them are useful to them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project conducted various capacity and skills training activities were beneficiaries mainly targeted women, youth and vulnerable groups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project had a gender component.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project included an analysis of women's participation in "Small and Medium Enterprises" projects, which were represented both in the field of critical raw materials and the supply chain during Covid-19, and which are expected in the post-Covid -19 period. This analysis was evaluated very positively.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project included and looked at those target groups and can be a starting point for some more detailed activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the project produced analytical piece on the impact of Covid-19 on trade and business development prospects of women-led companies which fed into subsequent policy action adopted by the Government in relation to childcare as a part of women empowerment and employability.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project was supported for the women and youth through capacity-building training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project would also cover on areas of " COVID-19 Seed recovery for women and Youth"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The said group had been able to get access to entrepreneurship training and access to credit facility.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The survey sampled enterprises from women, youth and PWDs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There was a deliberate effort to include women and youth among the participants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There were Covid Relief funds disbursed to women and youth MSMEs to cushion them during the crisis. In Kenya for example the group WomenWork in partnership with Kenya Chamber of Commerce and 4G capital ensured we got the funds directly to our phones through mobile money.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There were specific trainings targeting women entrepreneurs of developing countries in East Africa, which understood that these MSMEs also needed to shift from informal trading to formal businesses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● these people are highlighted in the recommendations made but the implementation is up to the government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Through knowledge sharing seminars and workshops
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training of women entrepreneurs in Malaysia/ Empretec training in the context of Cross-border trade activities/Training on Farming as business/E-Regulation platforms allowing for formalisation of informal sector.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Upskilling of youth and women businesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use of sign language

- We do have a success story from a woman from Zimbabwe who participated in the online course: see her story. link here. <https://unctad.org/news/how-make-small-businesses-developing-countries-more-competitive>
- we have not any special project
- While my farming project supports mostly women and youth, the new initiative is more popular among men.
- Women Empowerment
- Women, youth, people with disabilities are we support them

Results of the project

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Outcome 1A	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know	Total
The project contributed to formulating and implement enabling policies on green, resilient and inclusive entrepreneurship for MSME promotion in post COVID-19 resurgence	32%	39%	15%	10%	2%	0%	2%	41

Outcome 1B	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know	Total
The project activities contributed to expanding my business venture or to starting a new business	15%	42%	18%	0%	12%	0%	12%	33
The project supported my business by increasing sales	15%	27%	24%	3%	12%	3%	15%	33
The project activities contributed to the creation of new jobs	18%	39%	21%	3%	12%	0%	6%	33

Outcome 2	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know	Total
The project contributed to facilitating MSME registration and formalization	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3
The project activities contributed to decreasing the administrative costs of starting a business	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2
The project contributed to increasing the number of businesses registering	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2

Outcome 3	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know	Total
The project contributed to improving financial inclusion and MSMEs access to finance	11%	44%	33%	11%	0%	0%	0%	9

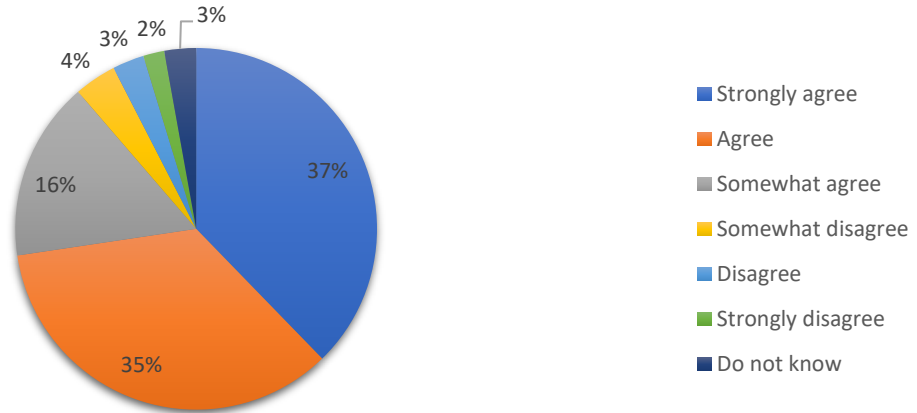
Outcome 4	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know	Total
The project activities contributed to increasing MSMEs access to innovation and technology	27%	45%	27%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11

Outcome 5	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know	Total
The project contributed to new/improved measures on consumer protection and competition	11%	33%	56%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9
The project contributed towards new/improved measures on agricultural quality and food loss reduction	13%	25%	50%	0%	0%	0%	13%	8
The project contributed to increase MSMEs access to markets, including export and integration into value chains	13%	63%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8

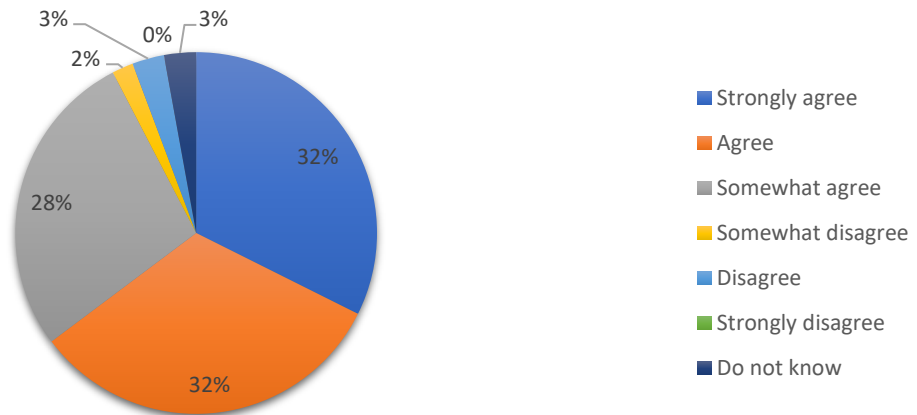
8-B. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know	Total
The project contributed to improving the resilience and competitiveness of MSMEs in post-COVID-19 resurgence	38%	35%	16%	4%	3%	2%	3%	106
The project contributed to better outcomes for women and youth entrepreneurs and other vulnerable and marginalized groups	32%	32%	28%	2%	3%	0%	3%	105

The project contributed to improve the resilience and competitiveness of MSMEs in post COVID-19 resurgence



The project contributed to better outcomes for women and youth entrepreneurs and other vulnerable and marginalized groups



9. Please share any examples of how the project has contributed to the resurgence of MSMEs, policy or economic improvements, or advancing sustainable development in your country.

