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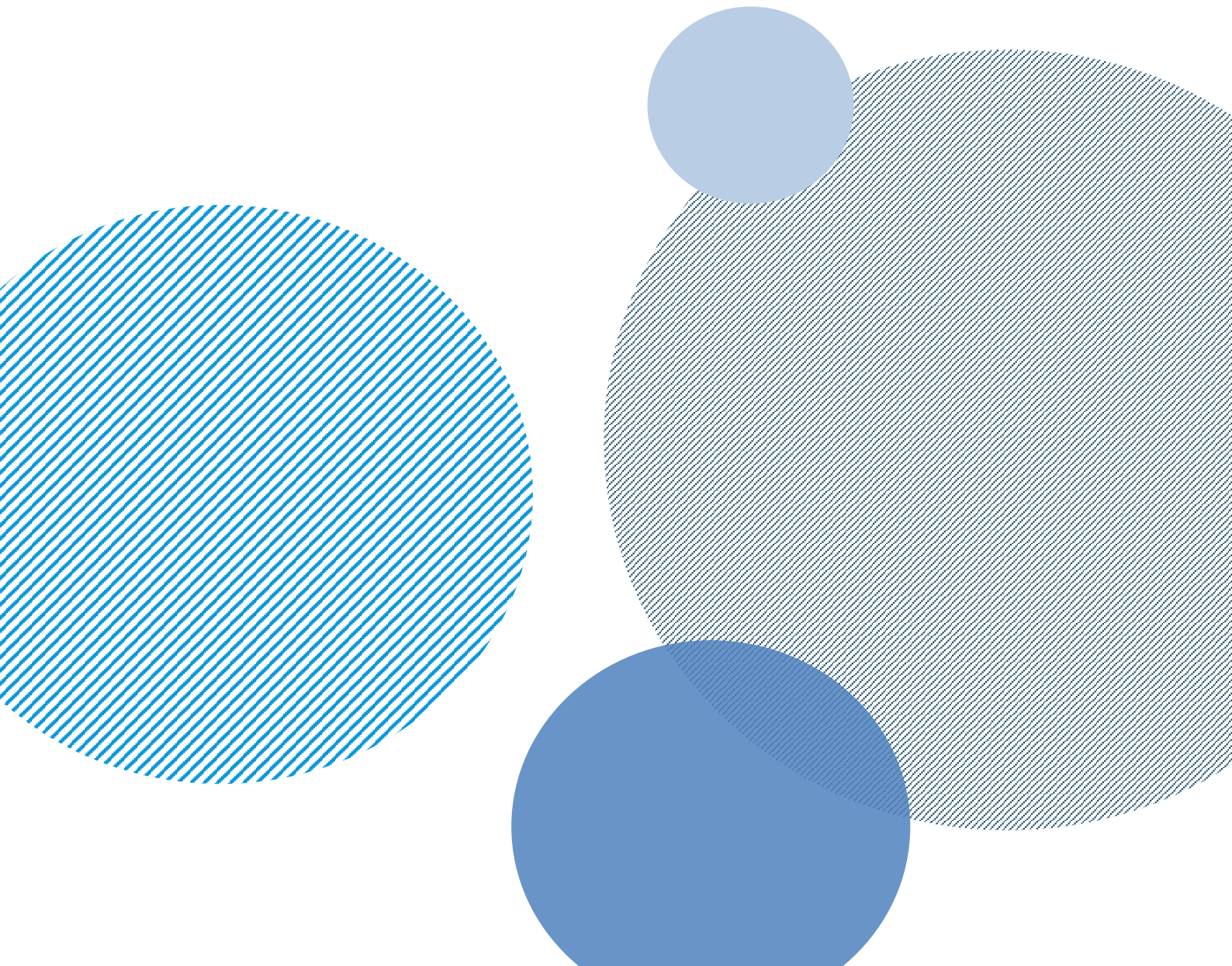Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into local action in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific

Project evaluation report | December 2021

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Acknowledgments

List of acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
APFSD	Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
APUF	Asia Pacific Urban Forum
ART	Territorial Partnership for Implementing SDGs (UNDP)
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CBMS	Community Based Monitoring Survey
CBO	Community Based Organization
CLGF	Commonwealth Local Government Forum
DA	Development Account
DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
EARTH	Ecological Alert and Recovery Thailand Foundation
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GIZ	German Development Agency
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
IGES	Institute for Global Environmental Studies
KII	Key Informant Interview
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCPC	Naga City Peoples Council
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NTC	Nasinu Town Council
NTFP	Non Timber Forest Product
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
PPP	Public Private Partnership
SCP	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SURM	Sustainable Urban Resource Management
TAF	The Asia Foundation
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UCLG ASPAC	United Cities and Local Governments, Asia-Pacific
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlement Programme
USD	United States Dollar
VLR	Vountary Local Review
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WUF	World Urban Forum

Executive summary

This UN Development Account (DA) project on "Integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into local action in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific" aimed to assist city governments and other key urban stakeholders in adapting their local development plans to achieve sustainable management of natural resources, and implementing linked activities to enable localization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) implementation. For achieving this overarching systemic goal, a thematic SDG subset of linked goals were identified that were required for Sustainable Urban Resource Management (SURM). Those identified included SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), SDG 12 (responsible production and consumption), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals). At a regional level, the project aimed to strengthen regional capacity to localize SDG implementation and reporting, and the evaluation of progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals at the urban level in Asia and the Pacific.

The project commenced in April 2018 with a budget of USD $700,000 (later increased to USD $704,500) and was slated for completion in June 2021. Completion date was later extended to December 2021 in light of implementation delays encountered due to the COVID pandemic.

This is an end of project evaluation for the purpose of accountability and learning, and support of results-based management. It is intended to generate information on results achieved and lessons learnt to inform Development Accounts annual reporting to the UN General Assembly and relevant reporting of ESCAP to the Commission and other stakeholders. The evaluation was conducted from August 1 to November 30, 2021. It corresponds with the closing activities of the Project, which was scheduled for December 2021. It was conducted in line with ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines, and the DA Evaluation Framework (2019).

The project strategy was to build capacity at the local level by focusing on three mutually reinforcing development streams: i) Participation – inclusive multi-stakeholder governance; ii) Evidence – strengthening urban stakeholders' capacity to collect, analyze and disseminate data aligned to SDG indicators and use it for evidence-based decision making; and iii) Integration – system wide analysis for integrated planning and implementation. The project team selected five pilot cities in developing or least developed countries across three sub-regions: Battambang, Cambodia; Nadee, Thailand; Naga City, Philippines; Nasinu City, Fiji; and Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Key partners for the project in all cities were Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO)who led the management and coordination in the respective countries with stakeholders, including the local government municipalities. This NGO and government partnership was at the core of the project design, around which other stakeholders were identified from different groups such as provincial and national government, academia, private sector, community groups and other NGOs. The project had a final total budget of USD $704,500, with Implementing Partners mobilizing an additional USD $64,589.

The scope of the evaluation includes results at the outcome level for the project's results framework, as per DA guidelines. Evaluation Criteria and Evaluation Questions were drawn from the Evaluation Terms of Reference, and indicators selected from the main streams of work contributing to outcome level results. Stakeholder mapping for partnerships conducted by project cities was used to identify participants for data collection by interviews and online survey. The entire evaluation was conducted remotely and a Case Study approach was used for the evaluation.

Data collection methods included a Desk Review of documents and Consultations with the Evaluation Reference Group, Key Informant Interviews (KII) with Implementing Partners and key members of the city-level stakeholder coalitions, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with community groups (where available) and an Online Survey of stakeholders. Ethical standards and a human rights perspective were applied in data collection, based on ESCAP guidelines. Limitations of the evaluation stemmed from limited stakeholder lists and baselines, and gaps in tracking of results along activity streams that were contributing to SURM outcomes.

Evaluation Findings

Effectiveness: **Active stakeholder coalitions were formed and participated in urban governance.** This was one of the most significant outcomes valued by respondents in all five cities, but it varied somewhat by city. The multi-stakeholder coalitions enabled municipal governments to connect with communities as well as with NGOs and universities/research organizations, to identify SURM priorities, conduct the data collection, systemwide planning and implementation activities. **Data collection for strategic planning and visioning on priorities for SURM were key activities.** Overall, stakeholders reported that useful data for planning interventions was obtained, although all used different data collection strategies. Measures to address SURM were different in each city: this underscores the importance of contextual circumstances in designing and implementing SURM.

Relevance: **The project design ensured a high level of relevance to stakeholder priorities.** Results of both online survey and interviews suggest a very high level of ownership of project activities and the relevance of activities to address their SURM issues. This also translated into confidence in their ability to continue and expand this effort after end of the project. The project design enabled selection of city-level priorities by their stakeholder coalitions, and this was at the heart of the high relevance to beneficiaries. Endorsement from higher levels of government was also used as an indicator of relevance from a larger national perspective, and this varied by project city. This endorsement was found to be an enabling factor in level of success in project outcomes.

Efficiency: Stakeholders interviewed in all cities indicated that **despite COVID-19 pandemic related disruptions in activities, adjustments were made in implementation modalities to achieve results.** Despite the challenges faced, online survey respondents rated efficiency at above average in 4 out of 5 cities. They also noted the efficient support of ESCAP in making these adjustments to ensure smooth functioning. In all cases where a superior level of efficiency was cited, this was associated with a high level of synergy created in stakeholder partnerships.

Sustainability: There is clear evidence of a high level of ownership by stakeholders, and **confidence expressed by stakeholders including all five Municipality focal points - for continuation and expansion of activities and results without ESCAP's further involvement**. Outreach and scaling up at the regional level was gaining traction in 2021 and is expected to continue in the following years. At the time of this evaluation, it was mainly being taken forward with ESCAP support by Implementing Partners and other stakeholders. ESCAP is facilitating an expansion of partners' linkages with regional platforms.

Gender and Equity: Respondents of interviews and online survey from all project cities stated that these issues were well integrated in project design and activities, with **many specific examples of ways in which this effort was made.**

Innovations: **A central feature of the project was the role of city municipalities in gathering diverse stakeholders to help identify and find solutions to SURM priorities.** This was found to be very innovative by stakeholders. This innovative feature is seen to contribute to a high level of ownership of project activities by stakeholders, ensuring good sustainability and scalability of activities. In all cases mastering technology for the new COVID-19 era virtual world was innovative for stakeholders, and in addition there were many examples of innovations that were brought into the sphere of activities for improving SURM in the cities.

Localization of Agenda 2030: **Enhancing the ability of urban decision makers to implement SDGs at the local level in a participatory, evidence-based and integrated manner was the main goal of the project.** Specifically, the focus was on enabling localization of a thematic subset of SDGs for sustainable management or urban resources. The project results demonstrate that this was achieved.

Conclusions

The overall performance of the project on all the evaluation criteria was found to be superior or excellent, with the exception of Nasinu where it was rated at average on some of the criteria. Contextual issues related to capacities in Nasinu municipality and a history of weak relations with stakeholders contributed to performance observed there. Other key conclusions that are relevant from the perspective of project design and contextual conditions contributing to outcomes are:

- **Project design** was very good for providing relevance and stakeholder ownership, but challenging in terms of providing technical support due to locally driven processes. ESCAP management was supportive and flexible in adjusting to the stakeholder priorities and challenges, and can be credited for enabling achievements. The high level of stakeholder ownership of project activities is also correlated with significant evidence of sustainability at institutional level.
- **Identification of stakeholders**, convening capacity and good management/coordination by Implementing Partners were critical for providing synergy and achievement of results.
- **Contextualizing success stories** observed at the city level is important, especially since city governments generally have limited powers. It is seen that a good enabling environment as well as support from provincial/federal levels was essential for cities with superior results.
- **Municipalities consistently found value in multistakeholder partnerships,** especially with communities and researchers or universities. This enabled them to formulate data driven policies to enable regulatory reforms by legislatures and administrative bodies.
- **SDGs localization requires trans-sectoral engagement** and capacity to 'break out of' traditional ways of 'business as usual'. This was challenging. Also, data availability and capacity for large scale comprehensive data gathering was limited at the city level. This limits ability to monitor change with Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR). However, if evaluability capacity building is integrated in these types of SDG localization projects, greater progress may be achieved.
- **Community outreach for SURM practices was severely curtailed due to COVID-19 pandemic**, but good efforts to involve marginalized migrant and waste picker communities were made.
- **Outreach of project City experiences and learning at regional-level** are taking place. However, continued ESCAP facilitation will be required for significant impact at scale from this project.

Lessons Learnt

One of the main lessons is that SDGs localization support has to be contextualized to local priorities and policy/institutional environments to enable lasting benefits. The three pillars on which the project was built – i) inclusive multi-stakeholder governance; ii) building evidence base for decision making, and
iii) system-wide analysis for planning and implementation - proved effective for producing results and was welcomed by municipal governments in all five project cities. However, an aspect of the database may need to be refined further – by including capacity building for evaluability of results and progress being achieved.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: ESCAP should continue to adopt a flexible approach to pilot project implementation for SDGs localization, as demonstrated by this project. This flexibility ensures it is aligned with local needs and requirements.
Recommendation 2: Future support by ESCAP for SURM should involve provincial/federal agencies unless city has clear budgetary and policy reform capacity.
Recommendation 3: ESCAP may consider integrating a monitoring and evaluation plan in the design and implementation of pilot projects.
Recommendation 4: ESCAP should consider replicating and scaling up of this pilot project approach and tools, with practical lessons from processes gained from its implementation.
Recommendation 5: ESCAP should continue to promote the online learning course and further develop a tracking system for feedback and improvement.

1. Introduction

This UN Development Account (DA) project on "Integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into local action in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific" aimed to assist city governments and other key urban stakeholders in adapting their local development plans to achieve sustainable management of natural resources, and implementing linked activities to enable localization of linked Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) results for sustainable urban resource management. The thematic SDG subset of linked goals identified included SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), SDG 12 (responsible production and consumption), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).

The project commenced in April 2018 with a budget of USD $700,000 and was slated for completion in June 2021. Completion date was later extended to December 2021 in light of delays encountered due to the COVID pandemic.

The project implementing agency is ESCAP, with support from The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). The project also gained support from other partners, including the United Cities and Local Government Asia-Pacific (UCLG ASPAC), the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ).(Progress report for 2019)

This is a summative end of project evaluation for the purpose of accountability and learning, and support of results-based management. It is intended to generate information on results achieved and lessons learnt to inform DA annual reporting to the UN General Assembly and relevant reporting of ESCAP to the Commission and other stakeholders. The evaluation was conducted from August 1 to November 30, 2021, which corresponds with the closing activities of the Project, scheduled for December 2021.

