

# Management Response to the Terminal Evaluation of the Development Account COVID-19 Joint Project

**Project title and ID: “Transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics (2023X)” implemented by UNCTAD, ECE, ESCAP, ESCWA, ECLAC and ECA**

**Entity name: Development Account Programme Management Team (DA-PMT)**

## Overall Remarks by Management

The Development Account (DA) launched in June 2020 five short-term joint projects to support Member States in addressing the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, in response to General Assembly resolution 74/270, adopted on 2 April 2020, calling for the UN system to mobilize a coordinated global response to the pandemic and its adverse social, economic and financial impact. These five projects aimed at providing immediate support to Member States over an approximately 2-year period, and were jointly implemented by a group of DA implementing entities who combined their technical expertise and proven capacities to support Governments at global, regional and national levels. The projects were designed to respond to the emergency situation evolving in each region, with planned outputs and budget requirements for the five projects developed in three phases due to the evolving crisis.

DA-PMT welcomes the results of the terminal evaluation of the project “Transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics”, implemented by UNCTAD and the five regional commissions. The evaluation report highlights that the project contributed considerably to the development of UN conventions, standards and recommendations for contactless solutions, and helped strengthen regional collaboration. The evaluation also found that the project had brought the implementing entities closer together and enhanced their appetite for further exploring how they can contribute and complement each other’s work in the future. At the same time, the evaluation also identified several key shortcomings in the design of the joint project, and a number of lessons learned that should inform future joint projects under the DA. **The two recommendations addressed to DA-PMT** both concern the development, monitoring and evaluation of future joint projects. DA-PMT has already rolled out a series of measures to strengthen the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of joint projects since 2023, in response to the recommendations of the terminal evaluation of the 10<sup>th</sup> tranche project on statistics and data, and taking into account the lessons learned from the five joint COVID-19 projects that had become available before the completion of this evaluation. This has been done in consultation with and with support from the DA Focal Points in the implementing entities. The two recommendations from this evaluation will aid in the ongoing efforts by the DA implementing entities and DA-PMT to further enhance the support provided to Member States.

## Recommendation Action Plan

Recommendation	Management response <sup>1</sup>	Planned action	Responsible unit(s)	Target completion date
<b><u>Strategic Recommendation 1 (to the DA):</u></b>	<b>Partially accepted.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Development of guidance on the design and implementation</li></ul>	<b>DA-PMT</b>	<b>May 2025</b>

<sup>1</sup> Accepted, partially accepted, or rejected.