- A través del sistema de registro, importante para conocer cómo se desarrollan económicamente las empresas.
- Access to finance and creation of programs so that MSMEs pivoted to continue with their operations.
- After that , Most policies at work has aspects protection and awareness
- As always in Armenia nothing ever helps.
- By applying the knowledge acquired

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By developing good guidelines for MSMEs to assure resilience and progress towards a circular economy in sustainable resources management and critical raw material supply chain solutions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By touching the concern people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● City of Harare developed a MSMEs policy which now recognize the importance of informal sector and has included use of technology as one of the building blocks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Con éste tipo de proyectos apoyados por la ONU, desarrollados por especialistas son de mucha ayuda para los que quieren y estén interesados para aplicarlos en beneficio de las actividades económicas de mi país
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● conscientization in education sustainable development in companies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Diversification of business opportunity innovations especially into Renewable energy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Economic improvements through Income generating activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● El proyecto desde mi percepción, lo que ha logrado es aportar herramientas de singular importancia para el fortalecimiento de las empresas que han sobrevivido a la pandemia, a entender mejor los dolores del mercado, y las oportunidades y barreras para la exportación.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Empowerment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● En mi trabajo no tengo acceso para poder dar un ejemplo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GREEN JOBS. GREEN TECHNOLOGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I don't know
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I joined the project as a freelance development practitioner, and was not commissioned by my government. I don't think any representative from my country joined the project. However, I do engage in multi stakeholder forums, workshops and conferences where I make a point of raising issues of SMME resilience for inclusive development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In my country, I see a lot of businesses are moving into trading online, thus increasing their market.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● influenced Thai SME policy and national strategic plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● it contributed with easier access to supporting mechanisms, as well as tailored guidelines by country for the MSMEs in order to overcome all challenges from the new environment caused by the pandemic.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It's really improved the small through new methods of engagement using available technology and innovations to drive market ...also in the areas of supply chain innovation to deliver goods and services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● logistic service is more developed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maybe for those who are already in business
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● mejorar los ingresos economicos de las familias, contar con capital, mejorar los costos de produccion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More recently in my country Kenya, various funding opportunities are now available to MSMEs through the convenience of mobile phone. This includes the Women Enterprise Fund, the Hustler Fund, and Group loans. Grant Managers such as the KCIC Group have ensured sustainable development in our country by promoting and funding sustainable projects throughout the country.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MSME is going to be back bone for developing economies. Focus on policies to encourage them especially guide them to explore eCommerce advantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MSMEs started using e-commerce and this lead the development of digitalization and consequently facilitate business operations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Muchos mipymes se reinventarse y a la vez entendieron la importancia de que hay que estar preparados ante cualquier eventualidad, no sobrevive el más sabio u cauteloso, sino quien tenga una idea innovadora , la desarrolle y sepa como llegar al consumidor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● My appreciation of MSME challenges in markets contributed to effective enforcement. We were able to progress complaints faster and also require large buyers to review oppressive contracts to support sustainability of their MSME suppliers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● N/A

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • na
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New skills were mastered in the conditions of the pandemic, and certain types of risks of natural disasters and pandemics began to be considered in a valid way, which also influenced the introduction of new jobs for developing and solving this problem.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not reached affected communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not yet
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only in cases the entity has the obligation to prepare financial statements to access to loan in a local bank.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our government poor credit methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • our project was a good example for resurgence MSME, after that, we will prepare for the future the sustainable strategy for vulnerable groups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project allowed for distribution of fiscal incentives through e-Regulation platform El Salvador. EPF strategies developed for beneficiary countries and recommendations on implementations included measures specifically oriented towards MSME resurgence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting olive biomass pomace for heating and hot water energy demand
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revamping the Waste management system through collaboration with government in the sanitation of the environment in Calabar, Nigeria.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Se logro la reorientación operativa de PYME al establecer políticas de contratación de personal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several online events were organized to share success stories of Empretec participants during COVID 19 restrictions which raised awareness of others on business opportunities during the pandemic.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sharing knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • so far there is no significant contribution however sensitization to the communities and to companies that have great impact on the green technology were the targets for training how they can contribute towards the climate emission
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some traders they have knowledge on how to control resources for business and looking ways on how to find start-up Capital
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still doing research on that
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • successful project to put up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The country shifted from somewhat backward thinking and started to focus on ideas that will positively impact the society more especially in the rural areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus of the project was to support MSMEs to overcome the constraints enhanced by the pandemic, so enhancing resilience in a sustainable manner was a constant goal.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Agriculture is coordinating National strategies meant to empower farmers towards sustainable production and sustainable Value Chain Development. Women, Youth and People with disability are being supported to ensure NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The outcomes of the conducted studies helped to develop policy recommendations provided to the government in support of economic improvements and advancing sustainable development of the country.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The partnership involved the Microsoft Small Enterprise Authority of Kenya and hence got practical feedback from the study
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project enabled better access to information and contributed to the increase in the number of MSMEs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project had a positive impact on MSMEs, there were a lot of job creations reported.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has trained entrepreneurs to be more efficient and confident in their work thereby contributing to economic development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project jobs The project activities contributed to the creation of new jobs Strongly agree The project activities contributed to the creation of new jobs Agree The project activities contributed to

<p>the creation of new jobs Somewhat agree The project activities contributed to the creation of new jobs Somewhat disagree The project activities contributed to the creation of new jobs Disagree The project activities contributed to the creation of new jobs Strongly disagree The project activities contributed to the creation of new jobs also the project contributed to improve the resilience and competitiveness of MSMEs in post COVID-19 resurgence here in Rwanda</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project revealed challenges faced by women-led MSMEs which subsequently were complemented by development of gender-based assessment jointly with the WBG. Furthermore, challenges faced by women in terms of access to ECD facilities (which became more acute during the pandemic lockdown) were addressed by the GoM policy on regulating the ECD facilities in private sector that contribute to women's economic empowerment and employability through regulation of establishment of creches and kindergartens under private companies employing young women with children, as well as facilitating expansion of private and public ECD facilities as one of the measures supportive of women labour participation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project strengthens youth and women's employment opportunities, therefore, improving economic and community development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project supported a Policy Implementation Forum: Supporting Micro Small and Medium Size Enterprises (MSMEs) in the Post COVID-19 Pandemic Era - Promoting MSME Formalization This event was jointly organised by DSDG/DESA and the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (MoTIE) of The Gambia and the UNDP. It brought together high-level policymakers and development partners to review challenges and identify solutions supporting the growth of the MSME sector in The Gambia in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era, taking into account opportunities offered by the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The results were widely distributed to National stakeholders, some concrete actions were implemented by ODIMM Moldova by launching new support schemes for MSME..
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SDG's are simply seen as fancy paperwork that yields funds, without any concrete plans on how to implement them.... Nigeria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The training opened the eyes of the participants to the potential of MSMEs especially through leveraging ICTs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is a lot of development in my country as many businesses were in the verge of closing up during covid but thanks to the project, they survived.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through this project the government of the Republic of Zambia under the ministry of small and medium enterprises has greatly improved women participation in business activities through various cooperatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to support women with disabilities, students are mobilizing with companies and individuals to collect small equipment such as a sewing machine, knitting needles and balls of wool, raffia etc so that these women can start producing and selling fashion or decorative clothing and accessories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • we establish comprehensive business policies that prioritize women-owned businesses, female-intensive businesses and social enterprises
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Womens inclusive in polca, and government