2. Description of the Project

2.1 Background

Economic growth and demographic transition over the past 20 years have given rise to a vast system of cities in the Asian and Pacific region, which are now home to two-thirds of the world's urban population. Cities can be central for driving the progress of national economies, strengthening the social fabric of societies and safeguarding the environment of countries in the region. While millions of people have been lifted out of poverty in the past decades, poverty in the region remains a large (and increasingly urbanizing) problem with inequality in many cities on the rise. Urban areas use up a significant, usually unsustainable proportion of renewable and non-renewable resources with accompanying environmental degradation, waste and pollution.

Urban areas can be the hubs of dynamic and complex development. Yet local governments especially in secondary cities of the region's developing countries struggle to take integrated and inclusive action to ensure that such development is sustainable. The challenges that urban managers face include: population pressure, lack of basic   infrastructure, inadequate resources for service delivery and planning, conflicting interests for economic development, ecological sustainability and quality of life. The inability to effectively manage these related challenges is rapidly increasing the human risks associated with poor housing conditions, uncollected solid waste, over-consumption of limited freshwater supplies, untreated waste water and urban air pollution. Local governments are severely hampered by limited political and fiscal power, lack of access to finance, low institutional capacity, weak multi-level government cooperation, the absence of meaningful multi-stakeholder partnerships, and lack of local level data and statistics to support evidence-based planning and to monitor progress. These challenges need to be tackled for urban populations to benefit from the SDGs.

2.2 Project objectives and expected accomplishments/results

The project objective was to assist city governments and other key urban stakeholders in adapting their local development plans and in implementing linked activities to achieve sustainable urban resource management (SURM). Based on the Project strategy and activities, its implied Theory of Change (TOC) guiding the results framework, is shown in Annex 2 . There were two expected accomplishments stated in the project results framework:

Expected Accomplishment 1:
Strengthened awareness and institutional capacities of project cities to implement and report on the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level by incorporating them into local development plans. As a result, urban decision makers will have enhanced their capacity to implement sustainable urban resource management at the local level in a participatory, evidence-based and integrated manner.

Expected Accomplishment 2:
Strengthened regional capacity to localize Sustainable Development Goal implementation and reporting and the evaluation of progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals at the urban level in Asia and the Pacific.

2.3 Link to Sustainable Development Goals

Goals of this project are in line with a thematic subset of SDGs on sustainable management of natural resources and sustainable consumption and production (SCP). The project defined this thematic SDG subset as consisting of SDGs: 6 (clean water and sanitation); 7 (affordable and clean energy); 11

(sustainable cities and communities); 12 (responsible consumption and production); and 17 (partnerships for the goals) and refers to it collectively as "urban resource management".

The project aimed to achieve its objective by assisting cities to operationalize the 'what' and 'how' of localizing SDGs, and track results – or in other words, the project would focus on related 'processes'.

2.4 Project Strategies, Key Activities and Adaptations

This project strategy was to strengthen 'local processes' by focusing on **three mutually reinforcing capacity-development streams: (i) PARTICIPATION** - strengthening inclusive multi- stakeholder governance for the local level, **(ii) EVIDENCE** - strengthening urban stakeholders' capacities to collect, analyze and disseminate data aligned to SDG indicators and use it for more evidence-based decision making, and **(iii) INTEGRATION** - systemic analysis for integrated planning and implementation.

Within the thematic SDG subset on urban resource management, the project left it open to participating cities to decide through their multi-stakeholder process to identify which plans to adapt and what concrete activities to implement. In this way, the project aimed to maximize local ownership and ensure that cities build capacity to localize SDGs in accordance with their needs, priorities and capacities.

In the initial design of the project, it aimed to divide participating cities into two Tiers. Tier-1 cities were those that were ready to immediately start with implementation of all proposed project activities (up to 4 cities) and Tier-2 cities would take on the role of learners or observers. Tier-2 cities would participate in regional activities and would be invited to selected local activities of Tier-1 cities. Depending on availability of funds, Tier-2 cities would implement the processes and methods developed through the project at a later stage, or decide to self-finance and join the project process. Selection of Tier-1 and Tier-2 cities was to follow transparent and competitive selection criteria. This element of the project design was modified after the Regional Inception Workshop, and the decision made to include 5 cities based on budget availability, with all cities following a similar process of project implementation.

Key activities at the city level were:

(i) assist local governments with identifying members of the multi-stakeholder coalitions and with setting up a participatory process; (ii) through the mechanism of the multi-stakeholder coalitions, undertake participatory issue analyses (including identifying baseline data and gaps, collecting key missing data and analyzing this in line with respective SDG subset targets and cross-cutting issues); (iii) align existing city plans and policies to the SDGs sub-set in a participatory and integrated manner (including additional actions to be implemented by the multi-stakeholder coalitions with co-financing through the project); and (iv) review and evaluate localization of the SDGs sub-set. Throughout, the multi-stakeholder coalitions would also engage in SDG advocacy for the population of their cities. Project results and learnings would then feed into the next urban planning cycle, during which the cities may explore other thematic SDGs subsets and further institutionalize multi-stakeholder coalitions and integrated approaches. The chart below shows key project activities carried out.

Key Project Activities (2018 - 2021)
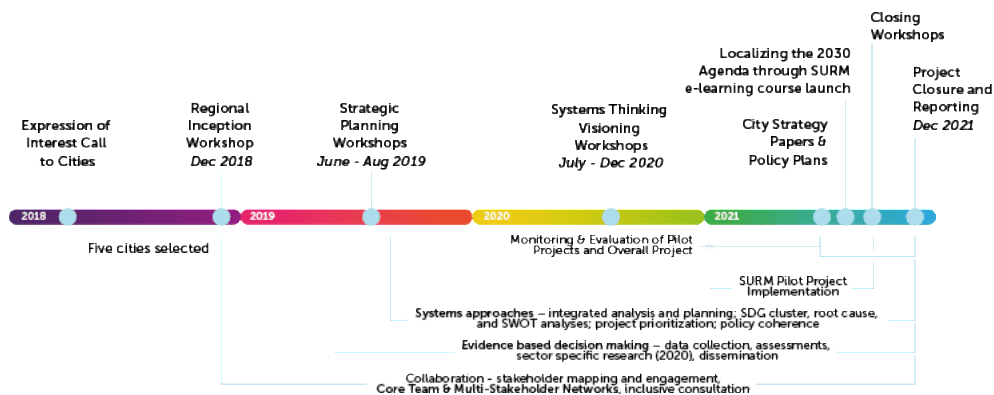
Adaptations were made early on in the project for city-level plans. According to the 2019 Progress Report for the project: *"Some redesign of outputs was necessary due to timelines and difficulties identifying effective regional consultants for the project workstreams on data. Project team thus adapted delivery for the initial regional workshop and will enhance local data support tailored to the partner city needs".*

At the regional level, the project aimed to provide ideas and guide participating cities and encourage other cities in the region to adopt similar approaches to localizing SDGs. This would be achieved through trainings and through online dissemination of training and advocacy materials as well as documentation of good practices and lessons learned along the three mutually reinforcing capacity-development streams mentioned above. The project also aimed to provide standardized approaches to analyzing and disseminating data, enhance comparability and quality of city-level data across the region and across time. As for training events and dissemination, the project aimed to closely link to an ongoing partnership with CityNet and Seoul Metropolitan Government under which an 'Urban SDG Knowledge Platform' has been developed to disseminate tools and learning (www.urbansdgplatform.org).

Significant changes were made in the Regional elements of the project. The regional-level harmonized training workshop was eliminated due to variations in city-level project designs, data and analysis needs and capacities. Instead, localized support was provided, and budgets for city-level activities were increased, and an e-learning tool was developed based on city experiences for sharing in the region. Additional adjustments were made in project budgets and activities to accommodate the COVID-19 pandemic related curtailment in travel and in-person meetings during the last two years of the project – 2020 and 2021.

The project further aimed to build links between project and numerous regional platforms as well as other related ESCAP projects to disseminate outputs and learnings from the project. These include the projects: "Integrated Resource Management in Asian Cities: the Urban Nexus" (implemented jointly with the German Development Agency GIZ and the city network of International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI); "Implementing Alternative Building Technologies for Housing the Urban Poor" (implemented jointly with Hilti Foundation, UN Habitat and the Homeless People's Federation of the Philippines); "Pro-poor and Sustainable Solid Waste Management in Secondary Cities and Towns" (implemented jointly with the non-governmental organization and social enterprise Waste Concern) and a series of projects on cities and climate change (led by UN-Habitat). The project also aimed to link with the urban component of the 10th tranche Development Account Programme on Statistics and Data, and coordinate with other initiatives that aim at localizing SDGs, such as those by UN-Habitat, UNDP and the Global Task Force of Global and Regional Governments, UNDP's ART

project (Territorial Partnerships for Implementing the SDGs at local level) or the UNDP-UN Environment 'Poverty and Environment Initiative'.

Key activities at the Regional level:

At the regional level, key planned activities were to assist cities by undertaking trainings and advocacy, disseminating tools and sharing practices. A regional workshop to train cities for a harmonized data base was also planned, but eliminated due to the issues cited above.

The project developed "how-to guidelines" to support city activities, and regional trainings modules and good practice sharing on participatory and inclusive approaches to urban governance. This is contained in an e-learning tool for online learning that has been developed by this project.

It was also expected that Pilot cities would participate in regular high visibility forums, such as ESCAP's annual Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), UN-Habitat's World Urban Forum (WUF), ESCAP's Asia Pacific Urban Forum (APUF), and CityNet Congresses, in addition to sharing project experiences on ESCAP's and partners' existing online knowledge platforms. Delays in project implementation and curtailment of travel and meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic has in effect delayed much of this regional outreach, but is still ongoing and expected to continue after the end of the project.

2.5 Beneficiaries and target countries

The project issued a Call for Expressions of Interest for participation in the project. This was distributed through partners and regional and sub-regional networks, resulting in responses from 84 cities indicating strong demand in the region for the technical assistance on promoting sustainable urban resource management, and for localizing the SDGs. The project team selected five pilot cities in developing or least developed countries across three sub-regions: Battambang, Cambodia; Nadee, Thailand; Naga City, Philippines; Nasinu, Fiji; and Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The map below shows the participating cities and local implementing partners.
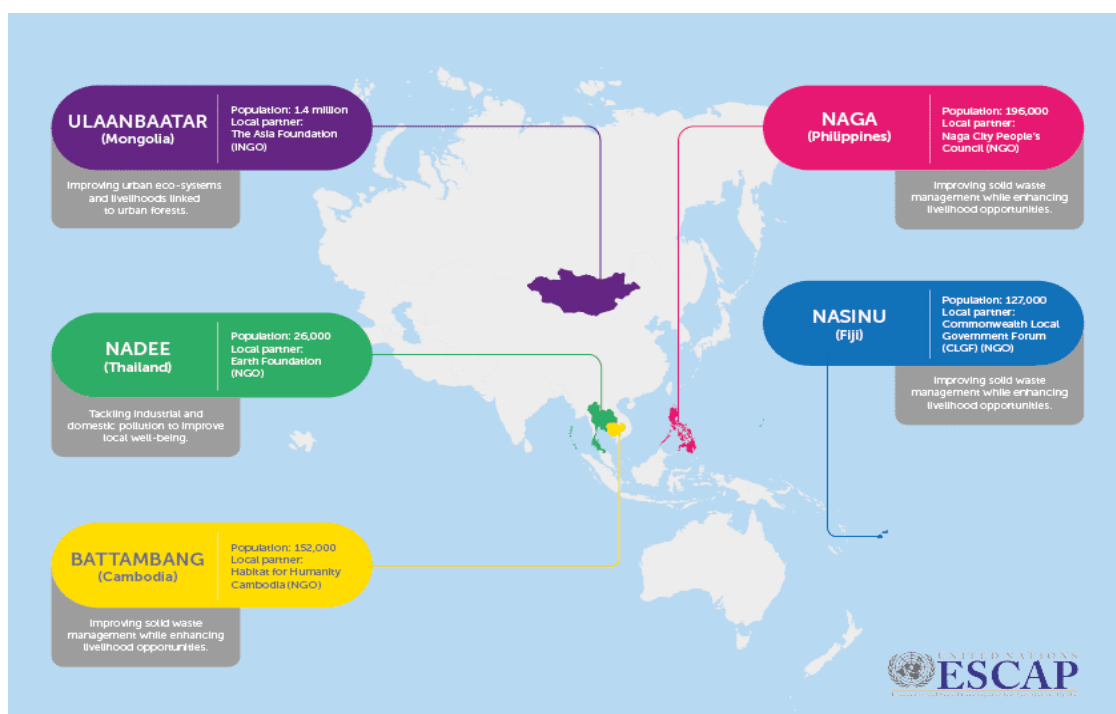
Partner cities' priorities included solid waste management, local economic development/livelihoods, affordable housing, wastewater management and eco-systems management. The project team and local focal points of project applicants from the pilot cities explored interlinkages and identified related stakeholders, to establish a core multi-stakeholder group (including local, provincial and national government officials, Non-governmental and Community Based Organizations (NGOs/CBOs), academia, and private sector) in each city. Through this multi-stakeholder network of partners, the main project beneficiaries were residents and businesses of these partner cities.

2.6 Implementing Partners and Key Stakeholders

Implementing partners for the project in all cities were non-governmental agencies who led the management and coordination in the respective countries with stakeholders, including the local government municipalities. This NGO and government partnership was at the core of the project design, around which other stakeholders were identified from different groups such as provincial and national government, academia, private sector, community groups and other NGOs. This formation of multi-stakeholder groups was tasked with contributing to the identification of SURM priorities and then addressing them through the stages of: baseline data collection, integrated analysis and planning, and evidence based decision making using data, analysis, pilot projects, and dissemination of information. The implementing partners and city municipality stakeholders from each of the project cities is shown below in Table 2.1.

TABLE 2.1
Key Partners and Stakeholders in Project Cities/Countries

Project City	Implementing Partners	Key Stakeholders
Battambang, Cambodia	Habitat for Humanity, Cambodia	Battambang Municipality; Battambang Provincial Government
Nadee, Thailand	Ecological Alert and Recovery Thailand (EARTH) Foundation	Nadee Municipality; Samut Sakhon Provincial Government
Naga City, Philippines	Naga City People's Council	City Government of Naga; Ateneo de Naga University
Nasinu, Fiji	Commonwealth Local Government Forum	Nasinu Town Council
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia	The Asia Foundation	Ulaanbaatar Environment Department, Ulaanbaatar City Council

2.7 Resources

The Project's total budget and its allocation is shown below in Table 2.2. The initial budget of USD $700,000 was later amended to USD $704,500.