<p>DA should <b>continue encouraging joint project development</b> among agencies on nexus issues and addressing issues in development of <b>holistic approaches</b>. When properly planned and implemented, joint actions have the potential to provide better and more holistic results for countries. However, compared to UNTTC, <b>the scope should be carefully designed and the approach to capacity building adjusted to become more effective in terms of achieving results at national level and the possibilities for sustaining/scaling of supported interventions</b>. In order to strengthen the effectiveness and funding opportunities for joint projects further, this should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Less agencies/entities</b> involved in the same project and attention to agencies different capacities to implement.</li> <li>- <b>Narrower geographical or thematic focus</b>.</li> <li>- Strengthening of project <b>governance and ownership</b> by not only involving lead agencies in steering discussions but all involved entities.</li> <li>- Focus on the promotion of <b>existing global UN agreements</b> / conventions / standards and tools.</li> <li>- Further exploring opportunities for partnerships with <b>private sector</b> (e.g. with the port and shipping industry) and strengthen linkages to other UN supported interventions.</li> </ul>	<p>The project reviewed was of a very unique nature as it was designed to respond to a COVID-19 crisis, as well as due to the restrictions caused by the crisis and the much shorter implementation period of 2 years. Due to the evolving nature of the crisis the project was implemented in 3 phases.</p> <p>DA-PMT is in principle agreeable with the recommendation that fewer entities should be involved, and that there should be a narrower geographical or thematic focus.</p> <p>Since the completion of the project in June 2022, DA-PMT has developed further guidance on the governance for joint projects in the project document guidelines. The project document guidelines, starting with the version for the 16<sup>th</sup> tranche issued in May 2023, include guidance on project governance requirements specific to joint projects. Specifically, it has been clarified that: “It is mandatory for all joint projects to have a Project Steering Committee comprised of representatives from all jointly implementing entities, which should meet at regular intervals throughout the project’s lifecycle, at least once every 12 months.”</p>	<p>of joint projects as part of the concept note and prodoc guidelines, which will be based on a further review of areas where joint projects have the potential to provide more effective and holistic results for countries. The guidance will address the involvement of fewer entities and the focus on narrower geographical or thematic focus.</p>		
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	<p>It is not clear to DA-PMT that joint projects should always focus on the promotion of existing global UN agreements / conventions / standards and tools. There are other areas where joint actions strengthen the effectiveness of support to countries. Also, while partnerships with private sector can be an important part of a DA project, it cannot be made a criterion for joint projects.</p>			
<p><b>Strategic Recommendation 2 (to the DA):</b>  <b>More clear operational guidance and support need to be provided to agencies on how to develop, monitor and evaluate joint projects.</b><sup>2</sup> This should include more specific guidance on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The need for developing a clearly articulated <b>Theory of Change for the joint projects</b>, including clear articulation of key assumptions and drivers for achievement of joint results.</li> <li>- How to <b>develop nested results frameworks</b> with clear considerations of how joint actions are supposed to contribute to higher-level results, as part of a larger contribution system with multiple actors (linked to <i>nested Theories of Change</i>).<sup>3</sup></li> <li>- How to <b>develop monitoring plans</b> (according to indicator framework) with definition of clear roles and responsibilities for collection of monitoring data.<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>	<p><b>Partially accepted.</b>  As mentioned in relation to Recommendation 1, guidance on joint projects has already been developed since the completion of this project in June 2022. More specifically, the DA-PMT has revised the project document guidelines to include a more clearly articulated theory of change for all projects, including joint projects, and including the identification of assumptions. In addition, it has been clarified that “all joint projects should include at least one joint output, which is jointly delivered by the jointly implementing entities.” The guidelines on monitoring specify what is expected in terms of monitoring plans and include specific guidance for joint projects, requiring clear roles and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of guidance on the design and implementation of joint projects (as stated under Recommendation 1), which will include guidance on the formulation and monitoring of cross-cutting and inter-institutional results.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DA-PMT</b></p>	<p><b>May 2025</b></p>

<sup>2</sup> A concrete step has been taken by developing of the “Guidance Note on Terminal Evaluation of Joint Projects”, United Nations Development Account (June 2023, V.1) The Project Document Guidelines for the 16th tranche (issued in May 2023) also include guidance specific to the development and monitoring of joint projects.

<sup>3</sup> Reflected in the recently developed “Guidance Note on Terminal Evaluation of Joint Projects”, United Nations Development Account, June 2023, V.1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How to formulate, monitor and measure <b><i>cross-cutting and inter-institutional results</i></b> as part of joint projects, both from a short-term, medium-term and longer-term perspective.</li> <li>- How to extract and document <b><i>cross-institutional learning</i></b> from implementation of joint interventions.</li> <li>- How to demonstrate <b><i>complementarity</i></b> in the planned interventions.</li> </ul>	<p>responsibilities for collecting, consolidating, and maintaining monitoring data at the project level. Furthermore, a DA guidance note on terminal evaluation of joint projects was issued in June 2023. The guidance note establishes the expectation that the scope of the terminal evaluation of a joint project adequately covers the joint efforts by all jointly implementing entities and provides guidance on the evaluation management and support structure/mechanisms to support it.</p> <p>As indicated in relation to Recommendation 1, the DA-PMT will develop a guidance on joint projects. While nested results frameworks could be an interesting approach, a similar approach was done for the 10<sup>th</sup> tranche joint Programme on Statistics and Data, it is not clear on how to do this for multi-country policy change projects. An important element of the selection and implementation of joint projects are cross-cutting and inter-institutional results. We will make sure that this is part of the guidelines.</p>			
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