Looking forward

10. Are there other ways in which you think the UN could support the MSMEs sector in your country?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a startup business in agricultural exports.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical training and accelerator programme would be good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. conducting relevant trainings on the implementation of MSME sector in the country. 2. development and sending of press releases on the report to government agencies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to finance for MSME, increase to financing resource

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to finance that may serve as post-training support for MSMEs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● be closer to local reality beyond best practices because there is no one best way but all depends
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building the capability of BSOs, especially where the function of trade has devolved to regions, provinces and even lower forums. The Federal bodies in Pakistan are no longer representative of the MSMEs, especially no support for sectoral specialization.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By establishing a zero-rated network programme that connects entrepreneurs with their immediate market/community, linked to other up to the international community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By Funding Start up organizations and continue to provide classes for quality results.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By provide some seed money
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By providing various training on how to manage businesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By sending technological tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By sharing knowledge and capacity development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaborate with national governments to promote the implementation of best practices, in particular, to disseminate best practices in the development of the MSME sector.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conducting specific trainings in the field of financing and access to the market
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Considero que si dándole seguimiento con mas capacitaciones para ampliar esos criterios
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue supporting and mentoring MSMEs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Design and develop policies for businesses in specific industries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Developing BDS services/Facilitating business through e-tools/allowing for smooth implementation of new sustainability reporting standards introduced by ISSB.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Direct engagement with private sector and capacity-building of private in promoting good governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ejemplificando mas la información tomando como base la actividad económica para que sea comparable la información y poder medir el impacto en nuestro pais
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enlightenment and also empowerment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grassroots propagation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ground -top approach which will break and limits the barriers of state bureaucracy and other means of engaging the people ..who will be directly affected
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I don't know.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I hope to continue the indicative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● implementation of pilot projects with training and financial support for rural businesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In addition to training, the project could invite MSMEs to submit proposals for financial support so that there is a more practical element to the training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In collaboration with UNCT to develop an agile policy paper that would highlight short- and long term measures necessary to stimulate economic growth (and improvement of livelihoods) amidst regional war-related crises and trade disruptions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In Moldova, a majority of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) owned and led by women operate without access to resources and benefits. Assistance could be provided to the ministries and, agencies and to the Secretariat of the Prime Minister on the development of policies and initiatives in support of entrepreneurship, especially for women, youth, and the elderly, of digital finance solutions, transition to sustainable trade and a circular economy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase support to improve the business environment as well as to reduce the cost of doing business, including: A. Access to finance/capital/credit B. Support the establishment of the Single Window Business Registration (e-services) for countrywide coverage C. Improve the quality of infrastructure for product development and trade D. Support the development and improvement of business environment-related infrastructures etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Information Dissemination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● more financing for the conscientization in the education for sustainable development

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More funding opportunities are required to meet the demand especially with the economic crises being witnessed. Do not tire in doing good.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More targeted activities or studies, specified to certain issues/challenges on MSMEs will be helpful.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSMEs need continuous training to enhance their knowledge and skills and to face new challenges: there should be annual courses on a wide range of issues for their update.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n/a
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • na
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New webinars or courses about the key issues for MSME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not specific to UN, but the MSMEs in my country are one sector that needs support in many areas. For example, in my view, they need support on energy planning and management - eg more awareness to energy audits, awareness of the possibilities to improve, utilisation of RES, how the energy influence the price of their service/product etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Funding for the ongoing UNDP Supplier Development Programme in Botswana. More MSMEs to be capacitated to be part of the Government and Private sector Supply Chain.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide direct capacity-building support to MSME entrepreneurs, with priorities given to women, youth and groups in vulnerable situations; focusing more on the effective implementation of MSME supporting policies in line with demands of MSME entrepreneurs, instead of supporting the formulation of policies themselves
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support in developing MSME friendly policies, complement government resources through financial and technical support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicizing the work of our entrepreneurs internationally
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purchasing women innovations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si por supuesto. Es una figura de autoridad y relevancia, por lo que genera interés en participar.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si, compartiendo información de PYMES que requieran asesorías, en caso de contar con alguna estadística relacionada.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • si, con apoyo de ONG, instituciones privadas y otros
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sim.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • soft loans and more accessible training publicity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support in establishing technology and innovation hubs, centers, and incubations for youth, women and disabled persons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UN would support the women and youth on Start-up capital, cross border traders lost thier capitals during the COVID-19 because of movement restriction and there was no business at all.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a little support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through capacity-building
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through capacity-building and mentoring projects.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through direct training of personnel on concrete examples, but including personnel in government sectors where, in accordance with procedures, the relevant issues are dealt with and where there are "fully trained and qualified professional workforce", in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their work and fully realize the principles of sustainable development in the shortest period.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through organised registered cooperatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To open more international trading opportunities (business linkages)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide grants and access to credit facility. To provide vocational training and value chain training.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support the underserved people MSMEs and marginalized communities' economic growth, the UN should collaborate with grassroots NGOs that promote employment and community development. The local NGOs are closer to the people and understand their challenges.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Totalmente, a más de los programas que ya tienen desarrollado para aplicar, considero que la vía de llamados a proyectos de co creación, con amplia participación de los actores de cada región del