Table 2.2
Total Project Budget (USD)

Budget Class	Budget ($)	Expenditures ($)	Expenditure Rate (%)
Staff Costs	18,548	18,548	100
Consultants and Experts	223,782	223,782	100
Travel of Staff	16,223	16,223	100
Contractual Services	17,917	17,907	99.9
General Operating Expenses	20,551	20,551	100
Supplies and Materials	41	41	100
Furniture and Equipment	26	26	100
Grants and Contributions	407,412	407,125	99.9
Totals	704,500	704,202	99.9

Additional resources were mobilized with contributions made by Implementing Partners in each city. These in-kind contributions made, and their estimated financial values are shown below in Table 2.3

Table 2.3
Implementing Partner Contributions (USD)

City	Implementing Partner	ESCAP Contribution ($)	Implementing Partner Contribution ($)	% Additional Contribution Made
Ulaanbaatar	The Asia Foundation	81,250	14,923	18.4
Nadee	EARTH Foundation	73,920	39,862	53.9
Naga City	Naga City People's Council	70,000	8,755	12.5
Battambang	Habitat for Humanity-Cambodia	83,750	16,572	19.8
Nasinu	Commonwealth Local Government Forum	66,234	28,360	42.8
Total		375,154	108,472	28.9

2.8 Innovative element of project

An innovative element in the design of the project was to "develop a transformative framework for SURM" that combines:

Localizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the levels of, i) normative objectives, ii) means of implementation, and iii) goals (i.e. the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs with their targets and indicators) to represent the pillars of sustainable development and focus on governance, for achieving SURM. This aimed to empower local governments and their stakeholders to design and implement locally relevant interventions in policies and institutions for achieving their SDG goals. This innovative approach would also enable capacity building of local governments to enrich their stakeholder partnerships for expanding activities in future for other local priorities.

3. Evaluation objectives, scope and questions

3.1 Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the evaluation is to promote accountability and learning and support results-based management.

The objectives of the evaluation[1] are to:

1) Assess the performance of the project against evaluation criteria: effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability, gender mainstreaming, and any other cross-cutting issues as deemed relevant;

2) Formulate lessons learnt and action-oriented recommendations to inform management decision-making and improve future project design and implementation.

It is conducted in line with ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines, and the UN Development Account Evaluation Framework.[2]

It will generate information on the results achieved and lessons learnt to inform DA annual reporting to the UN General Assembly and the relevant reports of ESCAP to the Commission and other stakeholders. The evaluation results will also inform future programme design and implementation of relevant ESCAP capacity development work.

According to the Terms of Reference (TOR) for this evaluation, the main users of the evaluation results will be the UN General Assembly which provides the funds for the DA, the DA fund manager at UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), ESCAP management and staff, in particular the Environment and Development Division, and the stakeholders in the participating countries as well as other interested stakeholders in participating and other Asia Pacific countries. The report will be circulated within the ESCAP secretariat and posted on ESCAP's public website. Also ESCAP management response will be provided for any follow-up actions as appropriate.

3.2 Evaluation scope, criteria and questions

The scope of the evaluation is based on the ESCAP evaluation framework, and key evaluation criteria of: Effectiveness, Relevance, Efficiency, Sustainability, Gender and Human Rights mainstreaming. Additional criteria for this evaluation are: Innovation, and Contribution to SDGs. The key evaluation questions posed in the evaluation TOR were tailored to address the main activities, outputs and outcomes that the Project intended to achieve. Adjustments due to COVID-19 and their effects are incorporated in this evaluation.

This evaluation analyses the level of achievement of project results at the level of objectives and expected accomplishments -- by examining the results framework, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria. It also assesses the design, strategy and implementation of the project to inform future programming. In addition, as a pilot project, it also provides learning for both scale up and adoption in other cities and countries.

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[1] Please see Annex 1 for Evaluation Terms of Reference

[2] Available on the ESCAP webpage at http://www.unescap.org/partners/monitoring-and-evaluation/evaluation, UN Development Account, October 2019

In terms of project results, the evaluation focuses on outcome level changes. As indicated in the ESCAP guidelines, outcomes are the likely or achieved effects of an intervention's outputs. Outcomes reflect the changes in the behaviour or practices of the target group(s)/countries that ESCAP intends to influence, including through actions taken collectively with its development partners. They also reflect those benefits and actions taken by the target groups/countries through the project interventions.

The evaluation includes the design, strategy and implementation of the project over the entire period of its implementation. It covers the implementation and results of the project in all of the participating countries. The assessment covers all modes of implementation of the project, including national and regional workshops, trainings and additional activities as agreed upon based on consultations with project countries.

The evaluation took place between 1 August to 30 November 2021, with reporting finalized in December 2021. All the five project cities/countries are included in this evaluation. They include:

- Battambang, Cambodia
- Nadee, Thailand
- Naga City, Philippines
- Nasinu, Fiji
- Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

All the stakeholder groups that participated in the project were mapped for inclusion in the evaluation. These included: all implementing partners, representatives from city municipal governments, as well as from provincial and national governments, Non-Governmental Organizations, community organizations, research and academic institutions, private sector, and international organizations.

Due to the on-going global pandemic, mission travel to the project sites was not carried out but instead the evaluation was entirely conducted remotely.

The main Evaluation Criteria and Evaluation Questions were drawn from the Evaluation TOR (Annex 1). Evaluation Questions were further elaborated for each of the Evaluation Criteria based on activities and results achieved along the project's results framework. This elaboration was reflective of the specific project related objectives and also contextual aspects that may be related to observed outcomes. These are shown below on Table 3.1.

Indicators were drawn primarily from the outcome indicators that were stated in the project document. In addition, the main desired outcomes for different stakeholders were also addressed. The Evaluation Matrix with details of Indicators and Sources of information for each of the Evaluation Criteria and Evaluation Questions is shown in Annex 3.

Table 3.1 Evaluation Criteria and Evaluation Questions

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions
Effectiveness	● What are the most significant results at the city level achieved or contributed by the project? How did the project activities/outputs lead to the results and what is the evidence of project's contribution to the results. Results at the outcome level will be assessed along the 3 Streams of focus for the project's implementation: building stakeholder coalitions; building data, baselines and analysis/monitoring capacity; situation analysis, pilot projects and policy reforms and outreach/advocacy ● How did the adjustments made to the project due to the COVID-19 pandemic affect the achievement of the project's expected results as stated in its original results framework?
Relevance	● To what extent was the project designed based on demand from the target beneficiaries? ● To what extent did higher levels of government participate and validate city-level efforts? ● What adjustments, if any, were made to the project activities and modality, as a direct consequence of the COVID-19 situation, or in response to the new priorities of participating cities?
Efficiency	● To what extent did the project achieve efficiency in implementation and how effective was ESCAP support in achieving this, including with respect to adjustments due to COVID-19 situation? ● To what extent has partnering with stakeholders and other organizations enable synergy or enhanced reaching of results?
Innovation	● What innovative strategies or measures of the project (addressing new topics or using new means of delivery or a combination thereof) proved to be successful?
Sustainability	● To what extent can results of the project be continued without ESCAP's further involvement? ● Is there any evidence of institutionalization of activities or outputs produced by the project?
Gender and human rights mainstreaming.	● To what extent were gender and human rights integrated into the design and implementation of the project, informed by, relevant and tailored to human rights and gender analysis?
The 2030 Agenda/ SDGs	● To what extent has the project outputs contributed to participating city and its national efforts to achieve the SDGs?

4. Methodology

Methodological Approach

A Case Study approach is used for this evaluation. Case studies are particularly useful for understanding how different elements fit together (implementation, context and other factors) to have produced the observed outcomes. In this evaluation, the focus is on programme implementation and programme results. This approach is recommended for innovative programmes, that are implemented in different settings[3]. When a programme is unique, this method provides rich detail about how the design and implementation in each context in which it is delivered, contributes to the observed outcomes. This allows learning on how the programme worked in different settings, and the appropriate modalities required for its success. This method is especially suited to complex programmes that involve different sectors in varying degrees, allowing for unpredictability of outcomes in different locations.

An aspect of the Case Study Approach noted in the evaluation literature, is that when Interviews are conducted with stakeholders after the programme is complete, it will depend on people's recollections of events. Also many stakeholders may not be accessible at that time. It is better to interview people as the programme takes place. The evaluator can observe as many meetings as possible, and interview participants as they plan and implement activities. To some extent this aspect was incorporated in this evaluation, as the evaluator was able to attend (virtually) the Closing Workshops for 4 cities in the Project, and also interview stakeholders during the closing period of the evaluation.

Methods for data collection used were:

Desk Review of Project reports including all progress reports and outputs produced by Project cities.

Key Informant interviews (KII) with the core project team of ESCAP and country Implementing Partners. This was followed by interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with key members from each city's multi-stakeholder partnership. Translation assistance was required for stakeholder interviews in Ulaanbaatar, Battambang, Nadee, and for two FGDs with informal waste pickers in Philippines and Fiji.

Sample selection for Key Informant Interviews: Implementing Partners were requested to identify 5-6 key members of their multi-stakeholder coalitions, giving adequate attention to different stakeholder groups that participated. All those identified were then contacted by the evaluator (in countries where translation required, the contact was made by a team member of the implementing partner organization). Interviews were conducted with all those who responded, and accepted the request for interviews.

Online survey of stakeholders from each country[4]. This was initially planned for only those who had participated consistently in project activities. However, this had to be modified to limit the survey to those who attended the 4 project Closing Workshops (Ulaanbaatar, Battambang, Nadee and Nasinu) due to unavailability of stakeholder lists for the duration of the project. In the case of Naga City where no Closing Workshop was held, the partner organizations provided a list of stakeholders to include in the survey.

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[3] Case Study Evaluations by Linda G. Morra and Amy C. Friedlander. World Bank, Operations Evaluation Department
"Using Case Studies to do program Evaluation" by Edith D. Balbach. California Department of Health Services.
[4] Please see Annex 4 for Data Collection Instrument for Online Survey.

The Online survey instrument was translated into Mongol, Khmer and Thai languages and administered separately to each country stakeholder sample identified. For Philippines and Fiji the survey was fielded in English. All major stakeholder groups (along the lines identified in the project document) were sampled in the Online survey. Response rates (Table 4.1) are generally along the lines expected for online surveys. In terms of response rate variation between cities, Nasinu, Fiji had the lowest rate at 20 percent and Battambang the highest at 75 percent[5]. This much higher rate for Battambang was possibly due to the connections their multistakeholder group had with their networks who had participated in the project, and did onward sharing of the survey instrument. A lower response rate for Nasinu may be attributed to insufficient communication by implementing partners with stakeholders.

Table 4.1

Response Rates for Online Survey

	Nadee Thailand	Ulaanbaaatar Mongolia	Battambang Cambodia	Naga City Philippines	Nasinu Fiji
Number of persons contacted	85	42	20	23	40
Number of responses	37	20	15	9	8
Response rate %	43.5	47.6	75	39	20

Representation of respondents by sector and gender also varied by city (Tables 4.2 and 4.3). Government representation was highest in Battambang, while university/research presence was the highest in Ulaanbaatar, where community and NGO presence was the lowest. Women were a majority of respondents in Ulaanbaatar and Nasinu, while in the other three cities men formed the majority of respondents.

Table 4.2

Representation of stakeholder groups in Online Survey

(% of city sample)

	Nadee Thailand %	Ulaanbaaatar Mongolia %	Battambang Cambodia %	Naga City Philippines %	Nasinu Fiji %
Government	32.5	30	47	22	37.5
University/research	32.5	40	12	22	0
NGO or Community	14	10	18	22	25
Private Sector	16	0	6	22	12.5
International Org.	5	20	17	11	25
	100	100	100	100	100

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[5] A response rate of 50% or higher for online surveys is considered excellent, and responses in the 5-30% are more typical. The lower response rate for Nasinu may be attributed to the limited engagement of the Implementing Partners there in requesting stakeholder participation.

Table 4.3

Representation by Gender in Online Survey

(% of Sample)

	Nadee Thailand %	Ulaanbaaatar Mongolia %	Battambang Cambodia %	Naga City Philippines %	Nasinu Fiji %
Female	35	60	35	22	57
Male	65	40	65	78	29
PNTS[6]/Other	0	0	0	0	14
	100	100	100	100	100

Data analysis consisted of a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Perspectives of different stakeholders, as well as progress reports of other city-level deliverables were used to triangulate the findings and draw conclusions. Analysis also considered accomplishments at each level of each of the specific objectives, as identified in the Evaluation Matrix.

Ethical Principles, Gender and Human rights

The ethical principles of integrity, accountability, respect and beneficence are applied in this evaluation according to the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (2020). This aims at protecting the interests and rights of diverse participants and their communities, to avoid adverse consequences for those intended to benefit from the project and its evaluation.

The evaluation applied UN standards for ensuring protection of participants and respect for confidentiality. At the beginning of each interview or discussion, participants were given a brief on purpose of the evaluation and proposed use of information they share. The independence of the evaluator was clarified, and participants assured of confidentiality and consent explicitly requested prior to their participation.

The evaluation used a gender-responsive approach by integrating analysis of context, and structures of political and social control that create gender inequality.

Limitations to Methodology

A key limitation was unavailability of stakeholder participation lists for the duration of the project. This did not affect KIIs as the main stakeholders who had participated consistently were a well identifiable core group in each case. They were associated with most of the project elements and could give a comprehensive feedback from their perspective. This ensured the strength of the qualitative analysis part of the evaluation. This could not be said of the quantitative element – obtained from Online Survey results.

There were several sampling and procedural limitations of the Online survey, possibly resulting in some non- comparability in samples taken from each project city. These limitations arose from the following situations:

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[6] PNTS: Prefer not so say

- Stakeholder lists from all workshops conducted were not available due to staffing turnovers at both ESCAP HQ team and Implementing Partner teams in Project cities. This may have created document dislocations in record keeping and tracking of stakeholders
- COVID-19 pandemic created a series of disruptions in implementation of city-level activities that involved stakeholder or community level meetings, workshops and field research work, creating delays and discontinuities in planned activities, leading to inconsistent participation
- Active stakeholder partnerships were created in many project cities, leading to synergies associated with decentralized activity streams, creating management fragmentation, out of hands of the main implementing partners. Some of these stakeholders were also involved in forwarding the Online survey questionnaire to their networks – thus introducing some sampling bias depending on stakeholder partners in any city that had access to their network of participants.