<p>pais, es de fundamental importancia. Pues solo con el involucramiento participativo de los actores de cada región geográfica es posible generar confianza, luego adherencia al proyecto y finalmente sentirse orgullosos de los logros del trabajo en equipo, participativo, que no solo busca el resurgimiento de las pymes, sino que además siembre la cultura de sostenibilidad en línea con los ODS, y la cultura de la legalidad mitigando los casos de corrupción e impunidad, a través de las buenas prácticas empresariales y personales como ciudadanos. Me suscribo para emprender y caminar este sendero de la mano de ustedes. Considero que el llamado a presentar proyectos de creación es el camino correcto e infalible.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UN can do more on business development services, including as a follow and complementary to behavioural methodology of the Empretec programme. More efforts could be done to bring together and coordinate MSME related policies and activities of different agencies at a national level.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UN should develop core team to discuss with developing economies countries the best practices across globe for MS ME and help them to have online real time repository of MSMES, their issues and resolution mechanisms. UN can support this activity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● work more with chambers of commerce
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● yeah UN should allow local national and INGO to acquire small funding instead and support accept taking risk organization if the country wants move together localization agenda.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes This is because the COVID-19 affected a lot of MSMES especially we at the northern part of Ghana
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes by presenting international benchmarks for EE/RES through workshops and supporting countries for secondary legislation for EE/RES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes keep training members of MSMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● yes there are many 1.funding 2.couching after trainings will be useful. 3.capacity-building 4. study tours to learn from other countries.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes through the trainings and expertise availability for the better and proper enforcement and participation of the policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes through training in entrepreneurship.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, because most of us were train without finding so we plead that next time small Grant be given for a start up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, in the universities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, Kenya. A review to establish how public policy and competition policies support or create challenges to MSME competitiveness and sustainability.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, most beneficial of this coordinators don't lodge the beneficiary account. I am on opinion that individual account should be credited direct. Because I didn't benefit from the programme too
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, pick up from the recommendations of the project and and start engagements with stakeholders that promote and develop the MSE sector such as the Micro and Small Enterprise Authority in Kenya
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, targeted resources for capacity-building and training on how such models as cooperatives can be suitable vehicles for formalization.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes. Huge amount of options. Starting with eliminating useless jobs that we have in local UN. Some projects has admin costs that never have given any result.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes. It's necessary to give stability to the incubators. And may be that UN can promote and support that initiative face the government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes. Using technologies requires not only capacity. Resources are needed to purchase the necessary gadgets. On top of this, piloting a project in the country can increase replication potential if results are positive. Learnings and practice can help shape policy at national level. If UN can fund a pilot project where learnings are generated, that is ideal in Zimbabwe.

Final questions

11. In what type of organization do you work?

Type of organisation	Total
Government	28
Micro, Small or Medium Enterprise (MSME)	17
Other private sector, Business or industry association, Commercial Registry Office	20
Other (please specify)	43

Other (please specify)

- Academe
- Academe
- Academic
- Association
- CAD Internazionale
- Centro de Estudios Tecnología e Investigación: Es una consultora privada pero vinculada a temas de investigación con la Universidad Católica
- Consulting Company
- CONTADOR PUBLICO INDEPENDIENTE
- Cooperative Development
- Cooperatives
- EMPRETEC CENTRE
- Farmer
- Former civil servant of the Ministry and now retired and independent consultant in the Mining sector
- Former Head of Branch at UNCTAD responsible for this project until 1 May 2021
- H
- Have worked in sector now advisory role
- I am a Business Advisor
- Independent business development consultant
- INGO
- International NGO working in Sustainable Development
- International Organisation
- International organisation
- International Organization
- International Organization
- International organization
- ITC
- NGO
- NGO /Expert
- None
- Nongovernmental Organization
- Public University
- Research institution
- SOCIOLOGIST in OR at FRANCE

- Think tank
- UN
- Un
- UN
- UN
- UN agencies
- UNDP
- United Nations
- United Nations entities
- University

12. What country do you represent?

Country	Total
Albania	2
Armenia	3
Bangladesh	1
Bhutan	1
Botswana	1
Brazil	2
Burkina Faso	1
Cameroon	1
Colombia	1
Dominican Republic	1
El Salvador	2
Ethiopia	2
France	1
Gambia	3
Germany	1
Ghana	1
Guatemala	2
Honduras	1
India	2
Indonesia	1
Italy	1
Kenya	7
Kyrgyzstan	1
Lesotho	3
Macedonia	2
Madagascar	2
Malawi	1
Mexico	2
Moldova	3
Mongolia	1

Namibia	1
Nigeria	10
Pakistan	1
Paraguay	1
Peru	2
Philippines	5
Rwanda	2
Senegal	1
Serbia	2
Somalia	1
South Africa	3
South Sudan	1
Swaziland	1
Sweden	1
Tajikistan	1
Thailand	3
Togo	1
Uruguay	1
USA	2
Venezuela	1
Vietnam	1
Zambia	3
Zimbabwe	3
Total	101

13. What is your gender?

Gender	Total
Female	42
Male	62
Other/Prefer not to say	1
Total	105

14. Do you identify as part of any of the following groups?

Type of vulnerable group	Total
Youth	30
Indigenous	17
LGBTQ+	0
Person with disabilities	2
Survivor of violence (domestic, gender-based, other)	2
Other vulnerable group (please specify)	24

Other vulnerable group (please specify)

- Above youth 1
- Academic 1
- Adilts 1
- Adulto mayor 1
- Adulto maytor 1
- Cross Border Traders 1
- Estado con alto índice de marginalidad económica y tecnológica. Oaxaca, México. 1
- Executive 1
- Grassroots women 1
- N/A 1
- NA 1
- No 4
- Non of the above 1
- None 2
- Pashtun Ethnic Minority 1
- People living with facial palsy 1
- Previously disadvantaged individual 1
- SIMPLE CITIZEN 1
- Single Mother 1
- Smallholder farmer 1

15. Are there any final comments that you would like to share about the project to help inform this evaluation?

● A well curated and well executed project. We hope to have more opportunities like this.
● Agradecer al proyecto por habernos incluido
● Any
● Continue the good work.
● Does it matter? Have you ever considered anything said? Nope? What a surprise.
● en Uruguay para acceder a financiamientos se requiere información contable de acuerdo a NIC. La iniciativa es muy buena para que el microempresario cuantifique resultados u ordene sus finanzas internamente , pero a nivel país debe regirse por régimen reglamentado gracias por la generosa oportunidad que me brindaron y el excelente trabajo desarrollado
● Great programme it was
● I am hosting regular talks and training workshops and would be delighted to have a speaker from your office, and hopefully even a collaboration
● I enjoyed managing the project.
● I really need a financial support to support my MSMEs in the northern part of Ghana. Majority of their businesses have collapsed and it is making cost of living very difficult.
● I think everything is good
● In my opinion, in the implementation of UN projects, the majority of experts who could be engaged or active are not too interested in directly participating (lack of general knowledge, language, personal - direct engagement, somewhat weaker departmental communication in the state and private sector, etc.), which ultimately (in my opinion) affects the level of quality and the final design of the project.
● Is a good information for me

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It would be helpful for us if we are able to make partnership with UN Women or any UN agency.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keeping in touch with MSMEs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Let's the poor BREATHE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Many thanks and keep up the good work....while improving lives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Many thanks for supporting for this work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Me encantó la experiencia.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Me ha gustado la capacitación, tal vez en otras similares se podría trabajar también con espacios de ILab, aplicando Productos Mínimos Viables, a través de interacciones de los participantes de diferentes países. Otra sugerencia es que puedan dar espacios para fortalecer los temas aprendidos en los 3 cursos con becas de CEPAL, generando llamados a proyectos de co creación en donde los participantes de los cursos puedan conseguir mayor permeabilidad respecto a los temas aprendidos, y así generar la sinergia necesaria con recursos y presencia de marca de ustedes. Todo lo aprendido puede complementarse con el uso de herramientas AGILE, y aplicando tecnologías de bajo costo y alto impacto para permear en forma sinérgica al campo o regiones de toda la riqueza aprendida en los 3 cursos.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● more successes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More training The evaluation should not take a longtime to come evaluators to avoid the risk of forgetting the content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not really
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not sure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personalmente agradezco por tomarme en cuenta para esta encuesta
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● possibility of collaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share the project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the training, and for the follow up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thanks for considering sharing the survey to get my feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thanks for the opportunity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thanks for the survey.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thanks for this program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● That all
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project and upcoming successors should be of long-term with possible long-term financing to support infrastructure development, Capital funding support and long-term Capacity-building activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the project helped to reveal real problems for small businesses and develop recommendations for overcoming them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project was a great opportunity to promote and support the MSME sector and Empretec network during COVID 19. Wish there were more projects like this one.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project was pro-poor and appropriate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project would also cover on areas of sustainability, institutional support for continuity of the project, supporting material and equipment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The projection should initiate inclusive capacity-building's courses / sessions within regions and/or grassroot communities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The UN should incorporate NGOs into the project for fruitful outcomes.

● There are lots of information to share with you but it is confidential, that is one on one.
● This is a wonderful initiative, please continue with it as it sparks the slumbering creativity to some of us. Also, it shaping the communities to be better
● This project should deal with the individual groups not there heads by so doing you are dealing with this group of people directly
● Those trainings should be conducted in-person or hybrid inorder to make them more interactive, focused and effective
● training of smses
● Unicamente agradecer el apoyo que brindan

Annex 7: Evaluation Terms of Reference

Evaluation of the United Nations Development Account 12th tranche “Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 resurgence of the MSME sector” (2023W)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

A. BACKGROUND

A1. ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT

The Development Account (DA) is a mechanism to fund capacity development projects of the 10 economic and social entities of the United Nations Secretariat, namely: the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Environment Project (UNEP), the United Nations Human Settlements Project (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The DA provides capacity development support to developing countries in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as recommendations and decisions made in intergovernmental processes and relevant governing bodies. The DA-funded projects build on the mandates, individual technical capacities and comparative advantages of the respective implementing entities, while providing those mostly non-resident entities with the ability to operationalize their knowledge and know-how to deliver capacity development support at regional, sub-regional and country levels.

The Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Economic and Social Affairs is designated as the Project Manager of the Development Account with responsibility for overall coordination, programming, monitoring and evaluation, as well as for reporting to the intergovernmental bodies. The Project Manager is supported by the DA Steering Committee, who advises him/her on strategic policy and project-support matters.¹⁶⁶ The Project Manager is also supported by the DA Project Management Team (DA-PMT) located within the Capacity Development Programme Management Office (CDPMO) of DESA, which assists with all aspects of the management of the DA, in particular with regard to programming, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. DA-PMT also liaises with the DA Focal Points in the implementing entities, who are most often the head of the entity’s unit responsible for project planning, project management, capacity development or technical cooperation, on all aspects of the management of DA-funded projects.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Development Account has funded five short-term joint projects to help developing countries alleviate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, including the project on Global initiative towards post-COVID-19 resurgence of the MSME sector (2023W).

A2. ABOUT THE PROJECT

¹⁶⁶ The DA Steering Committee is composed of five members with one member representing each of the following implementing entities and key stakeholders: 1. DESA; 2. the regional commissions; 3. UNCTAD; 4. UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNODC (on a rotational basis); and 5. the Programme Planning and Budget Division (PPBD) of the Office of Programme Planning, Finance and Budget of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance.

The COVID-19 crisis is plunging the global economy into a deep recession and micro, small and medium enterprises – which play a major role in emerging economies – are amongst the hardest hit. Trapped in economic stagnation due to large-scale lockdowns, millions of MSMEs have become the most vulnerable to COVID-19 within the private sector. Compared with large firms, small businesses have fewer resources and lower capacities to cope with the abrupt economic shocks economies are currently facing. With more than two-thirds of the global population employed by MSMEs, the unprecedented outbreak of the pandemic has vividly shown how tightly their activities are woven into the economic and social fabric of the world, as well as their critical role in social and economic resurgence.

The objective of the project is to develop and implement capacity-building tools for governments and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to facilitate the resurgence and strengthen the resilience of MSMEs in developing countries and economies in transition. These capacity-building tools will seek to mitigate the economic and social impact of the global COVID-19 crisis and to facilitate the contribution of MSMEs to the SDGs implementation.

The project was designed based on the request for assistance for MSMEs from more than 50 Member States, including countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Europe and the Arab regions, as well as intergovernmental demands and resolutions on COVID-19.

The project is jointly implemented by UNCTAD, DESA, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA, and builds upon the comparative advantages of the participating agencies to provide immediate advice, capacity-building and support to governments and MSMEs during the ongoing global pandemic. The project is structured in five clusters that address the most critical areas of the MSME recovery. Broadly, the roles and lead entities for each of the clusters and workstreams are as presented in the following table:

Table 1. Project clusters and leads

Project cluster/workstream	Lead agency
Overall coordination	UNCTAD
Project cluster/workstream 1 Entrepreneurship and business skills promotion	UNCTAD
Project cluster/workstream 2 Business facilitation/formalization	UNCTAD/DESA
Project cluster/workstream 3 Access to finance/financial literacy	ESCAP
Project cluster/workstream 4 Access to technology and innovation	UNECA
Project cluster/workstream 5 Access to markets	UNECE

The beneficiary countries cover different geographical regions, as shown in Annex 2. The expected outcomes, indicators of achievement, and outputs are presented in the project results framework (Annex 3). The project was developed and implemented under three phases. A new set of outputs was designed or added at each of the three phases of the project.

Under the three-phase approach, the project budget was approved by phase. In 2021, when the phase 3 budget was discussed, the Development Account faced a funding gap. To bridge the gap, in November of the same year, the five joint projects were requested to reduce their proposed phase 3 budget by 1 million USD, which led to the curtailment of certain planned activities. For this project, the budget was reduced by \$310,000.

Overall, a total of \$4,490,500 was allocated under this project. Concretely, UNCTAD received \$2,671,000, ECLAC received \$134,000, ESCAP received \$240,000, ECA received \$467,000, ECE received \$448,500, ESCWA received \$370,000 and DESA received \$160,000.

The project started its implementation in May 2020 and was scheduled to conclude on 31 March 2022, but received approval in February 2022 for an extension until 30 June 2022.

B. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

B1. EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The present evaluation will constitute a terminal evaluation of the Project. Terminal evaluations are mandatory for all DA-funded projects with a value above \$1 million. The evaluation will be largely guided by the UN Development Account Project Evaluation Guidelines, issued in October 2019 and the evaluation policies of the implementing entities, in particular, UNCTAD, which leads the evaluation.