The limitation of stakeholder lists for online survey was addressed by using participant lists from Closing Workshops from four cities (Ulaanbaatar, Nasinu, Battambang and Nadee) as the respondents. Given the limitation of who could attend these workshops, these stakeholders were also invited to forward the survey to others in their networks who had participated in the project but did not attend the Closing workshop. For Naga City, a list of 23 stakeholders for the online survey was provided by the Implementing Partner as no closing workshop was held there.

Flexibility in the local application of project approach in each of the cities and consequently, types of stakeholders who participated varied across the respondents of the Online Survey. This is reflective of the focus of city-level activities and stakeholder groups that were active participants. Figure 4.1 is an illustration of the nature of sample variations in terms of familiarity with SDGs. In the sample from Ulaanbaatar, Naga City and Nasinu all respondents were familiar with SDGs, but in Nadee and Battambang, this was 94 and 67 percent respectively.

Figure 4.1
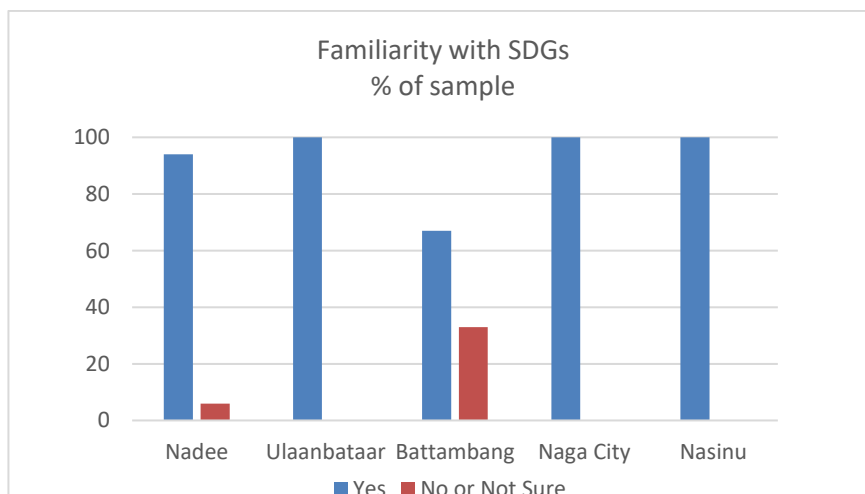
5. Evaluation findings

5.1 Effectiveness

The evaluation examines the extent to which the project objectives and expected accomplishments have been achieved. It also assesses the most significant results along the results framework, with a focus on outcomes achieved.

Active stakeholder coalitions formed and participated in urban governance: This was one of the most significant outcomes valued by respondents in all five cities. Its effectiveness did vary somewhat, as shown in Figure 5.1. A majority of respondents from Online Survey (except in Nasinu) observed that an active multi-stakeholder coalition had been formed by the project. The multi-stakeholder coalitions enabled municipal governments to connect with communities as well as with NGOs and universities/research organizations to identify SURM priorities, collect data and design systemwide analysis, planning and implementation.

Figure 5.1
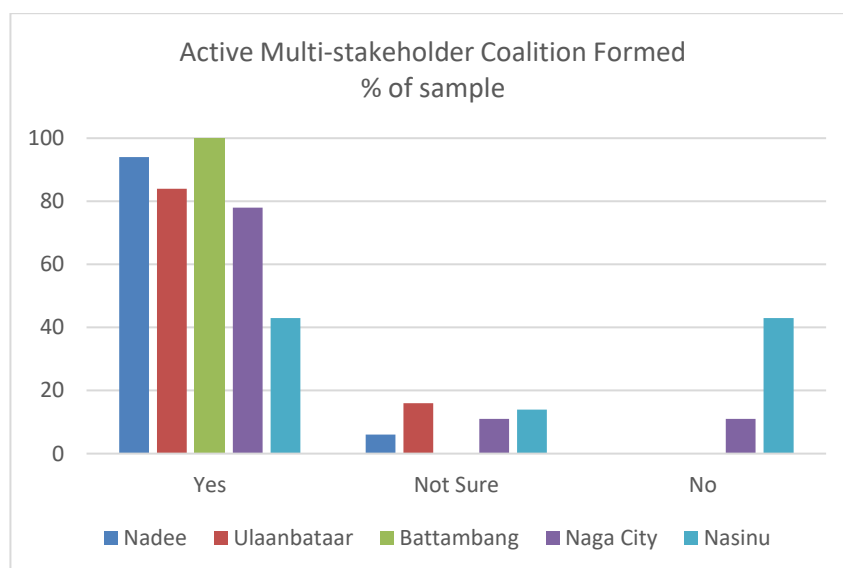
Data collection for strategic planning and visioning on priorities for SURM: Online survey respondents in four of the five cities reported an above average (a rating of 4 on a 5-point scale) for good baseline data collection, with only Nasinu, Fiji giving a rating of 3. However all five cities gave a rating of 4 for usefulness of strategies developed to address SURM needs.

Data collection strategies varied by city, and these were guided by local SURM priorities identified in each city's strategic planning workshops.

Ulaanbaatar conducted a series of studies to document urban forestry problems, livelihoods related to forest products and surveyed users of forestry services for payment for ecosystem services (PES). These results were then used to formulate urban forestry policies and also a draft regulation for PES.

Nadee collected information on industrial and municipal waste to develop a 'waste transfer' data base between industries to enable them to attain 'Green Industry' standards; as well as municipal waste segregation at source procedures and capacity building.

<u>Naga City</u> introduced a SURM data module into the Community Based Monitoring System that is an ongoing 3-yearly national data system. This enabled them to collate a wide-ranging information and relate it to SURM needs for the city.

<u>Battambang and Nasinu</u> collected information on types and amounts of municipal waste being generated and linked this information with opportunities for recycling and capacity building for communities to engage in it. Both cities engaged with communities of informal waste pickers to help build their income generation capacity with better information on recycling opportunities.

Most significant results achieved

<u>Ulaanbaatar</u>:

- Strengthened the legal framework for proper use of urban forest resources;
- Developed regulations and a legal framework for payment of ecosystem services;
- Developed video programs to increase public awareness of the proper use of non-timber forest products (NTFP);
- Improved the capacity of local forest rangers and forestry professionals with guidebooks on pests and fighting forest fires, distributed via the Ulaanbaatar Environment Division;
- Created a shift in urban forestry policy dialogue with a system-wide engagement and analysis.

<u>Nadee</u>:

- Developed a management system for the municipality to support circularization of municipal waste;
- Improve the monitoring and management of industrial waste in the Nadee sub-district, and established a material exchange database for industries;
- Built capacity for private industries to participate in "Green Industry Standards" certification. At the closing of the project, five factories were working towards getting qualified for certification at Levels 1 and 2, with others also interested to attain this certification;
- Conducted advocacy and awareness raising and worked in a pilot community and with migrant workers for circularization of waste;
- Created additional income for local people including vulnerable groups with training for collection and sale of recyclable waste; and production and sale of environmentally friendly products from waste and natural raw materials.

<u>Naga City</u>:

- Barangay ordinance on socialized garbage fee introduced to address budgets needed for better waste management;
- Included an SURM module in the periodic Community Based Monitoring surveys (CBMS) for ongoing monitoring and management;
- Capacity building of informal waste pickers for improving livelihoods;
- Promoted composting capacity building and allocation of land for urban gardening to informal waste pickers;
- Promoted the engagement of youth in SURM with a video making contest with the theme of "Solid waste management at home in the time of pandemic".

<u>Battambang</u>:

- Integrated SURM in the city's Master Plan;
- Linked community to Municipality with App developed by a stakeholder to manage hazardous waste accumulations;
- Provided training on entrepreneurship and business concepts to 27 waste collectors, including 20 women, to improve income.

<u>Nasinu</u>:

- Constructed a community Resource Recovery Facility in one community for recycling. The Facility is intended to provide a drop off station for waste recycling that will be picked up by private recyclers;
- A policy workshop conducted for Nasinu Municipality staff on participatory policy review and development for waste management.

Even though the priorities and strategies for addressing them varied by city, the over-arching project strategy in each case was identical. This underscores the importance of contextual circumstances in designing and implementing SURM. At the same time, the value of the project design was also highlighted with consistent results across all cities with respect to the following key results:

- Multi-stakeholder networks in each city enabled municipalities to improve their connection to communities
- Municipalities valued the ability to access policy relevant information and form relationships with universities/research teams to enable data-based decision making
- Municipalities built capacity and platforms to engage with stakeholders ongoingly
- Concrete institutional and policy results obtained from pilot activities, and others in process (more on this in Sustainability)

The last two years of this 3-year project coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, introducing significant challenges across all project cities. These challenges included:

- Disruptions in activities caused due to shutdowns imposed for controlling the pandemic
- Curtailed in-person workshops and trainings, and adverse effect on community level engagements
- Staffing turnovers and discontinuities in all cities

Project activities, timeframes and budgets were all impacted, and adjustment made with support of ESCAP HQ team to address these and achieve commendable results. Adjustments were made on time lines for deliverables and for additional budgetary support. The project team also modified its service delivery modality, providing support to cities through remote means and utilizing virtual collaborative tools to ensure that proper and timely guidance was given. The project team introduced a creative method of virtual training of trainers in each of the cities, which allowed the core teams to conduct their local visioning workshops with their multi-stakeholder constituents for inclusive decision-making. The evaluations of all workshops indicated generally that the participants of the visioning workshops were satisfied with the modified arrangements for discussing and identifying the project activities.

5.2 Relevance

The main evaluation question on relevance, or the usefulness of project activities and outcomes delivered, was related to assessing the extent to which the project was designed based on demand from beneficiaries. Online survey results indicate a high or excellent rating for relevance, from all cities a median rating of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale. This is reinforced by stakeholder interviews which suggest a very high level of ownership of project activities and a confidence in their ability to continue and expand them after end of the project. Variations in selection of city-level priorities by their stakeholder coalitions was at the heart of the high relevance to beneficiaries. The project design thus ensured a high level of relevance to stakeholder priorities.

Sustainable management of solid municipal waste, and in the case of Nadee industrial waste as well, is a major challenge in all the project cities, and they identified their own ways of addressing it. In the

case of Ulaanbaatar however, they chose to prioritize highly threatened urban forests as a more pressing environmental challenge, thus ensuring high relevance for them. Contributions made to project implementation by all Implementing Partners (Table 2.3) is also indicative of the relevance they associated with this project.

A slight disconnect with relevance was noted for Nasinu, which also has a high budgetary dependence on a garbage levy but this was not addressed in project activities. Similar administrative challenges were addressed in other cities – Naga City and Battambang. In Ulaanbaatar, a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) regulation was developed to generate resources for improved forest management.

Endorsement from higher levels of government was also used as an indicator of relevance from a larger national perspective, and this also varied by project city. Online survey results show differences between cities in terms of endorsement from higher levels of government for city-level SURM initiatives undertaken (Figure 5.2). Between half to three-fourths of respondents indicated that "good endorsement" was received, except in Nasinu where less than one-third of respondents noted good endorsement.

Figure 5.2
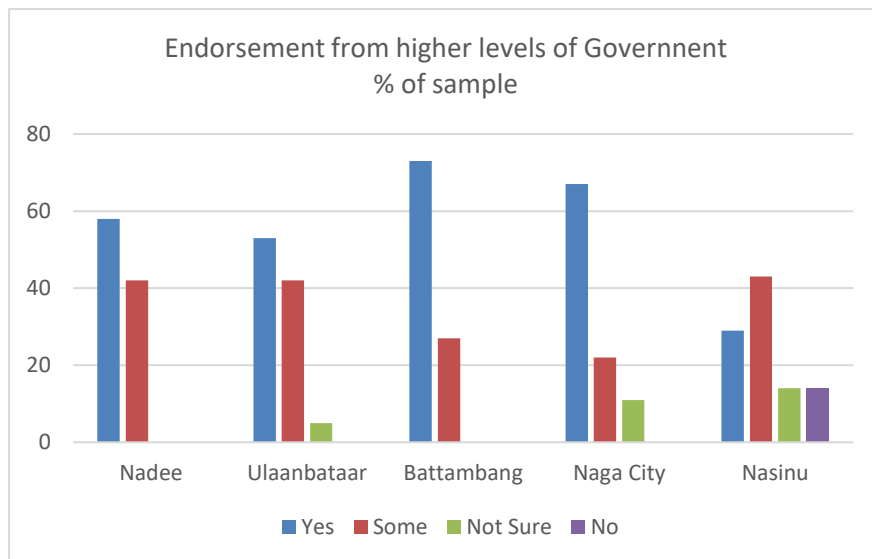
5.3 Efficiency

Efficiency relates to the extent to which human and financial resources were used in the best possible way to implement activities, deliver outputs and achieve objectives and outcomes. KIIs in all cities indicated that despite COVID-19 related disruptions in activities, adjustments were made with modifications in implementation modalities to achieve results. Online survey respondents also rated efficiency at above average in all cities (except Nasinu, where the median rating was 3 on a 5 point scale). They also noted the efficient support of ESCAP in making these adjustments to ensure smooth functioning (Figure 5.3)

Figure 5.3

General Efficiency and ESCAP Support
Median rating on 1-5 scale
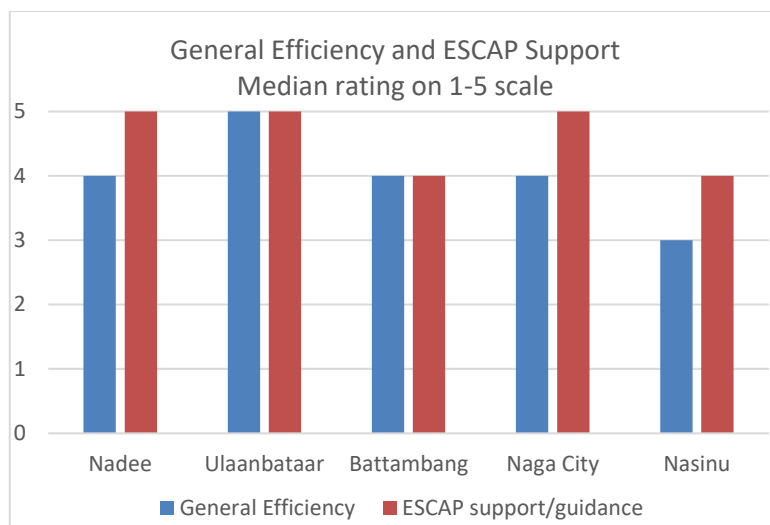
An indicator of efficiency attained that was used in the evaluation was assessing the extent to which partnerships with other organizations enhanced results. We asked the question: to what extent did the project achieve efficiency in implementation through the combination of project stakeholders using comparative advantage and creating synergy? All cities reported synergy created in stakeholder partnerships, though in varying degrees. Figure 5.4 below shows the results on this from the Online Survey. The majority of respondents in all cities, except Nasinu reported that synergy was indeed created.