The main purpose of the evaluation will be to support accountability for results, and to enable learning.

This terminal evaluation of the project has the following specific objectives:

- Assess the results and establish the link between achievements and activities of the intervention;
- Assess the response delivery and external coordination¹⁶⁷, including the extent of gender, human rights and disability mainstreaming; and
- Identify good practices and lessons learned from the project that could feed into and enhance the implementation of related interventions.

The primary intended users of the assessment are the management of the implementing entities. The evaluation will also provide accountability to project beneficiaries and member States. Furthermore, the evaluation will form a key input to the programme-level evaluation of the DA's response to COVID-19 to be initiated by the CDPMO/DESA. The programme-level evaluation will entail: a synthesis of the terminal evaluations of five COVID-19 joint DA projects, including this project; a review of relevant 10th and 11th tranche DA projects; and a programme-level assessment. The primary audiences of the programme-level evaluation will include the DA Steering Committee, the DA-Programme Management Team (DA-PMT), and the management of the implementing entities. The results of the programme-level evaluation will also be presented to the General Assembly, through the biennial progress report on the implementation of the DA.

The evaluation will cover the duration of the project from May 2020 to 30 June 2022, covering all phases, clusters and activities.

B2. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

The evaluation will assess the Project's performance against the main criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence, sustainability, gender, human rights and disability. In particular, the evaluation is expected to address a number of questions under the following criteria¹⁶⁸:

Table 2: Evaluation criteria and tentative questions

¹⁶⁷ The OIOS COVID-19 response evaluation protocol identifies the following three cross-cutting focus areas: 1) response delivery; 2) external coordination (or "Delivering as one"); and 3) business continuity. "Response delivery" is further defined as consisting of delivery of: 1) the existing mandate needed to implement previously mandated activities in the new environment created by the pandemic; and 2) the COVID-19-specific response (health and non-health) needed to address the pandemic specifically. See OIOS (October 2020), "COVID-19 Response Evaluation Protocol", para 3-4.

¹⁶⁸ The evaluation questions were developed as part of the "Proposed approach, scope and questions to the Evaluation of the United Nations Development Account's Response to COVID-19", which was jointly developed by the DA-PMT and select implementing entities in the spring of 2020. The document is designed to guide both the terminal evaluations of the five COVID-19 joint projects and the programme-level evaluation of the DA's response to COVID-19, and is expected to be updated later in 2022 to reflect the confirmed approaches and timelines for the terminal evaluations of the five projects.

Relevance	1. To what extent was the project designed to target the new needs and priorities of participating countries as a result of COVID-19?
Relevance	2. To what extent was the project aligned with the COVID-19 socio-economic responses of the participating countries (e.g. COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan)?
Efficiency	3. How well coordinated was the response among the entities implementing the joint project?
Efficiency	4. How did the three-phase budgeting and programming approaches impact the efficient delivery of the project?
Effectiveness	5. To what extent did the programme (Development Account) and project governance and management structures and processes enabled, or hindered, the effective implementation of the joint project and the achievement of its results?
Effectiveness	6. To what extent has the project contributed to the expected outcomes as enunciated in the project document?
Effectiveness	7. How did the response contribute to the participating country Governments' responses to COVID-19, especially in the area of MSME resurgence?
Effectiveness	8. What innovative approach or tool, if any, did the response use, and what were the outcomes and lessons learned from its application?
Sustainability	9. What measures were adopted to ensure that the outcomes of the response would continue after the project ended?
Coherence	10. To what extent was the project complementary to, and coordinated with, other work undertaken by the implementing entities?
Coherence	11. To what extent has the project been coordinated with, and complementary to, the response of other UN entities (Secretariat and non-Secretariat) to COVID-19 in delivering socio-economic support to Member States?
Gender, human rights and disability	12. To what extent were gender, human rights and disability perspectives integrated into the design and implementation of the project? What results can be identified from these actions?

C. EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation will be a transparent and participatory process involving the Project's implementing entities and key stakeholders. It will be conducted based on gender and human rights principles and adhere to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation.

The evaluation will apply a mixed-method design, including a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis to inform findings. It is anticipated that travel of the evaluation team may take place in support of elaborating case study/ies, as well as to meet key project stakeholders in Geneva (UNCTAD and ECE). The selection of potential case study/ies and travel requirements will be developed as part of the inception report.

Following a preliminary documentation review and a limited number of inception meetings with the core project team, the Evaluation Team will develop an inception report for the evaluation, which will include the finalized overall scope and focus of the evaluation, evaluation questions and methodology, including

information on data sources and collection, sampling, key indicators, stakeholder mapping, selection of case study/ies, survey design, and the evaluation timeline.

The tentative methodology for the evaluation is presented in Table 4.

Table 3: Tentative methodology for the assessment

<p>a) A desk review of Project documents, including documents/data related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project-level planning, implementation and results achievement, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concept note, Phase 2 project proposal, and Phase 3 budget and outputs ▪ Progress report for Phases 1 and 2 (both financial and substantive/narrative report) ▪ Final report (both financial and substantive/narrative report) ▪ Meeting minutes, including the minutes of the bi-weekly/monthly DA network meetings ▪ Monitoring reports ▪ Information on non-DA resources, financial and in-kind, brought in by the participating entities ▪ Information on resources, financial and in-kind, contributed by partners/donors (including information requested under the “supplementary funding” section in the progress reports, which is often incomplete) ▪ Beneficiary/user feedback collected, including, but not limited to, workshop survey results, user feedback on publications, advisory services, guidelines, methodology documents, etc. ▪ Requests for assistance/services received ▪ List of activities completed and details about each activity, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agenda, participant lists (name, title, division/unit, organization, country, gender, email address), report and any outcomes document, for each workshop/meeting - Description of each advisory service, beneficiaries (including contact details of the contact persons) and any outputs/deliverables produced - List and description of tool(s), research papers, policy briefs, studies published and information on how each product was disseminated and/or used, list of recipients/users of the product (e.g., dissemination lists) ▪ Documentation related to broader projects or sub-projects of the participating entities of which the Project or its component(s) has constituted an integral part or which are linked to and/or build upon/succeed the work undertaken as part of the Project ▪ Documents and literature related to the Project context ▪ Relevant web and social media metrics related to the outputs of the project; ○ Project strategic documents, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General Assembly's Resolution on Global Solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) (A/RES/74/270); ▪ Secretary General's report on "Shared responsibility, global solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19"; ▪ UN Framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19; ▪ 2021 Programme budget and mandate of implementing entities; ▪ COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan of participating countries.
<p>b) Questionnaires/surveys (in appropriate languages in addition to English) to relevant stakeholders in countries participating in a sample of project activities;</p>
<p>c) Telephone, online or in-person interviews with key stakeholders, including but not limited to:</p>

- Project Coordination Team and project focal points of implementing entities
- DA-PMT
- DA focal points in participating entities
- Sample of UN Resident Coordinators/Country Teams, as appropriate
- Sample of key global partners
- Sample of country-level stakeholders (mainly stakeholders from key beneficiary countries)

d) **Case Study/ies**, which may include for example a detailed examination of a particular intervention, or of project activities at a regional or national level.

In addition to assessing the mainstreaming of gender, human rights and disability perspectives in the design, implementation and monitoring of the Project (evaluation question 12), the evaluation will integrate these perspectives in the management of the evaluation, data collection and analysis, as well as the development of the evaluation report. Gender balance will be given full consideration in the composition of the Evaluation Reference Group, elaborated in Section D1 (Evaluation management), and the Evaluation Team. Data collected and analyzed in the course of the evaluation will be disaggregated by gender to the extent possible and whenever appropriate, and the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations to be presented in the evaluation report will reflect a gender analysis.

The evaluation will be carried out according to the UNEG ethical principles and standards.¹⁶⁹ The evaluators should demonstrate behavioural independence, impartiality, credibility, honesty, integrity and accountability in conducting the evaluation/assessment to avoid biasing the findings. The evaluators must also address in the design and conduct of the evaluation procedures to safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers. The Evaluation Manager will be responsible for ensuring that the Evaluation Team conducts the work assignments without any undue interference from those who were responsible for the implementation of the Project.

D. ORGANIZATION OF THE EVALUATION

D1. EVALUATION MANAGEMENT

The independent final project evaluation will be managed/coordinated by UNCTAD's Independent Evaluation Unit, with the support of an Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC) that comprises a representative each of the evaluation units of the partner entities (DESA, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA) and the Evaluation Officer with the CDPMO/DESA. The EAC primarily serves a quality assurance function and facilitates support to the Evaluation Team as necessary.

An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) consisting of a representative from each UN partner entity (e.g., the DA Focal Point for each entity) and the DA-PMT will review and contribute inputs to key steps in this evaluation such as the TOR and draft final report.

Both the EAC and the ERG commit to submitting substantive comments on a timely basis, and comments will be invited on a 'non-objection' basis (no response = agree) so that the process is not delayed for an unnecessarily long time.

An independent Evaluation Team will be convoked to undertake this assignment. The Evaluation Team (ET) is responsible for conducting the evaluation, applying the methodology as appropriate and for producing the evaluation report. All team members, including the Team Leader, will participate in briefing and debriefing meetings, discussions, and will contribute to the evaluation with written inputs for the draft and final report. A selected number of the evaluation team members will participate in the mission travel(s) if applicable. The ET and the Evaluation Manager will agree on the outline of the report, in consultation with the EAC early in the evaluation process. The ET will develop its own evaluation tools and framework, within

¹⁶⁹ UNEG (2020), [Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation](#); UNEG (2008), [Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system](#)

the available timeframe and resources. The team is fully responsible for its report, which may not reflect the views of any of the implementing entities of the project. The evaluation report is subject to quality control by the Evaluation Advisory Committee and clearance by the Evaluation Manager, as set out above.

The Team Leader guides and coordinates the team member(s) in their specific work, discusses their findings, conclusions and recommendations and prepares the draft and the final report, consolidating the inputs from the team member(s) with his/her own. The members of the evaluation team should possess a mix of evaluation skills and technical or sectoral/thematic knowledge relevant to the evaluation. In putting together the team, adequate linguistic, geographic and gender representation will also be key considerations.

The Evaluation Team will be provided full access to all project reports, documentation, and stakeholder lists and contact information. The Project Coordination Team are required to submit to the evaluation manager project documentation, including data and information residing with the other participating entities, in the last month of the project if possible, if not, immediately following the completion of the project, as well as support the evaluation process, including through facilitating the evaluators' access to the project's beneficiaries and other key stakeholders.

The roles and responsibilities in the evaluation process are described below:

Evaluation Manager (UNCTAD) will:

- Prepare the draft evaluation TOR and revise/finalize based on inputs received
- Prepare the TOR for each member of the Evaluation Team (Team Leader, Team Member and Expert(s))
- Recruit and manage the Evaluation Team
- Backstop the evaluation process, including supporting the development and administration of surveys, support outreach of the evaluation team to project stakeholders, and access to secondary data listed in Table 3.
- Oversee/provide quality assurance to the evaluation and the development of the evaluation report
- Facilitate the work of the Evaluation Advisory Committee and the Evaluation Reference Group
- Be responsible for clearance of the evaluation report
- Support the development of a management response to the evaluation report, including an implementation plan
- Organise a virtual workshop on evaluation findings and lessons learned.

Evaluation Advisory Committee comprises a representative each of the evaluation units of the partner entities (ESCWA, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, DESA) and the Evaluation Officer with the CDPMO/DESA. The EAC primarily serves a support and quality assurance function. Specific responsibilities of the EAC include:

- Review and approve the evaluation TOR;
- Advise on the selection of the evaluation consultant(s) to ensure that the selection is based on the required skills and qualifications;
- Support facilitating access from their respective entities to relevant project documentation and stakeholders;
- Review and comment on the inception and evaluation reports; and
- Monitor and conduct periodic follow-ups on the implementation of evaluation recommendations addressed to the parties within their entities.

Evaluation Reference Group, consisting of a representative from each UN partner entity (e.g., the DA Focal Point for each entity) and the DA-PMT,¹⁷⁰ will review and contribute inputs to key steps in this

¹⁷⁰ While multiple representatives of DA-PMT may attend meetings of the Global Reference Group, reflecting different roles held by each staff in relation to the Programme, DA-PMT will provide one consolidated written input as part of the review of the draft inception report and the draft evaluation report.

evaluation such as the TOR and draft final report. The ERC’s key function is to enhance the relevance, credibility and transparency of the evaluation process. Specific responsibilities include:

- To review the draft evaluation ToR and provide substantive feedback;
- To facilitate access from their respective entities to relevant project documentation and stakeholders;
- To review the draft evaluation report and provide substantive feedback, including coordinating feedback from other sections, units and offices from headquarters and from the field to ensure quality and completeness;
- To participate in the validation meeting of the final evaluation report;
- To play a key role in disseminating the findings of the evaluation and implementation of the management response.