Figure 5.4

Partnerships Created Synergy
% of sample
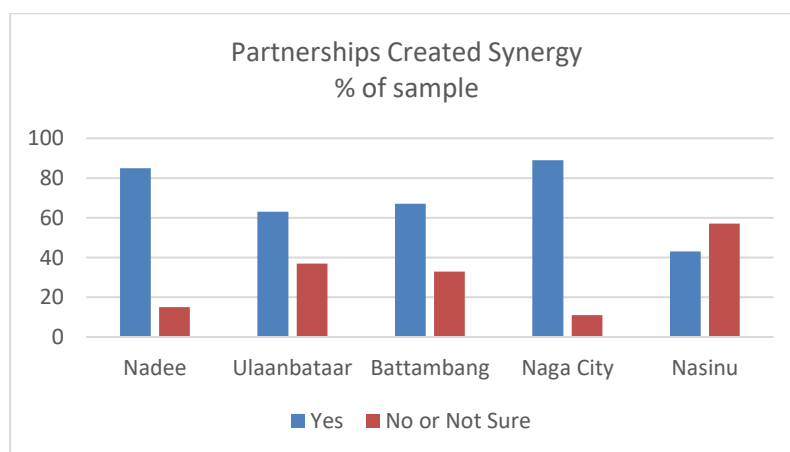
Other observations made with respect to efficiency were:

- Several Implementing Partner leaders observed that while having city governments' partnership was essential for project success, keeping its management out of government bureaucracies was better for its overall implementation efficiency. Project management went smoother since Implementing partners were from NGO sector[7], but able to work closely with municipalities and all other stakeholders;

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[7] Difficulties faced in Nasinu could be largely attributed to strained community relations with the Municipality, frequent leadership turnover there and difficulties faced by CLGF in light of these contextual conditions.

- ESCAP's management approach for tracking progress, and support for adjustments required was good and this enabled efficient achievement of results;
- Staffing turnovers were rampant for many municipalities (eg. Nasinu) and Implementing Partners as well, and this created discontinuities for implementation and stakeholder participation.

5.4. Sustainability

Sustainability issues examined included: i) the extent to which results of the project will be continued and ii) scaled up further at the national or regional levels -- without ESCAP's further involvement, after the end of the project.

In terms of sustainability of activities and results in project cities, there was clear evidence of a high level of ownership by stakeholders, including all five municipalities for continuation without ESCAP's further involvement. Interviews also showed a high level of institutionalization of results and pilot activities in all five cities. Online survey results shown in Figure 5.5, also gave above average rating for sustainability of results (exception was Nasinu,where the median rating was 3 on a 5 point scale). It should be noted that the project also developed a clear exit strategy. This required all project cities to formulate a Strategic Plan with stakeholder participation, creating a road map for activities after project completion that included continuation of institutionalization and policy reforms initiated during the project. This included a Policy Action Plan with measurable indicators that was produced by stakeholders.

Figure 5.5
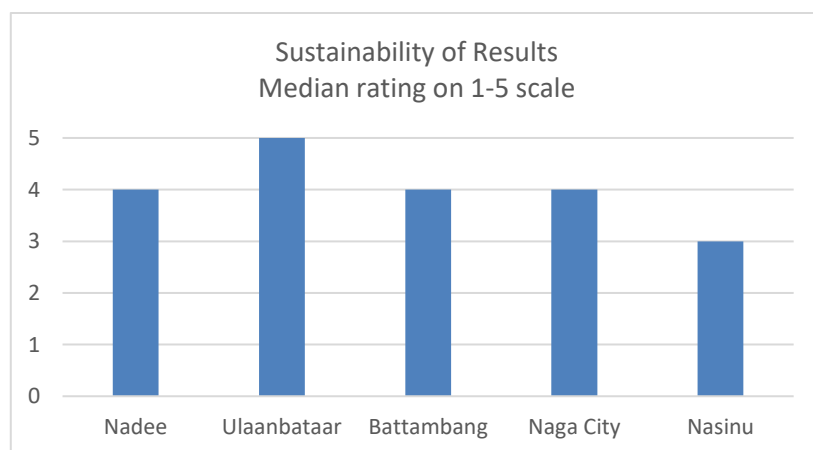
Below are examples of city-level project results that are indicative of sustainability and scaling up of achievements.

Nadee: The municipality has accepted a goal of 10% reduction annually in municipal waste, a system for tracking set up; has a Morandum of Understanding (MOU) with a leading University which plans to continue industrial waste tracking and exchange data base as well as expand it to other parts of Thailand; Green Industry certification work to continue; 11 new projects developed with municipality for follow up work; budget allocated for expanding waste segregation at source.

Ulaanbaatar: Draft PES regulation formulated is likely to be approved and could be taken up in other cities; plans being made for formalizing the multi-stakeholder network to continue to help frame

policies in the environment sector (eg., a thinktank idea being considered for data, research and conferences).

Battambang: SURM strategy integrated into the city's Master Plan, and its implementation now being taken up by other agencies – including Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Global Green Growth Institute; integration of project in Provincial development plan made possible by Deputy Governor of Battambang, for replicating in other cities; Habitat for Humanity exploring scaling up in Siem Reap province if additional funding secured, and doing a city-wide VLR with National University of Battambang.

Naga City: Barangay Ordinance on socialized solid waste tariff passed, and is a template for other Barangays; SURM module integrated in city's Community Based Monitoring Survey (CBMS) format and will be available for monitoring status every three years. Scale up measures for Philippines being developed in partnership with Manila based solid waste management enterprise – Green Antz.

Nasinu: Resource Recovery Center constructed in one community, and the Nasinu Town Council (NTC) plans to expand this concept using a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model. NTC also plans to expand its engagement with communities, using the training on formulating policies with community participation it received during the project. CLGF has links with Pacific Urban Forum and exploring that as a means of scaling up in Fiji and the region.

Outreach and scaling up at the Regional level

This component of project activities started in 2019, and was picking up momentum as city-level work and reporting was ending. At the time of this evaluation, it was being taken forward by Implementing Partners and other stakeholders with support of ESCAP.

An e-learning tool has been developed based on experiences from this project, and was launched in December 2021. Prior to its release, ESCAP sent out broadcasts on social media announcing its release in an effort to disseminate the final knowledge product.

The activities below represent examples of regional outreach activities of project experiences and learnings, and this is expected to continue after the project ends.

- In the 7th Asia Pacific Urban Forum hosted by ESCAP in October 2019, Naga, Ulaanbaatar and Nasinu each were engaged in thematic panels to incorporate the cities in regional forums, where project methods and tools were presented.

- The project was presented at the Asia Pacific Mayor's Academy, organized by ESCAP.

- Regional Partners Forum@Quito+5, 28-29 October 2021. At this Forum the project experiences from the 5 cities were presented.

- The Mayor of Naga participated in the second class of the Asia-Pacific Mayors Academy (2020-2021) and shared the project initiative. Naga City stakeholders attended the Voluntary National Review-Voluntary Local Review (VNR-VLR) Lab on 16-18 March 2021 which ESCAP co-organized.

- CLGF presented the project at webinars organized by ADB, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Developnet (OECD) and UNDP in April 2021 on the topic of Localizing SDGs. Also presented at a webinar by EAROPH Australia on 30 April 2021.

- Nadee presented the project at the virtual 15th Asia Pacific Roundtable for Sustainable Consumption and Production in May 2021. Nadee also a panelist at the City Expo Malaysia 2021 on the occasion of Association of East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Planners Network Launch in November 2021.

5.5. Gender and Equity[8]

The evaluation examined the extent to which gender and equity issues were integrated into the design and implementation of the project, including care taken in terms of balanced participation in the multi-stakeholders meetings and workshops. Aspects of gender identification in baseline analysis, capacity building and pilot projects were explored. Respondents of interviews and online survey from all project cities stated that these issues were well integrated in project design and activities.

Some specific points of note made by stakeholders were:

- Nasinu project included a livelihood component for waste sector employment for women and youth and is reviewing opportunities for household minorities to engage in generating income.
- In Ulaanbaatar, gender issues were integrated in study on use of forest products and in 'willingness to pay' study.
- Equity issues were considered in Naga City and Battambang with inclusion of informal waste picker groups in consultations, and training for recycling for better livelihoods.
- In Nadee, marginalized migrant worker community leaders were integrated in stakeholder consultations to elicit their participation in promoting a circular economy in their communities.

5.6. Innovations

As a DA project, the importance of testing innovative strategies and providing lessons for larger application is addressed in the evaluation. Questions asked included: 'what innovative strategies or measures proved to be successful' and instances of incremental or radical innovations observed by stakeholders were recorded.

Overall, a central feature of the project involved city municipalities to take a leading role in gathering diverse stakeholders to help identify and find solutions to SURM priorities -- this was found to be very innovative. Cities tend to generally be receivers of policy guidance from provincial or federal governments, and getting such attention from a leading international organization helped in empowerment as well as capacitating the cities to take a leading role in managing the challenge of SURM. The project also discovered early in its implementation, that this innovative design feature also encouraged cities and stakeholders to identify priorities and tailor their analyses based on information available and stakeholder capacities, and design solutions specific to their situations. This innovative feature is seen to contribute to a high level of ownership of project activities by stakeholders, ensuring good sustainability and scalability of activities.

This high ownership by stakeholders also facilitated synergy and cooperation and many innovations gained traction, besides the mastering of technology for virtual meetings necessitated by COVID-19 restrictions. Examples of notable city-level innovations cited by stakeholders were:

- Nadee: bringing "green industry" certification option to local industries; cooperation between different government departments under stewardship of new Mayor; city's partnership with a leading University's Environmental Engineering Department for database to enable waste transfers between industries.

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[8] It may be noted that this project was designated as an ESCAP Gender Marker GEM1 project. GEM 1 means a project contributes to gender equality/women's empowerment in a limited way.

- Ulaanbaatar: shift in urban forestry dialogue, and seeing urban spaces and forests as 'soft infrastructure' connected to physical and mental well-being; PES regulation though grounded in Mongolian environmental policy, is an innovation.
- Battambang: Involved youth networks in advocacy for circular economy; App launched for community to connect with municipality for better solid and hazardous waste management.
- Naga City: Enabling flexibiliy in CBMS data to collect waste management information; connected waste pickers with phone App to join plastic recycling facility.
- Nasinu: Policy development with community engagement training for NTC staff was innovative; connecting the municipality with CSOs and private sector is also a new way of doing business for them.

5.7. Localization of Agenda 2030

Enhancing the ability of urban decision makers to implement SDGs at the local level in a participatory, evidence based and integrated manner was the main goal of the project. Specifically, the focus was on enabling localization of SDGs for the thematic subset, related to sustainable management of urban resources. This pilot project has demonstrated an innovative methodology for localizing Agenda 2030 for SURM goals. The results achieved include multi-stakeholder participation and engagement for identifying needs and their solutions and implementing them in a holistic and system-wide manner. This evaluation has recorded a very high level of local ownership of activities, with high sustainability of results. This approach along with lessons learnt, are an important contribution to the localization of Agenda 2030, and needs to be promoted.

An aspect of this approach that may be developed further, would be building-up local monitoring and evaluation capacity to ongoingly monitor achievement of the SDG goals that the local stakeholders have identified. This would involve capacity building for evaluation from a diagnostic perspective along the TOC for achieving the goals. Such capacity to monitor local change can provide a good foundation for conducting future VLRs. As is common in projects that have external evaluations upon completion, there is limited focus on building capacity for evaluability, which would require stakeholder engagement in evaluation and more of a participatory process. This limits ability for conducting VLRs, and could be considered in future projects involving SDGs localization by ESCAP. Projects that require external summative evaluations, have a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan oriented mainly to tracking and documenting activities towards achieving the project outputs and outcomes, mostly in the nature of progress reporting (vs. evaluating activities for progress towards TOC goals[9]). Since data limitations at the city level are not uncommon, these outcomes have limited evaluability, as demonstrated by this project. Another option that can be explored for replication of this project design, or other SDG localization projects, is to integrate evaluative capacity building of partners (including identifying their TOC and progress indicators) into project design. This would improve ability of stakeholders for not only documenting but also evaluating local progress towards achieving their SDGs, and improve overall evaluability.

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[9] Workshop evaluations were conducted and were oriented to evaluating the activity from participants perspective, and not for the activity streams of building participation, analysis and integration.

6. Conclusions

The overall performance of the project on all the evaluation criteria was found to be superior or excellent, with the exception of Nasinu where it was rated at average on some of the criteria[10]. This rating is based on results of the Online Survey, and is consistent with feedback given in stakeholder interviews (Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1
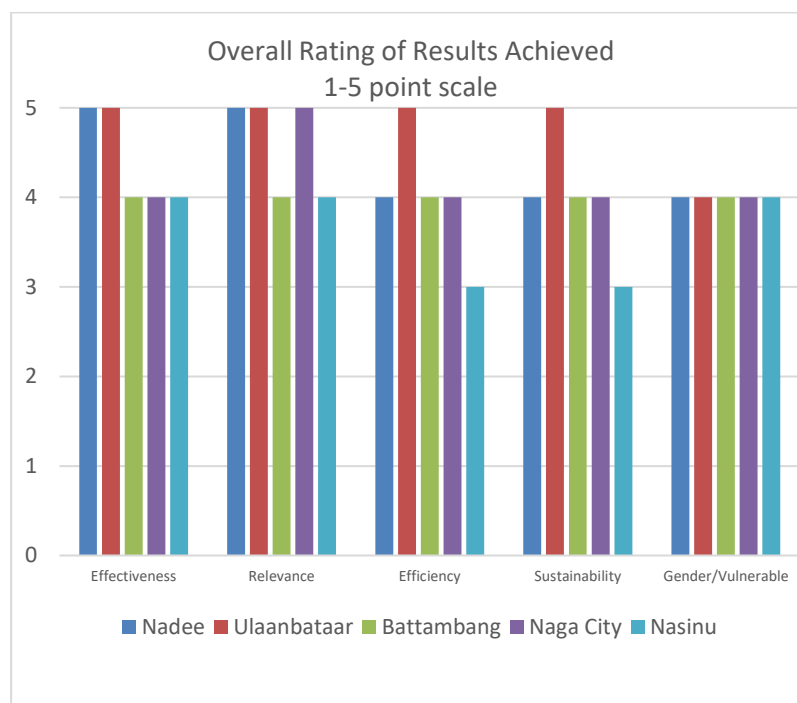
Other conclusions that are relevant from the perspective of project design and contextual conditions contributing to outcomes are:

- Project design was very good for providing relevance and stakeholder ownership, but challenging for providing technical support due to locally driven processes. ESCAP management was supportive and flexible in adjusting to the stakeholder priorities and challenges, and can be credited for enabling achievements. The high level of stakeholder ownership of project activities is also correlated with significant evidence of sustainability at institutional level.