Project Coordination Team will:

- Facilitate the Evaluation Team’s access to relevant Project documentation and stakeholders, including through:
 - Collecting and compiling requested data and information from the participating entities, as requested by the Evaluation Manager
 - Providing an updated list of stakeholders, and facilitating access to the sample of stakeholders that the Evaluation Team may wish to interview
 - Facilitating the administration of questionnaires to workshop participants in the participating countries
 - Ensure the cooperation and contribution of the relevant staff of the implementing entities to the evaluation process, as requested
- Lead the preparation of a response to the recommendations directed to the participating entities, including an implementation plan

DA-PMT will:

- Participate in the Evaluation Reference Group
- Provide guidance on the allocation of the evaluation budget
- Organize a virtual meeting with DA focal points to discuss the key lessons from this evaluation as well as from other COVID-19 joint project evaluations and how to incorporate them in future programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of DA-funded projects.

D2. EVALUATION TIME FRAME

The evaluation will be conducted from December 2022 to August 2023.

The evaluation process will involve five phases with the tentative timelines as below in Table 5 (the timelines may be adjusted should any exigencies arise):

Table 5: Evaluation phases and tentative timelines

Phase	Timelines
1. Preparation	August 2022 – December 2022 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Preparation and finalization of evaluation TOR ● Establishment of the Evaluation Reference Group ● Recruitment of the Evaluation Team ● Prepare package of documents required by the Evaluation Team
2. Inception	December 2022 -March 2023

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Preliminary documentation review and preparation of inception report by the Evaluation Team, including development of data collection instruments (questionnaires/ surveys, interview guides) ● Brief visit to Geneva (3 days) to meet with UNCTAD Evaluation Unit and key project stakeholders (UNCTAD and ECE) ● Draft inception report due: 10 February 2023 ● Evaluation Manager review and inception report revision by Evaluation Team: 13 - 22 February 2023 ● Reviews by Project Coordination Team, project focal points of implementing entities, and Evaluation Advisory Committee (in parallel): 23 February – 7 March 2023 ● Draft final inception report due: 14 March 2023 ● Final inception report approved: 20 March 2023
3. Data collection and analysis	<p style="text-align: center;">March- May 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Desk review of remaining Project documents, including requesting additional documentation ● Online surveys of stakeholders ● Interviews with stakeholders ● Data analysis and triangulation
4. Report preparation and reviews	<p style="text-align: center;">May – July 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Data analysis and triangulation ● First draft evaluation report due: 16 June 2023 ● Evaluation Manager review and report revision by the Evaluation Team: 19 – 28 June 2023 ● Reviews by Project Coordination Team, project focal points of implementing entities, Evaluation Advisory Committee and Evaluation Reference Group (in parallel): 29 June – 11 July 2023 ● Revised draft evaluation report due: 18 July 2023 ● Final evaluation report with annexes: 25 July 2023
5. Dissemination and follow-up	<p style="text-align: center;">August 2023 and onwards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presentation to the Project Coordination Team, project teams of implementing entities and development and approval of a management response, including an implementation plan for recommendations ● Virtual workshop on evaluation findings, lessons learned and follow-up with the DA Focal Points: April 2023

D3. EVALUATION TEAM DELIVERABLES

The Evaluation Team will be composed of a team of three consultants (evaluators), namely Team Leader, Team Member and a Gender and Human Rights (HRGE) Expert who also plays the role of Team Member. The two Team Members will report functionally to the Team Leader. The Team Leader will report to the Evaluation Manager. Each of the Evaluation Team has a set of deliverables as described below:

Deliverables for Team Leader and Team Member

- Initial review of key Project documents (preliminary document review)
- Preparation of an inception report with a finalized evaluation scope and focus, evaluation questions and methodology, including information on data sources, sampling and key indicators, stakeholder mapping/analysis, selection of case study/ies, as well as survey design
- Desk review of remaining Project documents
- Data collection and analysis based on the finalized methodology
- Preparation of an evidence matrix presenting a summary of evidence collected through each data collection method by evaluation question
- Development of a draft evaluation report, based on the template presented in Annex 1, for review by the Evaluation Manager, Project Coordination Team, project focal points of implementing entities, the EAC and the ERG
- Revision/finalization of the evaluation report, including all annexes, based on comments received
- Preparation of a 3-page summary of the evaluation report and a presentation (PPT) on key findings, conclusions and recommendations
- Presentation of evaluation report and discussions with relevant stakeholders such as Project Coordination Team, project teams of implementing entities, DA focal points of participating entities and DA-PMT.

Deliverables for Gender and Human Rights Expert/Team Member

- Initial review of key Project documents (preliminary document review), including identifying gender equality, human rights and disability inclusion dimensions and issues for consideration;
- Preparation of an inception report with a finalized evaluation scope and focus, evaluation questions and methodology, including information on data sources, sampling and key indicators, stakeholder mapping/analysis, selection of case study/ies, as well as survey design. Where applicable, gender equality, human rights and disability inclusion considerations will be integrated in the evaluation scope of analysis; evaluation criteria and questions design; methods and tools, and data analysis techniques;
- Desk review of remaining Project documents;
- Data collection and analysis based on the finalized methodology which would be gender sensitive;
- Preparation of an evidence matrix presenting a summary of evidence collected through each data collection method by evaluation question;
- Development of a draft evaluation report, based on the template presented in Annex 1 of the Terms of Reference for the evaluation, for review by the Evaluation Manager, Project Coordination Team, project focal points of implementation entities, the EAC and the ERG. The analysis of gender equality, human rights and disability inclusion dimensions and issues should be integrated in the report as an independent section and to the extent possible, these issues should be mainstreamed throughout the report, including in the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.
- Revision/finalization of the evaluation report, including all annexes, based on comments received;
- Preparation of a 3-page summary of the evaluation report and a presentation (PPT) on key findings, conclusions and recommendations.
- Presentation of evaluation report and discussions with relevant stakeholders such as Project Coordination Team, project teams of implementing entities, DA focal points of participating entities and DA-PMT.

E. COMMUNICATIONS AND DISSEMINATION PLAN:

The results from the evaluation including key lessons learned, best practices and recommendations will be shared widely with participating entities, partners and stakeholders, and member States. In particular, the following modes of communication could be used:

- e) A workshop with all relevant stakeholders to present the key findings, recommendations and lessons learned. The evaluation report will be presented at a workshop attended by the implementing entities, the DA-PMT and other relevant stakeholders for discussion and validation. The implementing entities will be given the opportunity to present their management response, including an implementation plan for the recommendations;
- f) A separate virtual meeting will be held with the DA focal points to discuss the key lessons from the evaluation as well as from other COVID-19 joint project evaluations and how to incorporate them in future programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of DA-funded projects and projects.
- g) A copy of the final evaluation report will be published on UNCTAD's website and the websites of the partner implementing entities, as appropriate; and
- h) The key findings from the evaluation report will also form a key input to the programme-level evaluation of the DA's response to COVID-19 to be initiated by the CDPMO/DESA.
- i) Other communication briefs and products will be produced as appropriate.