- Appropriate identification of stakeholders, convening capacity and good management/coordination by Implementing Partners were critical for providing synergy and achievement of results.

- Contextualizing success stories observed at the city level is important, especially since city governments generally have limited powers. It is seen that a good enabling environment as well as support from provincial/federal levels was essential for cities with superior results.

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[10] Nasinu faced many challenges, including multiple leadership changes, and strained relations of community stakeholders with the municipality due to political factors.

- Municipalities consistently found value in multistakeholder partnerships, especially with communities and researchers or universities. This enabled them to formulate data driven policy reforms to enable regulatory reforms by legislatures and administrative bodies.

- SDGs localization requires trans-sectoral engagement and capacity to 'break out of' traditional ways of 'business as usual'. This was challenging. Also, data availability and capacity for large scale comprehensive data gathering was limited, making it difficult to set up a tracking system at city level for assessing progress for achieving the SDG goals. An opportunity that may be explored in future SDG localization projects would be to include capacity building for stakeholders on evaluability of these efforts. This would require contextualization of the SDG goals (as was done in this project) and also localizing the TOC and identifying indicators to track and modify activities. By integrating this aspect in project design, the ability of local stakeholders to ongoingly track and improve their efforts for achieving their SDG goals, as well as for conducing VLRs would be improved.

- Community outreach for SURM practices was severely curtailed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but good efforts to involve marginalized migrant and waste picker communities were made.

- Outreach of project city experiences and learning at regional level have been taking place since 2019, and expected to continue even after the project ends. However, continued ESCAP facilitation will be required for significant impact at scale from this project.

- Results for Nasinu in all the metrics assessed in this evaluation were found to be lagging in comparison to the other cities. Contextual factors that played a role in this. Nasinu Town Council was lacking in leadership stability during the first two years of project implementation, and has a history of limited community partnership, which reduced stakeholder participation. With the current strong leadership in place, an inclusive policy development is required to ensure stakeholders of Nasinu town take ownership of the future they want to see for their town.

7. Lessons learned/good practices

One of the main lessons is that SDGs localization support has to be contextualized to local priorities and policy/institutional environments to enable lasting benefits. The three pillars on which the project was built – i) inclusive multi-stakeholder governance; ii) building an evidence base for decision making and iii) system-wide analysis for planning and implementation - proved effective in producing results and was welcomed by municipal governments in all five project cities. However, an aspect of the database that may need to be refined further – is including capacity building for evaluability of results and progress being achieved.

This evaluation demonstrates that ability of city municipalities to formulate change is strengthened when good data and analysis, is supported by an enabling provincial/federal policy environment. Thus, Naga City with its good data based on SURM module integration into CBMS surveys, and Nadee and Battambang with good Provincial backing, all made significant gains on institutional and regulatory reforms. Also, Ulaanbaatar with strong backing from recent legislative municipality legislation, was in a good position to institute policy reforms as well. Nasinu, on the other hand had limiting enabling environment in this project.

Capacity of cities is constrained by budgetary factors, and in many cases this is linked to tariffs for waste disposal. Linking improvements in generating these budgets to sustainable waste management and support of recycling was found to be effective.

Scaling up of lessons needs to integrate contextual factors that contributed to results. For example, variations in previous links that municipalities and Implementing Partners had with communities shaped how well and with whom multi-stakeholder engagement worked, and performance and results achieved. Breaking out of 'silos of comfort' based on past sectoral level engagements was also found to be challenging in this regard.

8. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: ESCAP should adopt a flexible approach to pilot project implementation for SDGs localization, as demonstrated by this project. This flexibility ensures it is aligned with local needs and requirements.

ESCAP management was supportive and flexible in adjusting to the stakeholder priorities and challenges, and this can be credited for enabling achievements. This project also demonstrated that ability to respond to local needs by project cities created a high level of ownership and sustainability. Though this was challenging for project management that has to work within ESCAP's budgetary structures, the ability to adapt the design and technical support as priorities became defined was a strength, and this needs to be encouraged and supported by the organization.

Recommendation 2: Future support by ESCAP for SURM should involve provincial/federal agencies unless city has clear budgetary and policy reform capacity.

The ability of city municipalities to create effective multi-stakeholder partnerships also varies with their engagement history with communities and stakeholders as well as their policy reform/budgetary authority. Some municipalities have limited power so they had to work with provincial governments. SURM also requires attention to municipal resource management policies and budgetary resources available for circular economy initiatives and capacity building. Therefore, explicit attention may be required for integrating provincial/federal policymakers when municipality capacities are limited.

Recommendation 3: ESCAP may consider integrating a monitoring and evaluation plan in the design and implementation of pilot projects.

This would build local capacity and improve evaluability of locally driven projects, as an added dimension to progress reporting for achieving Agenda 2030. Baseline information related to the TOC should be available and well documented to the extent possible, and evaluation integrated along the activity chain, not just from a narrow activity reporting based perspective, but be thematically goals driven. This could improve evaluation capacity of stakeholders, improve evaluability at the activity level and also help to improve the effectiveness of stakeholder participation. This recommendation applies to ESCAP and to DA projects overall.

Recommendation 4: ESCAP should consider replicating and scaling up of this pilot project approach and tools, with practical lessons from processes gained from its successful implementation.

There is good potential for replication and scaling up of this project throughout the region to carry the momentum going forward. The contextualized lessons and practices should be taken from the e-learning training that has been developed by ESCAP with the detailed process documented for cities that are interested in developing their own SURM approach and project. Opportunities can be created through ESCAP's convening power and various outreach platforms. Several of the project countries are also considering scaling up, and this can also be supported.

Recommendation 5: ESCAP should continue to promote the online learning course and further develop a tracking system for feedback and improvement.

The knowledge product for e-learning should ongoingly be tested for feedback after its release. For it to be an effective learning tool ESCAP should consider including a mechanism for tracking feedback for it to be a useful and relevant tool.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Evaluation TOR

UNITED NATIONS
ESCAP
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Terms of Reference: Project on
"Integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into local action in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia-Pacific"

1. INTRODUCTION

Project Title:

Integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into local action in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific

Short Description:

This Project aims to strengthen local government and key urban stakeholders' capacity to implement the 2030 Agenda in the area of urban resource management by supporting the processes of

- **Collaborative and adaptive urban governance** through multi-stakeholder coalitions;
- **Integrated analysis and planning** through systems approaches; and
- **Evidence-based decision-making** using data, information, analysis, and dissemination.

In 2018, UN ESCAP and UN-Habitat invited secondary cities and towns in Asia and the Pacific to join the Project through a Call for Expression of Interest. Five pilot cities were chosen through a competitive process, in which more than 80 cities applied. Local implementing partners were selected to coordinate on-the-ground activities. The partners and cities are as follows:

- [Habitat for Humanity Cambodia](#) – Battambang, Cambodia
- [Naga City People's Council](#) – Naga City, Camarines Sur, Philippines
- [Ecological Alert and Recovery Thailand (EARTH) Foundation](#) – Nadee, Thailand
- [Commonwealth Local Government Forum](#) – Nasinu, Fiji
- [The Asia Foundation](#) – Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

The project was launched at a Regional Inception Workshop in Bangkok, Thailand that brought together stakeholders from the pilot cities including representatives from local government, non-government and community-based organizations, academia and the private sector. Each Pilot city established multi-stakeholder networks for co-learning and peer-support on Localizing the 2030 Agenda through sustainable urban resource management (SURM). The cities selected priority SURM sectors ranging from solid waste management to urban forestry to focus on throughout the Project.

To better understand the existing social, economic, and environmental systems, regulations, and policies in place, the pilot cities gathered sector specific data and conducted research. Through a series of workshops, ESCAP and UN-Habitat supported the pilot cities with gaining experience in making evidence-based decisions on their priority sectors to enhance livelihood opportunities. The cities also examined linkages between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their SURM focus areas and used a variety of tools to plan and implement SURM pilot projects.

Building on these projects the cities have been aligning activities with the 2030 Agenda and local, provincial, and national plans and policies. Currently, ESCAP is developing an online course, based on the cities' experiences, on Localizing the SDGs through SURM to further disseminate methods and training tools across the Asia-Pacific region. ESCAP is also working with the pilot cities to develop Strategy Papers and Policy Action Plans to lay the foundation for Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), continuing progress on SDGs beyond the Project. Closing Workshops in August and September will highlight lessons learned and best practices and discuss sustainability plans and approaches to institutionalize Project impacts, and monitor and evaluate the results, well after Project closure.

Short reason for the evaluation:

Conducted as per the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) Development Account (DA) guidelines requirement. Please see details in the next section.

Timing of the evaluation.

1 August to 30 November 2021 (4 months)

2. EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

2.1 Evaluation Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is to promote organizational learning and accountability, and support results-based management. It will generate information on the results achieved and lessons learned to inform DA annual reporting to the UN General Assembly and the relevant reports of ESCAP to the Commission and other stakeholders. The evaluation results will also inform future programme design and implementation of relevant ESCAP capacity development work.

Main users of the evaluation results will be the UN General Assembly which provides the funds for the DA, the DA fund manager at UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ESCAP management and staff, in particular the Environment and Development Division, and the stakeholders in the participating countries as well as other interested stakeholders in participating and other Asia Pacific countries.

2.2 Evaluation Objectives

The objectives of the evaluation are to:

1) Assess the project performance against the evaluation criteria: effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability, gender and human rights mainstreaming, and any other cross-cutting issues, as deemed relevant; and

2) Formulate lessons learned and action-oriented recommendations to inform management decision-making and improve future project design and implementation.

The evaluation analyses the level of achievement of project results at the level of objectives and expected accomplishments, making use of the project results framework, implementation processes and contextual factors, establishing as much as possible causal linkages guided by the evaluation criteria and questions. The evaluation will be conducted in line with ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation

Policy and Guidelines[11] and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards for evaluation.

2.3 Evaluation Scope

The evaluation includes the design, strategy and implementation of the project over the entire period of its implementation. The evaluation covers the implementation and results of the project in all of the participating countries. The assessment covers all modes of implementation of the project, including national and regional workshops, trainings and additional activities as agreed upon based on consultations with project countries. The desk review of the evaluation will include all relevant project and related documentation, including the accompanying reports of project activities.

In terms of results the evaluation will focus on outcome and output level changes. As indicated in the ESCAP guidelines, outcomes are the likely or achieved effects of an intervention's outputs. Outcomes reflect the changes in the behaviour or practices of the target group(s)/countries that ESCAP intends to influence, including through actions taken collectively with its development partners. They also reflect those benefits and actions taken by the target groups/countries through the project interventions.

The evaluation is expected to take place between 1 August to 30 November. The five project cities/countries that are included are Battambang/Cambodia, Nadee/Thailand, Naga City/Philippines, Nasinu/Fiji, and Ulaanbaatar/Mongolia. The stakeholders involved include national, provincial, subnational and community-level representatives from the government, municipalities, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, private sector, international and bilateral organizations. From the United Nations family, UN-Habitat supported the project from the project design stage. Due to the on-going global pandemic, mission travel to the project sites will not be carried out but instead the evaluation will be conducted remotely.

2.4 Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The following evaluation criteria and questions to assess the project performance will be considered and further refined following consultations with project management and other stakeholders during the evaluation inception period.

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions
Effectiveness	• What are the most significant results at the regional and national levels achieved or contributed by the project? Describe the project activities/outputs that lead to the results and present evidence of project's contribution to the results. • How did the adjustments made to project due to the COVID-19 pandemic affect the achievement of the project's expected results as stated in its original results framework?
Relevance	• To what extent was the project designed based on demand from the target beneficiaries? • What adjustments, if any, were made to the project activities and modality, as a direct consequence of the COVID-19 situation, or in response to the new priorities of member States? • To what extent did the adjustments allow the project to effectively respond to the new priorities of member States that emerged as a result of COVID-19?

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[11] ESCAP, ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines, 2017, available on the ESCAP webpage at http://www.unescap.org/partners/monitoring-and-evaluation/evaluation.

Efficiency	• To what extent did the project achieve efficiency in implementation through the combination of project stakeholders involved, making use of comparative advantages and the creation of synergy? • To what extent has partnering with other organizations enabled or enhanced reaching of results?
Innovation	• What innovative strategies or measures of the project (addressing new topics or using new means of delivery or a combination thereof) proved to be successful?
Sustainability	• To what extent can results of the project be continued without ESCAP's further involvement?
Gender and human rights mainstreaming.	• To what extent were gender and human rights integrated into the design and implementation of the project, informed by relevant and tailored human rights and gender analysis?
The 2030 Agenda/ SDGs	• To what extent has the project outputs contributed to regional and national efforts to achieve the SDGs

3. METHODOLOGY

In assessing the results achieved, the evaluation will make use of a **theory of change approach** to understand the actual results achieved and the process of achieving results. The development of the theory of change should be guided by the results framework of the project and the actual implementation strategy and delivery of outputs.

The evaluation will use a mix of data sources collected through multiple methods, with analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Results will be triangulated where possible.
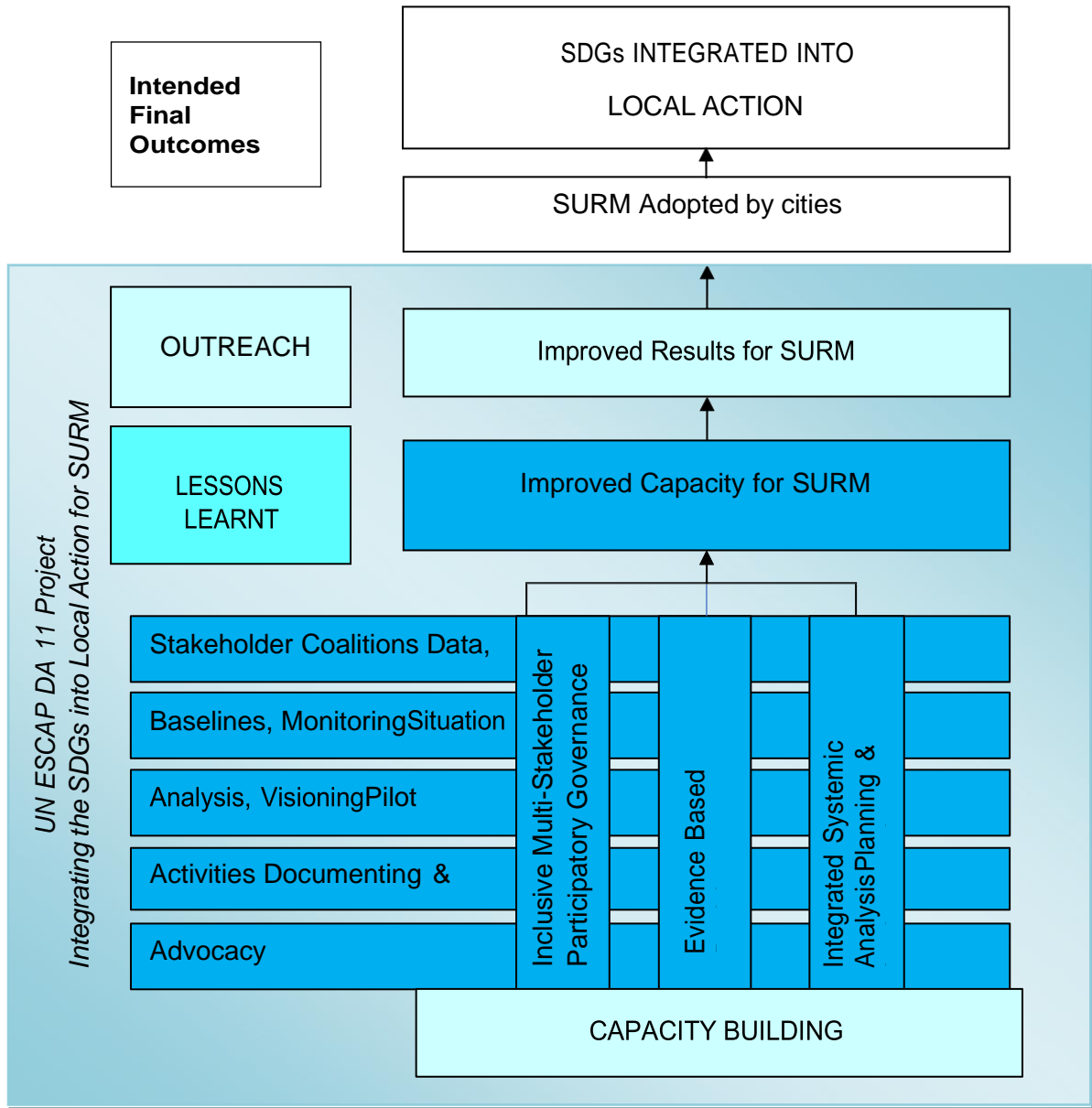
Data collection will include but not be limited to the following:

1. A desk review of relevant documents, including the project document, progress and terminal reports, activity reports, results of survey questionnaires, relevant official correspondences with stakeholders, any strategic documents related to the project.

2. Detailed online consultations and interviews with project staff from ESCAP and implementing/ collaborating partners and representatives from beneficiary countries/governments.

3. An on-line survey to relevant male and female stakeholders and other relevant groups.

Data will be disaggregated by sex and other relevant social categories. The evaluation will undertake a transparent and participatory evaluation process that will involve male and female stakeholders identified in the stakeholder analysis, including: the reference group, development partners and target beneficiaries in all key evaluation tasks.

In analyzing the data, the evaluation will use qualitative and quantitative approaches, and provide charts and direct quotations. Using the data to assess evaluation against the selected criteria. Gender and human rights mainstreaming are essential components of data analysis in all ESCAP evaluations and take place on three levels: 1) project design; 2) project implementation; 3) project outcomes. Data analysis will enable useful, evidence-based findings, the conclusions and recommendations.

Annex 2: Project results framework (Implied Theory of change)

Intended Final Outcomes

SDGs INTEGRATED INTO LOCAL ACTION

SURM Adopted by cities

UN ESCAP DA 11 Project
Integrating the SDGs into Local Action for SURM

OUTREACH

Improved Results for SURM

LESSONS LEARNT

Improved Capacity for SURM

Stakeholder Coalitions Data,

Baselines, MonitoringSituation

Analysis, VisioningPilot

Activities Documenting &

Advocacy

Inclusive Multi-Stakeholder Participatory Governance

Evidence Based

Integrated Systemic AnalysisPlanning &

CAPACITY BUILDING

Annex 3: Evaluation matrix

The Indicators and Sources of Information for addressing the Evaluation Criteria and Evaluation Questions.

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions	Indicators	Sources of Information			
			Project Docs	ESCAP Project Team	Imple-menting Partners	City Stake-holders[12]
Effectiveness *The extent to which the project objective and expected accomplishments have been achieved. A project is considered effective when its activities produce the desired results.*	• What are the most significant results at the i) national and ii) regional level achieved or contributed by the Project activities and outputs?	• Active Stakeholder Coalition	X	X	X	X
		• Stakeholders participate in Urban Governance	X	X	X	X
		• Baseline assessment done, data and monitoring information produced and disseminated	X	X	X	X
		• Integrated analysis and planning done, policy coherence and pilots developed	X	X	X	X
		• Pilots implemented and Results produced	X	X	X	X
		• City Strategy Papers and Policy plans done	X	X	X	X
	• How did adjustments made to project due to COVID-19 pandemic affect achievement	• Qualitative reporting	X	X	X	X
Relevance *the usefulness of activities and outputs delivered to the target group.*	• To what extent was the project designed based on demand from beneficiaries?	Procedures, and agreement by stakeholders	X	X	X	X
		Local resources mobilized	X	X	X	

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[12] Stakeholder interviews adapted based on their participation in the project

	Did adjustments made due to COVID-19 pandemic influence key intended outcomes?	Nature of adjustments made	X	X	X	X
	Did the pandemic influence local priorities, and how did the project respond?	Documentation of shift in priorities, and project response	X	X	X	
Efficiency *The extent to which human and financial resources were used in the best possible way to implement activities, deliver outputs and achieve objectives/ outcomes.*	To what extent did the project achieve efficiency in implementation through the combination of project stakeholders, using comparative advantage, and creating synergy?	From the perspective of local context, resources used appropriately and fully utilized	X	X	X	X
	To what extent did partnerships with other organizations enhanced results?	Inputs from stakeholders in a cost-efficient way	X	X	X	X
		Adjustments made to timing of outputs due to COVID-19 and efficiency	X	X	X	X
Innovation	What innovative strategies or measures proved to be successful?	Instances of incremental or radical innovation observed by stakeholders	X	X	X	X
Sustainability *The likelihood that the benefits of the project will continue in the future.*	To what extent can results of the project be continued and scaled up without ESCAP's further involvement?	• Stability of stakeholder coalitions	X	X	X	X
		• Pilot activities initiated durable behavior change for people or institutions	X	X	X	X
		• Sharing of results getting attention of other cities nationally or regionally	X	X	X	X
		• Additional opportunities for scaling up	X	X	X	X

| Gender and human rights mainstreaming

This criterion assesses the extent to which gender considerations have been incorporated in the project design and implementation.	To what extent were gender and human rights integrated into the design and implementation of the project?	• Gender and human rights issues identified in baseline analysis	X	X	X	X
		• Capacity building tailored to gender and human rights	X	X	X	X
		• Pilot projects paid attention to gender and human rights	X	X	X	X
The 2030 Agenda/SDGs	To what extent has the project outputs contributed to regional and national efforts to achieve SDGs	• Documented results at city level for SURM	X	X	X	X
		• Institutional Capacity for SURM improved at city level	X	X	X	X
		• Outreach efforts have scale-up possibility in the country and region	X	X	X	X

Annex 4: Data collection instrument for Online Survey

Sustainable Urban Resource Management by -------- Municipality with ---------- and UN ESCAP

The purpose of this Survey is to request your feedback on the Sustainable Urban Resource Managemen Project carried out by ---------- Municipality with --------------- and UN ESCAP. Your responses are fully confidential and we request that you complete the form in full, so that your responses can be entered into the learning data base for this Project.

This Project was started in 2018 and is completing in November 2021. Its aim was to strengthen capacity of City Governments to partner with key stakeholders for implementing Sustainable Development Goals for Urban Resource Management. It was built on three pillars: collaborative urban governance, integrated analysis and planning, and evidence based decision-making.

1.   1. Which Stakeholder Group do you belong to ?

Mark only one oval.

◯ Government Official

◯ University or Research

◯ Civil Society Organization

◯ Private Sector or business

◯ Community member or group

◯ International Organization

◯ Other: _____

2.   2. Which Gender do you identify as ?

Mark only one oval.

◯ Female -

◯ Male

◯ Prefer not to say

Participation in Project

3.   2.1 Please tell us about your participation in the project

Mark only one oval.

◯ Only participated in the Closing Workshop -- September 8-9 2021

◯ Participated in Closing Workshop and also Other Events or Actvities

◯ Didn't participate in Closing Workshop, but did join other Events or Activities

Please continue to next section if your answer is "2" or "3"
IF YOU ONLY PARTICIPATED IN THE CLOSING WORKSHOP, YOUR OPINIONS HAVE BEEN RECORDED IN THE EVALUATION C
THE CLOSING WORKSHOP. THANK YOU VERY MUCH. YOU MAY END THE SURVEY NOW.

Project's effectiveness in producing results	Expected accomplishments included: active multi-stakeholder coalition for urban governance, baseline data produced and disseminated, strategic analysis done and pilot projects implemented.

4.   3.1 What is your overall assessment of results produced by the project activities?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unsatisfactory	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Excellent

5.   3.2 Has the city government achieved an active multi-stakeholder coalition with many partners?

Mark only one oval per row.

	Column 1
Yes	◯
No	◯
Not sure	◯

6.   3.3. Was good baseline data and information gathered for understanding the important sustainable urban resource management problems ?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Excellent

7.   3.4. Were useful strategies developed for improving sustainable urban resource manageme or conservation ?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all useful	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Excellent

8.   3.5 Is there Community-level improvement of awareness for better urban resource/waste management?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No improvement	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Great improvement t

9.   3.6 Were activities and results adversely impacted due to COVID-19?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very little	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	A great deal

Project's relevance for improving urban management of waste/resources

10.   4.1. Please consider the extent to which the project's goals and activities are in line with th city's needs for sustainable urban waste/resource management ?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	A great deal

11. **4.2 Was there good endorsement from higher levels of government (provincial, federal levels) for this work at the city level?**

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes, good endorsement was present

◯ Some endorsement was present

◯ No, it was negligible or absent

◯ I am not sure

12. **4.3 What was the level of agreement by stakeholders on strategies and approach to solutions for SURM?**

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very little	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	A great deal

Efficiency of project's implementation

13. **5.1 What was the level of effectiveness in communications and coordination of activities with stakeholders**

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unsatisfactory	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Excellent

14.   5.2. Did stakeholder partnerships use comparative advantage to enhance results produce
?

Mark only one oval.

⬭ Yes

⬭ No

⬭ Not sure

15.   5.3 How would you rate the overall support and guidance provided by UN ESCAP?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unsatisfactory	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Excellent

Sustainability of project activities and results	Sustainability is achieved when results of the Project are continued after UN ESCAP support has ended.

16.   6.1. How would you rate the outcomes indicating that the project's benefits will continue i
the future?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	A great deal

17.   6.2 Please give your opinion on sustainability of the following results

Mark only one oval per row.

	Yes	No	Cannot say
Multistakeholder coalition created partnerships that will continue	◯	◯	◯
Capacity building outreach will have continued results	◯	◯	◯
Pilot activities will continued	◯	◯	◯
Activities started will be expanded by city government	◯	◯	◯
New initiatives in this and other cities for SURM are likely	◯	◯	◯

Mainstreaming for gender and vulnerable groups

Extent to which these considerations have been incorporated in design and implementation of Project

18.   7.1. To what extent were gender and vulnerable group needs integrated into the project ?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	A great deal

The Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 Agenda

19.   8.1. Are you familiar with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ?

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Not sure

If answered "Yes" for question 8.1, please answer question 8.2

20.   8.2. To what extent did project's goals and outputs contribute to the achievement of national goals to achieve SDGs ?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	A great deal

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS EVALUATION

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Google Forms

Annex 5: List of individuals interviewed

Evaluation Reference Group, ESCAP

	Persons Consulted/Interviewed	Dates	Sector Information
1	Edgar Dante	Multiple	Chief, Evaluation Unit Strategy and Programme Management Division, ESCAP
2	Curt Garrigan	Multiple	Chief Sustainable Urban Development Section Environment and Development Division ESCAP
3	K. Philip Kang	Multiple	Economic Affairs Officer Sustainable Urban Development Section Environment and Development Division ESCAP
4	Eva Wong	Multiple	Regional Project Coordinator Sustainable Urban Development Section Environment and Development Division ESCAP

Nadee, Thailand

	Persons Interviewed	Date	Sector information
1	Dr. Ms. Chuthatip Maneepong	September 10, 2021	EARTH Foundation Project Manager
2	Mr. Atsadang Wisetwongsa	September 23, 2021	Nadee Municipality Acting Mayor and City Clerk
3	Prof. Songkeart Phattarapattamawong	Septeber15, 2021	Researcher and University Professor in Environmental Engineering
4	Ms. Phusita	September 17, 2021	Community Health Volunteer
5	Mr. Partis Chaichana,	September 29, 2021	Red Bull Distillery, Owner and Manager

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

	Persons Interviewed	Date	Sector Information
1.	Mark Koenig	September 9, 2021	Country Representative, The Asia Foundation(TAF), Mongolia
2.	Ms. N. Ariunaa	September 10, 2021	Project Manager (TAF Mongolia) Project Focal Point
3.	E. Enkhbold	September 3, 2021	Project Officer (TAF Mongolia)
4.	M. Chinssanaa	September 10, 2021	Head, Forestry Unit, Ulaanbaatar City Government, Environment Department
5.	T.S. Banzragch	September 9, 2021	Director, Research and Training Institute of Forestry and Wood Industry, Mongolian University of Science and Technology (RTI-FWI)
6.	S. Amartuvshin	September 10, 2021	Economist, National University of Mongolia, Business School
7.	Ms. Delgerjargal	September 21, 2021	Professor of Forestry and Forest Economics, Mongolian University of Life Sciences
8.	Ms. Nasanbayar	September 13, 2021	Environmental Journalist, with NGO Tanaid Modtariya

Battambang, Cambodia

	Persons Interviewed	Date	Sector Information
1.	Ms. Bernadette Bolo-Duthy	October 5, 2021	National Director, Habitat for Humanity, Cambodia
2.	Mr. Bunheng Kat	October 2, 2021	Habitat for Humanity-Cambodia Project Focal Point
3.	Mr. Noi Chek	September 8, 2021	Municipality of Battambang
4.	Mr. Neang Chanthara	September 8, 2021	Owner, Plastic Recycling Company
5.	Mr. Bunthoeun Ho	September 7, 2021	I4DI/IUSAID (NGO)
6.	Dr. Seng Ratha	September 8, 2021	Professor, National University of Battambang
7.	Urban poor, waste pickers	September 7, 2021	Community

Nasinu, Fiji

	Persons Interviewed	Date	Sector Information
1	Ms. Anurashika Bari	October 15, 2021	CEO Nasinu Town Council
2	Ms. Karibaiti Taoaba	Sep 10, Oct 25 2021	Regional Director,CLGF Project Focal Point
3	Mr. Akuila Masi	Sep 10, Oct 26 2021	Consultant, CLGF Project Focal Point
4	Ms. Losalini Baikeirewa		Senior Health Inspector, Nasinu Town Council
5	Mr. Joseph Deo and		Pvt. Sector Waste Recyclers
6	Mr. Mani		Community representative

Naga City, Philippines

	Persons Interviewed	Date	Sector Information
1	Wilfredo B. Prilles, Jr.	September 1, 2021	Naga City Planning and Development Coordinator
2	Ms. Joanaviva Plopenio	September 3, 2021	OIC of the Institute for Environmental Conservation And Research (INECAR) Ateneo de Naga University. Project Focal Point
3	Paul Orpiada	September 15, 2021	Plastic Bank, NGO
4	Ernesto "Jap" Asence III	September 15, 2021	Agricultural Technologist City Agricultural Office
5	Four groups from Informal Waste Sector	September 14, 2021	Informal waste picker societies

Annex 6: List of documents reviewed

1. ESCAP Project Document: Integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into local action in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific
2. ESCAP First Project Reference Group Meeting to Support Project Coherence, 5-6 November, 2018. Concept Note, List of Participants and Programme.
3. ESCAP and UN HABITAT Project Brochure
4. DA 11 Management Tracking Dashboard July 29, 2021
5. Overall Critical Points in the DA 11 Project April 2020
6. DA11 Progress Report 2018
7. DA11 Progress Report 2019
8. DA11 Progress Report 2020
9. M&E Framework Monthly Reporting for 5 cities upto 2019, and Tracking Planning Timelines, 2020-2021
10. ESCAP Environment and Development: Cities for a Sustainable Future (ESCAP website)
11. ESCAP eLearning: Localizing the SDGs through SURM. Draft, July 2021
12. LoA Amendments for 5 cities and Reason for Amendments
13. Project budget documents for HQ and 5 cities
14. OECD Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully 2021
15. UNDG UNDAF Companion Guidance: Capacity Development
16. Nadee, Thailand: City Profile
17. Nadee, Thailand: Strategic Planning Workshop Report, August 2019
18. Nadee, Thailand: Visioning Workshop Report, July 2020
19. Nadee, Thailand: Material Flow of Industrial Waste Management in Nadee City
20. Nadee, Thailand: Policy Review on the Waste Management, National Level
21. Nadee, Thailand: Analysis of Institutional Capacity and Needs of private sector and government agencies in industrial waste management and monitoring for a circular economy in Nadee
22. Nadee, Thailand: Research Outcomes Report, Assessment on Sustainable industrial waste management for a circular and incliusive economy. July 2020
23. Nadee, Thailand: Closing Workshop Workplan
24. Battambang, Cambodia: City Profile
25. Battambang, Cambodia: Strategic Planning Workshop Report, Defining the Priority Area of Intervention. June 2019
26. Battambang, Cambodia: Visioning Workshop Report September
27. Battambang, Cambodia: Solid Waste Management Study Report, May 2020
28. Battambang, Cambodia: Case Study
29. Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia: City Profile
30. Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia: Strategic Planning Workshop Report: Identifying solutions for Ulaanbaatar's forests. September 2019
31. Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia: Research Summary 1 – Study on International practices and potential of setting ecosystem service fee in green areas, water body and its protected area.
32. Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia: Research Summary 2 – The livelihood of communities close to

the forests in Ulaanbaatar Green Zone: their potential utilization of non-timber forest products and firewood demand and supply.

33. Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia: Research Summary 3 – Forest cover assessment in the Green Zone of Ulaanbaatar.
34. Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia: Case Study for sustaining resources through enhanced urban forest management in Ulaanbaatar (2018-2021)
35. Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia: Visioning Workshop Report, July 2020
36. Naga City, Philippines: City Profile
37. Naga City, Philippines: Strategic Planning Workshop Report, October 2019
38. Naga City, Philippines: Visioning Workshop Report, December 2020
39. Naga City, Philippines: Sustainable Urban Resource Management, Project Report June 2021
40. Nasinu, Fiji: City Profile
41. Nasinu, Fiji: Strategic Planning Workshop Report. Solid Waste Management for Nasinu Town Council, November 2019
42. Nasinu, Fiji: Visioning Workshop Report, July 2020
43. Nasinu, Fiji: Research Outcomes Report. Household waste management practices in Nasinu, Fiji, July 2020.
44. Strategy Papers for 5 cities: Battambang, Ulaanbaatar, Nadee, Naga City, Nasinu

Title of Evaluation: Integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into Local Action in Support of the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific – Development Account Project

Date of completion: December 2021

	Signature	Date
Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana Executive Secretary ESCAP		6 June 2022
Mr. Kaveh Zahedi Deputy Executive Secretary ESCAP		3 June 2022
Mr. Adnan Aliani Director Strategy and Programme Management Division, ESCAP		25 May 2022
Mr. Sangmin Nam, Director, Environment and Development Division, ESCAP		20/05/2022

General Remarks by Management

Management welcomes the evaluation finding that the project has successfully strengthened regional capacity to localize SDG implementation and reporting. The evaluation highlighted concrete evidence of the project's success, including strengthened legal frameworks for proper use of urban forest resources in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia; improved monitoring and management of industrial waste in Nadee, Thailand; introduction of garbage fee in Naga City, the Philippines to fund water management initiatives; integration of Sustainable Urban Resource Management (SURM) in the city master plan in Battambang, Cambodia; and construction of a community resource recovery facility in Nasinu, Fiji.

Management welcomes the positive feedback received on the project's performance from the various project stakeholders, as well as entities involved in the five pilot project cities, and is pleased that the overall performance of the project against the evaluation criteria was found 'superior or excellent' with the exception of Nasinu where it was rated at average against certain criteria. As recommended by the evaluation, ESCAP will identify opportunities for replication in other cities interested in SURM initiatives with support from ESCAP and the project's implementation partners.

The evaluation found the project's innovative methodology to actively involve stakeholder coalitions in implementing SURM was valued highly by the project stakeholders. It also found that the project's standardized process for data collection to support strategic planning and visioning of SURM priorities was useful.

Despite multiple challenges faced, including disruptions due to the pandemic and staff turnovers in both the pilot cities and ESCAP, the project successfully achieved its planned outcomes. Management recognizes that the lack of well-defined roles and associated resources limited the engagement of UN-Habitat and participation from other expert inputs, including from ESCAP's divisions. Management is encouraged by the resiliency demonstrated by ESCAP's project management and implementation despite COVID-19 related disruptions, resulting in efficiency ratings above average in 4 out of 5 cities.

Management accepts the recommendations and will address them through the implementation of the ongoing and future projects relating to localizing SDGs and action-oriented policies.

Recommendation	Management Response	Follow-up Actions	Lead Unit	Expected completion date	Indicator of completion of follow-up action
1. ESCAP should adopt a flexible approach to pilot project implementation for SDGs localization, as demonstrated by this project. This flexibility ensures it is aligned with local needs and requirements. ESCAP management was supportive and flexible in adjusting to the stakeholder priorities and challenges, and this can be credited for enabling achievements. This project also demonstrated the ability to respond to local needs by project cities created a high level of ownership and sustainability. Though this was challenging for project management to work within ESCAP's budgetary structures, the ability to adapt to stakeholders' priorities was considered a strength.	Management concurs with this recommendation to provide flexibility and adaptability in SDG localization projects. A challenge was faced in implementing the pilot projects through contractual modalities such as Letters of Agreement, which define specific activities and outputs to be delivered by the partner. Any changes needed to these activities and outputs required a lengthy LoA amendment process causing delays in implementation. The project management provided for partner	ESCAP will implement this recommendation in the future pilot projects on SDG localization, which may be delivered through other Development Account projects and/or the Rapid Response Facility funded through RPTC (Section 23). Project implementation will undergo ample consultations with partners prior to any agreements to provide flexibility in activities to adapt and align with local needs and requirements. Mid-term reviews of agreements with the implementing partner(s) can be utilized to make any adjustments necessary to change course	EDD	December 2023	At least two pilot projects on SDG localization prepared with prior consultations and flexible activities.

	cities to adapt the activities and outputs according to the local needs and requirements especially in the context of the current pandemic.	in some of the activities, as required.			
2. Future support by ESCAP for SURM should involve provincial/federal agencies unless cities has clear budgetary and policy reform capacity. The ability of city municipalities to create effective multi-stakeholder partnerships also varies with their engagement history with communities and stakeholders as well as their policy reform/budgetary authority. Some municipalities have limited power so they had to work with provincial governments. SURM also requires attention to municipal resource management policies and budgetary resources available for circular economy initiatives and capacity building. Therefore, explicit attention may be required for integrating provincial/federal policymakers when municipality capacities are limited.	Management concurs with this recommendation noting that local-level projects in the future should make concerted efforts and a requirement to engage the provincial and federal governments at the planning stage. In the present project, ESCAP informed the provincial/federal governments of its engagement and support to municipalities as a standard protocol and engaged relevant national authorities in workshop activities. In future projects, further efforts will be made to more actively engage provincial/federal governments in local activities.	ESCAP will implement this recommendation in future pilot projects on SDG localization. Future local-level pilot projects will involve provincial/federal agencies, if appropriate. ESCAP will emphasize the need to have vertical, and not just horizontal, integration and consultation at the planning stage when engaging the partners and beneficiary countries. Ensuring that both provincial and central government are approached either through the partners or directly by ESCAP, the project will gain the buy-ins and political commitment to have them involved throughout the duration of the project. Efforts will be made to assess whether additional budgetary and implementation capacity can be mobilized from the	EDD	December 2023	At least two pilot projects on SDG localization prepared with the involvement of provincial/federal agencies as one of the partner organizations with clearly defined roles.

		higher-level offices to supplement and support the city municipalities during the project period and beyond for sustainability considerations. Both formal exchanges of letters and informal communications will be used to reach out to the government officials concerned.			
3. ESCAP may consider integrating a monitoring and evaluation plan in the design and implementation of pilot projects. This would build local capacity and improve evaluability of locally driven projects, as an added dimension to progress reporting for achieving Agenda 2030. Baseline information related to the TOC should be available and well documented to the extent possible, and evaluation integrated along the activity chain, not just from a narrow activity reporting-based perspective but be thematically goals driven. This could improve evaluation capacity of stakeholders, improve evaluability at the activity level and also help to improve the effectiveness of stakeholder participation. This recommendation applies to ESCAP and to DA projects overall.	Management concurs with the recommendation to integrate monitoring and evaluation in the design and implementation of pilot projects. Management notes that evaluation of this project included participation in closing workshops to enhance the evaluation process. As mentioned above, future pilot projects to be implemented through various modalities will include a mid-term review to make the necessary adjustments of activities, outputs and timeline based on the	ESCAP will consider this recommendation in future pilot projects on SDG localization, consistent with the monitoring and evaluation requirements of Development Account projects and those of other funding sources.	EDD	December 2023	Project concepts and documents supporting pilot projects on SDG localization prepared with mid-term reviews integrated to better integrate monitoring/evaluation.

	local needs and requirements.				
4. ESCAP should consider replicating and scaling up the pilot project approach and tools, with practical lessons from processes gained from its successful implementation. There is good potential for replication and scaling up of this project throughout the region to carry the momentum going forward. The lessons and practices should be taken from the e-learning training developed by ESCAP with the detailed process documented for cities interested in developing their own SURM approach and project. Opportunities can be created through ESCAP's convening power and various outreach platforms. Several of the project countries are also considering scaling up, and this can also be supported.	Management concurs with the recommendation, realizing all ESCAP projects already include sustainability, replication and scaling up considerations towards the end of implementation, but requiring a concrete planned follow-up actions.	The project includes the regional advocacy and dissemination of the various knowledge projects through online means, and this was implemented as the final activity by ESCAP. Furthermore, ESCAP plans to share the outcomes at regional venues, which may include the APFSD-9, VLR workshops and Asia-Pacific Mayors Academy and other events scheduled in 2022 for wider exposure to the regional audience to the extent possible. Furthermore, the SURM e-learning course is embedded in the Sustainable Urban Development Gateway and will be used for training and capacity building purposes.	EDD	December 2022	Evidence of ESCAP events in which the localization SDGs knowledge products are shared and promoted for a multiplier effect.
5. ESCAP should continue to promote the online learning course and further develop a tracking system for feedback and improvement. The knowledge product for e-learning should ongoingly be tested for feedback	Management concurs with the recommendation to continuously promote and improve and refine the e-learning course in the newly revamped	ESCAP will issue a guideline or memo on integrating a feedback questionnaire as a standard element in e-learning courses offered through the ESCAP knowledge hub and other	SPMD/CK MS/EDD	December 2022	A guideline or memo on integrating online feedback questionnaires in e-learning courses.

after its release. For it to be an effective learning tool ESCAP should consider including a mechanism for tracking feedback.	ESCAP knowledge platform and recommends a standardized tracking system for all e-learning courses.	platforms. It will also monitor users of the e-learning courses, including the SURM e-learning modules.			Evidence of regular analytics collected by CKMS to track users. Evidence of online survey conducted in a sample of e-learning courses.